



Members of the Lesterville Bearcats basketball team are: front from left, Miles Winn, Cameron Boyer, James Gibson, Riley Mathes, Brendan Myers, Holden Laughman, Vince Mathes; back, Landon Marton, Ayden Mathes, Nolan Mathes, Colby Sutton, Nick Orr, and Avery Mathes.

Lesterville Bearcats Bringing Height, Speed

The Lesterville Bearcats will have a new look this season. Part of that is due to a new coaching staff. The Bearcats will be coached by Anthony Caruso; Jared Hathcoat will serve as assistant coach.

Coach Caruso is entering his seventh year of coaching basketball. This is his first year at Lesterville; previously he taught and coached at Richland High School.

Riley Mathes is Lesterville's lone senior and is a 4-year varsity starter. "He's still working himself into basketball shape after tearing his hamstring playing spring baseball and having to sit out summer workouts,"

Caruso said. "He has the ability to create mismatches for us offensively as a guard standing at 6'0 and weighing 210 lbs, and he can handle the ball well while being able to finish both inside and out. I look forward to Riley having a solid senior year!"

Holden Laughman, a 5'10" Junior, is a 3-year varsity starter. "Holden is probably one of the fastest players I have ever coached and possibly one of the best two way players," Caruso explained. "He has an uncanny ability to put the ball on the floor and get to the rim, or create for his teammates. He also has that same ability on the defensive side of the floor, where I be-

lieve his quickness and ability to guard will frustrate opponents."

Brendan Myers, a 6' junior, is another 3-year varsity starter. "Brendan has put in a lot of work to become a combo type of offensive player, where he can beat you both inside and out," Caruso explained. He's a strong and smart kid that brings a lot of energy to our team. He will be looked upon to bring that same energy every night and be a leader for this team."

James Gipson is a 6'3" junior; he is a 2-year varsity starter. "James is the definition of a bull in a china shop," Caruso said. "He is tough, gritty, and willing to do anything to help

the team win. He's put in a lot of work in the weight room and in the gym to improve. I really see James having a big role this year and putting a lot of teams on notice of his ability."

Vince Mathes is a 5'9" junior guard. He's a strong guard that can do all the small things to make a team succeed, according to Coach Caruso. "Vince is also strong at getting to the basket and defending well," Caruso stated.

Cameron Boyer is a 6'3" junior who will be playing guard/forward. "He will be an X factor I believe," Caruso said. "He's been growing and has made improvements every year. His

length can trouble opponents and should help finish stops with rebounds."

Ayden Mathes is a 5'8" junior guard. He's going to possibly be the first man off the bench, Caruso said. Mathes is described as being quick, has good handles and can get under opponents skin on the defensive end. He will be a strong addition to the rotation.

Nolan Mathes, a 5'10" freshman guard will have to make the adjustment to playing varsity basketball. "He had a pretty seamless transition this summer and we hope to see that come out this winter," Caruso said. "Nolan is a good shooter with

the ability to get hot and get on a streak quickly."

Last season, Lesterville started won the Arcadia Valley Thanksgiving Tournament and shocked basketball fans. The Bearcats has a successful season. The Bearcats lost no starters from that team. Riley Mathes, Brendan Myers and Holden Loughman were all named to the All District team.

"I believe that simply being another year older and experienced will help this team's growth a lot," Caruso said. "The guys experienced a lot of success early on last year and hit a tough stretch when people start-

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Three Players Return for the Lady Bearcats

The Lesterville Lady Bearcats will return three players from last year's team. However, the team is young and working hard and should be very competitive.

David Burrows will be coaching the team. He is in his 12th year of coaching and his 5th year as Lesterville coach. He started his coaching career in Arkansas at East Poinsett County where we won back to back state championships in 2011-2012. He came to Lesterville to coach the girls in 2012 and continued to coach them until 2015. He took a job in Ellington to coach the girls there, and the next year came back to Lesterville to coach the girls again.

Lesterville will play tough defense and get out and run.

Burrows has identified three starters for his team—Jadyn

Fitzgerald, Macie Barton, and Leah Thomas.

Jadyn Fitzgerald is a very versatile on the court. She creates a presence down low and can score from the outside. She can fill many roles on the team.

Macie Barton has amazing defensive ability, Burrows said. She will get steals and get the ball out in transition for great looks at scoring. Coach Burrows foresees her as having the potential for a breakout season. "I believe she will out hustle teams and get out in the open court to make something happen."

Leah Thomas is much improved from last year. She will be great at handling the ball and dictating the offense, according to Burrows.

"Only 3 players return from last year's team so the bulk of the team will be young but I believe

they will step up," Burrows said. "Our teams strong points is the man 2-man defense and getting out in transition. We also have the ability to slow down and run some offensive sets. Our weak point is we are young and will have to learn fast."

Last season, Lesterville won the Reynolds County traveling trophy last year. Two players

received all conference and 1 received all district.

"Our philosophy will focus on pressure," Burrows said. Good or bad, outmanned or overmanned, we must pressure the ball in the full-court, half-court, using both man to man and zone philosophies developed to best fit the skill level of our team. Our biggest priority

on defense is to create turnovers, limit offensive opportunities for our opponent, and win basketball games by ensuring our fundamental defensive skills are as perfect as humanly possible. Defense is not only an individual responsibility, it is a team responsibility.

Lesterville's goal this season is to have execution, cohesive-

ness on both ends of the court, and 100% effort every game.

Burrows foresees his team having a balanced scoring attack. He said that more than a couple of girls that can score.

Basketball fans should also watch Tayler Watts. She will step into a large role in filling the post for the Lady Bearcats.



Members of the Lesterville Lady Bearcats basketball team are: front from left, Leah Thomas, Macie Barton, Allie Harrison, Alliyah Myers; back, Peyton Sanders, Hannah Steward, Jadyn Fitzgerald, and Tayler Watts.

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Good Luck, Bearcats!!



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