

# Hardwood hardware hiatus has Tigers in hunt for more in 2017

By Mike Gilmore

The St. John boys' basketball team knows that winning makes things taste good. At their own long-running Midwinter Classic Tournament, the fare is excellent – right down to the homemade pie.

But even a fast-food hamburger comes off like five-star cuisine after winning a state tournament. And this year's Tigers are hungry for more hardware.

Having Dean Wade around taught them that. With Wade, the Tigers claimed three straight Class 2A state titles, and started off a 63-game winning streak that continued into last season, even after the graduated Wade joined the Kansas State Wildcats' men's team.

In all that time, however, the Central Plains Oilers were closing in; even into the 2015 state championship final, which the Tigers won, 49-44.

Last year, the Oilers wouldn't go away; they wanted it all. It started that December in St. John, which not only resulted in a 55-48 Central Plains victory,



2016-17 St. John Tigers

it stopped the Tigers' consecutive win streak that St. John held for a glorious four-day weekend.

In January, another 51-38 win kept the Tigers first from claiming the top berth and then the championship of St. John's own home Midwinter Classic Tournament.

In February in Claf- lin, Central Plains won again, 46-45, to claim undisputed rights to the Central Prairie League title.

And then in a Class

2A sub-state unnecessarily overloaded by state assignment, the Oilers took St. John's chances for a four-peat at state away with a 48-46 win in the Tiger's Den.

It's the kind of thing that can kill one's appetite.

The Tigers, however, have not forgotten the taste of success, and have reloaded for another assault on Manhattan.

Coach Kinnamon offered up five reasons why the Tigers will

be belling back up to the state playoff table in 2016-17, beginning with long-range offense:

• "We had a pretty good team three-point field goal percentage last year that should be just as good or potentially even better this season," Kinnamon noted. Jorge Calleros, a 6-1 senior long-range bomber, averaged 14 points per game with 40 percent of his makes coming from behind the three-point circle;

• "We should be able to play at least 9-10

players in our rotation," Kinnamon said. Pretty good, when you consider that Kinnamon, Calleros and 6-4 junior post Chase Fisher averaged more than 20 minutes of playing time last year. The Tigers' bench will most likely be well-utilized in St. John's annual season opener against Pratt-Skyline, before heading off to a possible fourth-straight Keady Classic Tournament championship in Larned next week;

• "We return 12 letterwinners and four full-time starters from last year's 19-4 team," Kinnamon continued. Nine of those players remember firsthand what it's like to win a state title;

• "We have a team full of guys that really like each other and will share the ball," Coach Kinnamon said. The starters combine for 15 assists per game, led by Cole Kinnamon at 5 app.;

• "Our core group all worked really hard in the offseason," Kinnamon concluded. "They had countless hours in individual workouts; pick-up games; summer league games; MAYB tournaments and AAU tournaments since the end of last year." That sounds like a recipe for season success for a club that has won six state titles (1974, 1982, 2007, 2013, 2014 and 2015) in going on 16 years.

## St. John basketball 2016-17

Dec. 2	PRATT SKYLINE
Dec. 5-10	@Keady Classic
Dec. 13	@Central Plains
Dec. 16	CUNNINGHAM
Jan. 3	KINSLEY
Jan. 6	NESS CITY
Jan. 10	@Ellinwood
Jan. 17-21	MIDWINTER TOURN. (B)
Jan. 23-27	@Hilltop Tourn. (G)
Jan. 31	NORWICH
Feb. 3	CENTRAL PLAINS
Feb. 7	@LaCrosse
Feb. 10	@Victoria
Feb. 14	@South Central
Feb. 17	MACKSVILLE
Feb. 21	@Otis-Bison
Feb. 23	@Cimarron
2-28/3-3	Sub-state
March 6-11	State

## Lady Tigers building on better finish in 2016-17

By Mike Gilmore

St. John head girls' basketball coach Danny Smith looks for an improved Lady Tiger team to hit the hardwoods this season.

"We only lost one senior to graduation and most of the girls we have returning or as newcomers have put a lot of hours over the summer," Smith said. "We must be better defensively and have to be able to score the ball better than we

did last season. Defense and three-point shooting are strengths for us right now."

Bailey Burns leads three returning starters as a 5-7 senior; she is joined by 5-5 senior guard Kerisa Brown and 5-9 junior Tara Nelson from the Lady Tiger squad that went 6-15 overall and 2-5 in the Central Prairie League.

Senior Baley Dogget, at 5-10, returns length under the bucket

heading up a quartet of sophomores: Paige Doran, Jackie Rios, Alexa Rodarmel and Kandis Williamson. Senior newcomer Yukio Inamura and junior Monica Montoya add depth with a quartet of freshmen, in Erin Crissman, America Fernandez, Brooke Long and Bree Meyer.

St. John opens against Pratt Skyline tonight, then heads to Larned for the 10th annual Gene Keady Classic Tournament next week.

*"The difference between winning and losing is most often . . . Not quitting."*

~ Walt Disney

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