

Wildcats ready to take step forward



Junior Grant Harding (right) is one of the top returning players for the Louisburg boys basketball team this season. Harding was an honorable mention all-league player last season as he nearly averaged a double-double.

It may not have been the most ideal situation for Louisburg boys basketball coach Jason Nelson last year.

The Wildcats had just three seniors, didn't have much height and had to throw a group of inexperienced sophomores into the fire of varsity action. As it turned out, the Wildcats got better as the season went on despite only finishing the season with six wins.

Now, Louisburg is hoping to take an even bigger step forward this season.

Those group of sophomores are now juniors and features a senior class that has some veteran experience and a couple newcomers as well.

"Every junior has had some sort of varsity experience and that is huge," Nelson said. "There won't be a transition period and they'll know the difference in speed, aggression and tempo between junior varsity and varsity from the beginning."

Seniors Mitchell McLellan and Jacob Welsh return to the guard spot and will lead the Wildcats, while Alex Dunn and Ben Brummel are new to the team this year. McLellan, who missed half of the season last year with a leg injury, will be one of the team's outside scoring threats.

Welsh, on the other hand, will take over the point guard duties from Corbin Wertz, an all-league player from a season ago.

“Jacob will be our point and has done a superb job of preparing for the season,” Nelson said. “Mitchell is an example of why I love my job. He's always had the ability to do well, but has grown into a leader capable of rallying those around him. He's going to have a good year.

“Alex will help us around the perimeter and brings a quality aggression that is contagious. Ben hasn't played in high school, but is a talented young man who will fill in when needed and is a fantastic teammate.”



Jacob Welsh will be relied on to run the offense this season for Louisburg.

Despite that senior leadership, the Wildcats will also look to get a lot of production out of an underclassmen. Junior Grant

Harding emerged as one of Louisburg's top players a season ago, as he has the ability to play on the wing or inside.

Harding, who was an honorable mention all-league selection last season, averaged nearly a double-double with 11 points and nine rebounds a contest.

"Getting all-league honorable mention in the Frontier League is quite a statement, let alone for a sophomore and Grant has embraced the role of emotional leader and worked hard to improve his overall game," Nelson said. "Grant is a special talent with the ability to make those around him better while excelling himself and he's ready for the constant challenges this brings."

Harding, McLellan and Welsh are slated to start for the Wildcats with several others in the mix to fill the final two spots. Junior guard Jayce Geiman will look to give the Wildcats some scoring punch from the outside and fellow junior Sam Guetterman will back up Welsh at the point guard spot.

Junior T.J. Dover and sophomore Dalton Ribordy will also see a lot of minutes at the forward spot.

"Jayce has worked as hard as any player I've seen at improving his all-around game," Nelson said. "He's always been a good spot shooter, but he's now one of our better defenders, ball handlers and has added an element of attacking the rim that has made him a good all-around player.

"Sammy is also ready to step in at the point guard or off-guard spot. T.J. learned a great deal last year about being a post in the Frontier League and is ready to take the reins in that position. Dalton is just a sophomore, but will most definitely be counted on at times and is ready for some varsity experience."

The Wildcats open their season at 7:30 p.m. Friday when they host Pittsburg. Louisburg will also the Wildcat-Bulldog

Classic next week with games on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Louisburg will also host the substate tournament this season and will be paired with Spring Hill, Paola and Fort Scott.

To start the season, however, Nelson likes what he has seen so far out of his group and is excited for what the season holds.

“Couldn’t have asked for a better beginning for the first couple of weeks,” Nelson said. “Every single player has been eager to learn, competitive and willing to push themselves both physically and mentally. Probably the most enjoyable part for me has been watching them push each other in practice. They’re truly dedicated to making each other better through competition and at the conclusion of the competition, they understand that they’re teammates with a common goal.

“Being a true believer in transparency, our players all know where they stand with their coaching staff and have a good idea of their roles in our program.”

2015-16 LOUISBURG BOYS BASKETBALL SCHEDULE

Dec. 4
Pittsburg
7:30 p.m.

Dec. 8 Iola (Wildcat Bulldog
Classic) 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 10 Burlington (Wildcat-Bulldog
Classic) 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 11 Wildcat-Bulldog
Classic TBA

Dec. 15 at

Eudora

7:30 p.m.

Jan. 5

Ottawa

7:30 p.m.

Jan. 8

Baldwin

7:30 p.m.

at

Jan. 12

Frontenac

7:30 p.m.

at

Jan. 15

Soto

7:30 p.m.

at De

Jan. 19

Invitational

TBA

at Baldwin

Jan. 22

Invitational

TBA

at Baldwin

Jan. 23

Invitational

TBA

at Baldwin

Jan. 28

Hill

p.m.

at Spring

7:30

Feb. 2

Paola

7:30 p.m.

Feb. 5

Eudora

7:30 p.m.

Feb. 12
Ottawa
7:30 p.m.

at

Feb. 16
Baldwin
7:30 p.m.

Feb. 19
Hill
7:30 p.m.

Spring

Feb. 23
Soto
7:30 p.m.

De

Feb. 26

at Paola

7:30 p.m.