

Senior class to guide Wildcat basketball



Louisburg's Jayce Geiman is one of seven Wildcat seniors for the 2016-17 season, and those players will be looked upon to guide the team as they try and bounce back from a rough finish a year ago.

Once the final buzzer sounded on the 2015-16 season, members of Louisburg boys basketball team were ready to put it behind them.

It was a season that got off to such promise after the Wildcats won six of their first nine games, but it ended with 12 straight losses through a rugged Frontier League schedule. The players plan on using that experience to fuel them for the upcoming season that tips off Friday.

"Absolutely we learned from it," Louisburg coach Jason Nelson said. "I think they learned how to deal with adversity, given how much existed. It would have been easy for them to hang their heads when the injuries came, or we ran in to a juggernaut of an opponent, but they learned from it and will use it as motivation this year."

The Wildcats will feature a roster of predominantly upperclassmen, which includes seven seniors and two juniors that saw significant varsity minutes a season ago.

"This is the first time since I've been here that we've had a team dominated by upperclassmen and it has been fantastic thus far," Nelson said. "It is through our upperclassmen that our entire program will evolve. They've demonstrated the right way to play, focused on becoming fundamentally sound and competed with one another in an effort to not only improve themselves, but also their brothers in the program."

One of those players was considered among the best in the Frontier League a season ago in Grant Harding. The Wildcats senior returns after he earned second team all-league honors, and was also named to the honorable mention all-state team after he averaged 16 points and eight rebounds a game last year.

Harding will play a key role in the Wildcats' offense this season as fellow seniors Sam Guetterman, Jayce Geiman, T.J. Dover and junior Dalton Ribordy will start along with him to begin the season.

"(Grant) wants to be one of the best to have played at Louisburg High School and knows how much dedication it takes," Nelson said. "He's definitely stepped up his training over the summer working on his few areas for improvement. He's vital to our team success, not just as a scoring threat, but also defensively and distributing the ball and making those around him better."

"This group loves to play together, the coaches love to coach them and while Grant will be counted on, it will be no different than in past years. Our best games have always been when he, T.J., Sammy, Jayce, Jake (Hill) and others have been working as one."



Louisburg senior Grant Harding returns this year after he averaged 16 points and eight rebounds a season ago as a second-team all-league player.

Although the Wildcats might not be as tall as some of their opponents, as Dover (6-foot-3, 250 pounds) and Ribordy (6-2, 200) will give them some scoring and rebounding options down low along with junior Garrett Lowry (6-4, 295).

Seniors Jake Hill, Dalton Stone, Alex Seuferling, along with

juniors Ben Minster and Desmond Doles, will give the Wildcats a lot of production off the bench.

"This is the best our rotation has been in my time here, given that we have multiple 'true' posts," Nelson said. "In past years, we've had to play guys out of position occasionally, but this year, with TJ back, Dalton ready to break out and Garrett Lowry evolving, we can finally have a front court and back court rotation which will further facilitate everything. With Grant, Sammy and Jayce, expected to play a lot, Jake, Ben, Dalton Stone, Desmond, and Alex will also fit in to our rotation as needed and all offer different strengths that we'll look to exploit as we progress."

It will be a tough schedule for the Wildcats as they compete in a tough Frontier League that includes four combined games against No. 4 Ottawa and No. 8 Eudora, who are both ranked in Class 4A-Division I. Also in there are tough games against rival Paola, who qualified for the state tournament last season.

"Our league will once again be one of the best in the state," Nelson said. "There's not an easy game on the schedule, but that's to the benefit of this group, especially the upperclassmen. They've seen it for 3-plus years and know the kind of dedication and talent it takes to do well in this league and look forward to the challenges it presents."

Louisburg will tipoff its season Friday when it travels to Pittsburg for a 7:30 p.m. start. The Wildcats will then travel to Burlington next week for three games in the Wildcat-Bulldog Classic.