



2016-17 Macksville Mustangs

Mustang boys working to run with thoroughbred CPL herd

By MIKE GILMORE

It can be tough running with the herd. Macksville veteran boys' coach Jeff Kuckelman, whose teams spent time on the top of the Class 1A heap a few years back, can remember a time not having to worry about adding to a home win streak in the Macksville gym.

Lately, however, wins at home have been hard to come by, especially as the CPL has been taken over by Stafford County rival St. John and then by Barton County upstart Central Plains in recent years.

Finishing in the top half with a better than .500 record doesn't look so bad, then, all things considered.

Last year the Mustangs -- who won a state title in 2011 to top nine state appearances in Kuckelman's 14 years as head coach -- struggled to a fifth-place finish in the CPL, going 4-4 against league opponents in an 11-10 season. The Mustangs were elevated to Class 2A, when they learned they would be heading to sub-state opposite CPL strongarms St. John and Central Plains, who were destined

for a championship game slugfest.

Add in improved play from CPL reupping Ellinwood in the east and Ness City in the west, just running with the pack became a challenge.

To top it off, all of this in a rebuilding year.

"We had some growing pains throughout last season," said Kuckelman, who is looting to four returning starters among nine lettermen heading into the 2016-17 season.

"But, we played some of our best basketball at the end of the year.

"We used that to springboard into the summer. We had a good summer camp, as well as worked on getting better individually. Our team hopes this carries over into the season, where we hope to take another step forward, with players that have been together two years or more.

"It will be hard to improve a bunch, record-wise, as we still face a very tough schedule with several good teams, but we want that to prepare us for what always shapes up to be a tough season."

Jacob Rein, a 6-1 forward, returns as a junior after boosting the Mustangs with a team-leading 14.1 points, 5 rpg., 1.6 assists and 1.7 steals per game last season. He is joined by 5-10 senior guards Brigdon Russell (10.7 ppg., 2.8 rpg) and Deigo Delgadillo (11.0 ppg., 3.2 rpg., 2.9 apg.) who will take up some of the perimeter load. Also, 6-4 senior Jarrod Kuckelman (1.3 ppg., 1.9 rpg.) adds some length, and 5-10 junior point guard Kreed Parr (3.4 ppg., 1.9 rpg.) flexibility to the offense.

The Mustangs open against Ness City and 6-2 senior shooting guard Chandler Stiawalt, who has been tabbed one of the state's players to watch this season for the Eagles.

Then, it's up to Larned for the 10th annual Gene Keady Classic tournament, where the Mustangs will open play against Kiowa County, with both St. John and Spearville looming on their side of the bracket. After Christmas, the Mustangs travel to Claflin to continue CPL play against Central Plains.

The Mustangs do have a string of home games following an appearance in St. John's Midwinter Classic at the end of January, but one of them is against Pratt with an injury-free Samson Kohman.



2016-17 St. John Lady Tigers



2016-17 Macksville Lady Mustangs

Filbert to lead more experienced Lady Mustangs on hardcourt

By MIKE GILMORE

Third-year Macksville girls' basketball coach Chet Skinner is hoping that experience on the floor will improve the Lady Mustangs' chances this season.

"We look to be more experienced and mature," said Skinner, as five starters return to a team that went 5-15 last year. "The leadership from our upperclassmen should guide us through the season. This team should be deeper and more athletic than the previous year."

Sophie Filbert, a 5-7 senior guard, returns to a starting lineup bringing 10.2 points, 3.1 rebounds and 1.9 assists from last winter. She is joined by 5-4 senior point guard Olivia Vosburg, who returns 6.9 ppg., 3.1 rpg. And 1.8 assists. Filbert and Vosburg are the team's best ball-handlers facing a strong Central Prairie League schedule that this season will see improved play from Central Plains, St. John and Ness City. The Lady Eagles pre-

miered fourth in the Class 2A preseason coaches' poll.

Forward Emma Stimatze is the Lady Mustangs' glass-cleaner on the baseline, averaging a team-leading 4.8 boards per game; she averaged 5.2 points and an assist last season.

Rounding out the starting rotation are Lyset Ibarra (3.2 ppg., 1.1 rpg.) and Perla Ibarra (1.3 ppg., 1.5 rpg.)

"Filbert and Stimatze look to guide us this season," Skinner said. "We need to get off to a good start and use the Christmas break to prepare for a long, tough schedule and get ready for sub-state. 'I'm expecting solid shooting from the younger guards and passing from Filbert, with all-out hustle and physicality inside with Stimatze. We look to get off to a good start."

The Lady Mustangs travel to Ness City for their season opener, then travel to Larned for the 10th annual Gene Keady Classic beginning Dec. 5 in Larned.

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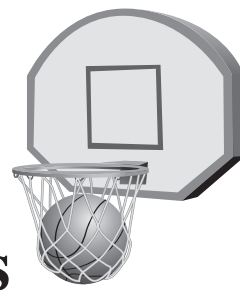
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