

South Iron Returns Three Starters

South Iron drew the top seed in the Arcadia Valley Thanksgiving Tournament once again. The Panthers are perennial powerhouses in the tournament and have dominated the tournament for more than a decade.

The tough Panthers are coached by Dusty Dinkins. He is joined on the bench by assistant coaches Jared Middleton, Delbert Jackson, and Jason McMurry. Coach Dinkins is beginning his 16th year at South Iron and has an overall record of 327-91.

"We return 3 starters from last year's team and 2 other players that received significant minutes," Dinkins said. "Last year, we finished with the record of (22-6). We finished 2nd at the AV Thanksgiving Tourney, 5th place at Park Hills Christmas Tourney and won the Black River League Tournament Championship and finished second in Districts behind Eminence which was the eventual State Champions.

"This year's team will still be very young. We are expecting to see a team-first mentality from each team member!" Dinkins said. "We have many talented players that if they are focused daily on giving a great effort, keeping a positive attitude, working for each other, and improving their skill sets and knowledge we should have a great season. If we can successfully achieve daily progression in those areas we should be able to overcome some of our youthfulness. We are expecting this year's team to bring an exciting brand of basketball each night on the court. Their effort, skill sets, and desire to be great teammates will no doubt bring many wonderful moments to this group!"

South Iron lost to Graduation Garrett Hovis (All-Conference and All-District) and Garrett Pauley. "We are extremely proud of what last year's seniors accomplished! They led our team with positive attitudes, work ethic, and communication on a daily basis. Their impact upon last year's team will continue to overflow into this year's team and for that we are grateful!"

Returning players...
Senior Austin Ruble, 5'8



South Iron Panthers

MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH IRON PANTHERS VARSITY BASKETBALL TEAM ARE: from left, **Albert Gaffney, Dalton Roark, Luke Lunyou, Jermarco Burse, Blake Crayton, Brock Wakefield, Champ McMurry, DJ Prater, Drenin Dinkins and Austin Ruble.** The team is coached by **Dusty Dinkins, Delbert Jackson, and Jared Middleton.**

had a very solid junior season at the point guard position. "He did a great job of bringing energy and effort on the defensive side of the ball," Dinkins said. "We are excited about his growth and improvements in regards to his offensive skill sets. Austin has worked hard throughout the off-season and we are looking forward to seeing him have a wonderful Senior season!"

Senior Albert Gaffney, 5'6, has not had a lot of game experience during his high school career but he will be an important part of South Iron's success this year. "We have seen solid improvements in his game throughout the last year and look forward to seeing him continue to improve," Dinkins said. "His effort, attitude, and positive leadership characteristics will help our team tremendously! He is eager to help his team in whatever capacity that is needed and that will pay

huge dividends as the season progresses."

Junior Blake Crayton, 6'3", is another team member that hasn't had a lot of basketball experience but brings many positives to the team. "His attitude, work ethic, and team first mentality are wonderful!" Dinkins said. "Blake will provide some size to our team that should improve our rebounding and defensive presence around the basket."

Sophomore Brock Wakefield, 6'2", was named All-Conference, All-District, All-State, and Dream Team last year. "Brock is one of the hardest working players we seen come through our program," Dinkins said. "He puts in countless hours during his own time and that has resulted in him being a high impact player for his team! We look forward to his future growth and success as a player and as teammate."



South Iron JV Panthers

MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH IRON PANTHERS JUNIOR VARSITY BASKETBALL TEAM ARE: from left, **Dalton Roark, Lawson Graves, Luke Lunyou, Blake Crayton, Brock Wakefield, DJ Prater, Drenin Dinkins, and Jacob Leverret.**

Sophomore Jermarco Burse, 6'1", was a starter last year as a freshman and did a solid job of improving throughout the season. "Jermarco has gotten stronger during the off-season and will be a more explosive player this year," Dinkins said. "We are excited to see his improvements and believe he is ready to make huge impacts on

both ends of the court!"

Sophomore Luke Lunyou, 6'0", played many minutes off the bench for the Panthers last year and is another player that is improving his game. "He has the ability to make more of an impact this year and will be a valuable player to this year's team," Dinkins said. "We look forward to seeing him continue

to progress into a more impactful varsity player.

Sophomore Dalton Roark, 5'10", made impacts on the defensive end of the court for South Iron as the season progressed last year. "His blue-collar mentality and extra effort, hustle plays enabled him to make key contributions,"

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Lady Panthers Expected to Be Strong Once

Powerhouse Ashley Mickan graduated in May 2018. This leaves a big hole to fill for the South Iron Lady Panthers, but the team is expected to be one of the teams to watch again this year.

The Lady Panthers are coached by Lawrence Graves. Jeff Ayers is the assistant coach. Coach Graves is in his sixth year as head girls coach at South Iron and has an overall record at South Iron of 81-50. His prior coaching experience was with boys. He spent two years as assistant at Risco, 2 years head coach at Bunker, and 5 years head coach at Marquand (boys).

"This year's team's playing style won't be much different from last year's," Graves said. "Last year, one of our major points of emphasis was to be a really good defensive team. We want to continue that trend for sure. We will continue to do similar things, trying to improve them over the course of the season."

Last season, the Lady Panthers had a 19-8 record and repeated as district champions, won first place in the Valley Tournament, third place in the Park Hills Christmas Tournament, and first place in BRL

Tournament. They were also BRL Regular Season Champs.

Graves and Ayers have identified Angel Hampton, Dara Miller, Michaela Ayers, Jada Brooks, and Rylee Masters as the team's starters at the beginning of the season. The team is expected to have a balanced scoring attack.

Angel Hampton is 5'4" senior and will be new to the starting lineup this season. "She has progressed into a very good varsity player," Graves said. "Her ability to defend on the ball is second to none and she has worked very hard to expand her ability to score. She has the ability to get to the rim, and has proven to be able to knock down an open three also. We look for her to take on a much larger role this season."

Dara Miller is a 5'7" senior who is what Graves and Ayers like to call a utility player. "She has the unique ability to not only play every position on the court, but to play them well," Graves said. "She has been a starter her entire high school career, and has been an important piece to our team's success. We look for her to have a great senior campaign as she is our most experienced varsity player."



South Iron Lady Panthers

MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH IRON LADY PANTHERS BASKETBALL TEAM ARE: front from left, **??, Madison Ayers, Angel Hampton, Megan Lashley, Alyssa Malone, Hailey Pauley, Drew Gayle, ??;** back, **Assistant Coach Jeff Ayers, Michaela Ayers, Jada Brooks, Rylee Masters, Callie Miller, Dara Miller, and Coach Lawrence Graves.**

Michaela Ayers, a 5'6" junior, will likely run the point again for the Lady Panthers this season. "She is known for her ability to make plays and get to the rim, but she has worked very hard on her ability to make the 3-point shot," Graves said. "We look forward to seeing her take on an expanded role this season, especially on the offensive end due to the graduation of Ashley Mickan. (2x All-Conference and All-District Selection)

Jada Brooks is a 5'10" junior, and this should be a big year for her. "She has been our second leading scorer the past two seasons (behind Mickan) and has lead our team in rebounds for that same span," Graves said.

"Although we have grown accustomed to expecting a lot from her on both ends of the court, we are hoping to see even more now that she has a couple of years of varsity experience under her belt."

Rylee Masters is a 5'11" senior. "Rylee took a huge step for us last year starting the season as a rotation player and eventually moving her way into the starting lineup," Graves said. "She is strong and physical on both ends of the floor and has great shooting touch. Along with being a skilled defender and rebounder, she has proven to be a capable scorer as well."

Callie Miller is a 5'9" junior who saw considerable playing

time last season. "We are really fortunate to have a player like Callie," Graves said. "She has a post player height and ability, with the added skill set of a guard. She, like her sister Dara, has the ability to play any spot on the floor. Callie gives us the ability to go to the bench without seeing any disruption on the court. She has a high basketball IQ and has proven to be a valuable asset to our team."

Hailey Pauley is a 5'4" Sophomore who will be seeing consistent rotation time for the first time in her career this year. "Last year, she was more than capable but due to the large number of experienced players ahead of her, her varsity playing time was limited," Graves said. "She brings a high energy approach to the game and despite her smaller size, is fearless. We look for her role to continue to expand as she gains experience."

This team will be different than last year's team. "First of all, we graduated a pretty special player last year in Ashley Mickan," Graves said. "She left our program as the all-time leading scorer in Lady Panther history, and for the past four years,

has been the focal point of our offense. This year, it will obviously have to be someone different. The good thing is that even though she is gone, we still have a bunch of talented and experienced players returning. What we have that we have not been accustomed to in the past is a large number of veteran players. Most of our players at this time have played in numerous championship games, have won two consecutive district titles, and have made a trip to the final four. We hope that those experiences will lead to even more success this season.

South Iron's strength this season will be having skilled players at all five positions and having a quality bench.

"Our goal is always the same: to grow as individuals and as a team with the hopes of achieving our utmost potential, which hopefully will put us in a position to compete for a district title," Graves said. "Many of our girls have the ability to play more than one position/fill different roles, but Dara and Callie Miller are asked to do it on a regular basis."

**Wishing you a great season!
Good luck,
PANTHERS**



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