

# Ellinwood boys out for third-straight winning season under Joiner

**By MIKE COURSON**  
 Derek Joiner's results speak for themselves in Ellinwood: last year, his Eagles posted a 14-8 record – the best winning percentage by a boys' team in Ellinwood since 1993. Joiner's teams have won 28 games in his first two seasons – the most of any back-to-back teams in 28 years. With some key players back this winter, Joiner has his sights set on a third-straight winning season in as many years.

"I am more excited for this season than usual," he said. "I think it's mostly because I know how much better we can get from the first day of practice to the last day of practice. We are very young, but there is some talent to be developed here."

Joiner does lose some scoring and experience with a large graduating class last year. Kaleb Schartz was a mainstay in the program in recent years, and Connor Ewing stepped up last year. The duo split 19.2 points a game last year. Big-man Cody Wondra is also gone after leading the team with 6.6 rebounds a night and 6.2 points a game.

What Joiner does have back is senior Tyson Martinez (6-0), already a two-time all-league player in a loaded Central Prairie League. Last season, Martinez paced the Eagles with 14.9 points a game. He made 65 of his 172 attempts from 3-point land last season (38 percent).

"Tyson has a chance to leave a big imprint on this



2016-17 Eagle basketball team, front row from left: David Hammeke, Tyler Knop, Zack Jacobs, Blake Garmann, James Schlessiger, Kyler Doll, Brandon Carr, Luke Wondra, and Pablo Perez. Back row: Eric Jones, Keiton Robl, Landon Robl, Mason Doll, Joel Kasselmann, Tyson Martinez, Myles Menges, Kodie McFarren, Tate Fisher, and Nathan Monday. Not pictured: Ryan Niles and Peyton Duvall. (photo by Mike Courson)

program," Joiner said. "He can be the first three-year starter with three-straight winning seasons in a very long time in this program. I was fortunate to have him on my roster from day one of getting this opportunity to coach here."

"I appreciate every-

thing he's done for our program for the first two years in my time as head coach. The coaches and I are going to work extremely hard to get these others to come along as quickly as possible to give him and the other seniors a positive experience for their final

run here at Ellinwood."

The rest of the Eagle roster is either young or inexperienced, but talented. Sophomore Myles Menges (6-3) saw varsity time as a freshman last year, playing in 17 of the 22 games. More importantly, Menges picked up valuable leadership skills as the Ellinwood quarterback this fall, leading the area in passing yardage.

Sophomore Joel Kasselmann (6-1) played in 16 games as a freshman last year, and junior Nathan Monday (6-2) played in just nine games but averaged 7.7 points and 4.9 rebounds a night in those contests. Senior Tate Fisher (6-3) joins the team this year after picking up varsity minutes as a sophomore two years ago. He brings athleticism and a jumping ability to the floor.

"Our roster will be comprised of 80 percent freshmen and sophomores," said Joiner. "We will be logging long hours in practice and doing a tremendous amount of teaching. We'll simplify some things from last year and get back to our core values and fundamentals of playing."

Joiner has a couple of other players in the wings. Sophomore Zach Jacobs (5-8) led the junior varsity squad in scoring last year and could make an impact at the varsity level. Senior Eric Jones (5-9) will also have the opportunity for a breakout varsity season.

The potential for success will again be there for the Eagles, but with so much youth, there could be some growing pains.

"My expectations are cautiously optimistic," Joiner said. "It will all depend on how quickly the young players come along and how dependable others become. There is a great deal of unknown, but we have some pieces to have a positive season. I expect us to practice really hard, learn a lot about ourselves, and compete extremely hard in games."

Regardless of the outcome each night, Joiner is setting up Ellinwood for some big years in the near future. Each night out will be a lesson learned.

"I am stoked about the youth and numbers in the program," said Joiner. "We have some quality freshmen and sophomores. We will have some that contribute in varsity right away. And even though not all of them will play varsity this year or next, we have serious depth with guys who I believe can help our varsity program before their time is done here."

"We'll be trying to win as many varsity games as possible, but this will be an important year to develop our young players as well for the future of our program."

Each night out in the CPL could be tough this season. St. John and Central Plains return with strength, and Ness City, Otis-Bison, and Macks-ville could also prove to be viable threats. Ellinwood will see new competition in Lyons and Haven this year.

## Ellinwood basketball 2016-17

Dec. 2	RUSSELL
Dec. 5-10	@Larned Tourn.
Dec. 13	@Ell-Saline
Dec. 16	@Ellis
Jan. 10	ST. JOHN
Jan. 13	@Macksville
Jan. 16-21	@Hoisington Tourn.
Jan. 24	LACROSSE
Jan. 27	@Lyons
Jan. 31	VICTORIA
Feb. 3	HAVEN
Feb. 7	@Ness City
Feb. 10	KINSLEY (HC)
Feb. 14	@Plainville
Feb. 17	@Otis-Bison
Feb. 21	CENTRAL PLAINS
Feb. 27	Sub-state
March. 7-10	State

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