

## Oilers

continued from page 2

history last year, ending St. John's record win-streak and taking a perfect record into the state tournament. After a loss in the semifinals, the Oilers pounded Hill City in the consolation game to finish the season at 25-1. The Oilers are 66-9 over the past three years.

But the losses this winter will be significant. Michael Ryan was Rolfs' floor general, averaging 17.5 ppg and earning a plethora of post-season honors. As a four-year starter, Ryan set the school record for career steals, and is second on the list in scoring and assists.

Braedan Crites was another four-year starter. Last year he averaged

8.4 points, 6.3 rebounds, and 5.2 assists a game. Jacob Warnken averaged 9.5 points a night, and Brady Rugan finished at five points a game. Last year's seniors accounted for two-thirds of the Oiler offense.

Rolfs will still have some big weapons back in 6-foot-3 junior Alex Barton, and 5-foot-11 sophomore Devin Ryan. Both are returning starters. Barton injured his hand in the final game of the football season and will miss the first portion of the season. He averaged eight points and four rebounds a game last season.

"Alex will be expected to step up big on both ends of the court

this season," Rolfs said. "He brings great athleticism and has the unique ability to play both inside and out. He continues to improve his game on both sides, and will no doubt be the difference maker on many nights. We look for him to play a big role for us and will be a key to our success."

As a freshman last year, Ryan was a big part of some late game situations. He averaged 8.5 points and 2.5 rebounds a game.

"Devin really stepped up for us last season and played extremely well for his age," said Rolfs. "That experience will serve him well as he enters his sophomore year. I expect him to lead



Devin Ryan (left) and Alex Barton (back) return with experience for Central Plains this season.

(photo by Mike Courson)

us from the point guard position. He has big shoes to fill, replacing his older brother, Michael, but I know that he will be more than capable of doing so as he matures into the role."

Seniors Bryce Miller and Collin Schloctermeier, and sophomores Alex Hinkel and Brett Liebl also return as letterwinners.

"Bryce will be expected to play a big part in our success as well," said Rolfs. "As he enters his senior season, he will bring a lot of experience having played in two state tournaments as well as numerous other big games along the way. He is deceptively athletic and brings great

quickness, toughness and energy to our team at the guard position.

"Though he didn't receive much playing time as a freshman last season, Alex gained an immense amount of experience running the point guard position for our JV program. He was able to learn our system and really mature being the leader at that level. We expect big things from him this coming season. I look for him to be an impact player for us. "Brett, much like Alex Hinkel, didn't see much varsity time last year but grew up a lot from the beginning to the end of the season. We look forward to having Brett alongside Alex Barton, as they should be a formidable tandem in the post for us this coming season."

Around the Central Prairie League this year, St. John will again be a Class 2A powerhouse, and Ellinwood, with several key returners, will also be looking to make a push for a league title.

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