



2017-18 St. John Tigers

St. John becomes heavyweight in 1A

By MIKE COURSON
Clint Kinnamon's squads never rebuild so much as they reload. Even losing four four-year players to graduation, St. John was poised to be a contender in Class 2A. Then the fall classifications were released and the Tigers made the move back to Class 1A, Div. I. Now playing against smaller schools, St. John enters the season ranked No. 2 in the new classification.

"I don't know much about 1A teams that are going to be good, other than Hanover and South Gray," Kinnamon said. "We really didn't see many 1A teams over the summer and we only play a few 1A teams on our schedule."

"There may not be as many as many talented teams, but there are still talented teams. We are nowhere near where we need to be at by the end of the year. I do, however, like our pieces we have and the hard work they're putting in so far. We've had some guys grow and really improve their athleticism and skill set since last year."

St. John is no stranger to 1A, Div. I. Two years after the classification split, the Tigers won the title in 2013. They then won two more titles in Class 2A in 2014 and 2015. After missing the state tournament in 2016, the Tigers made it back to the 2A state championship game last year where they fell 59-51 to Sacred Heart.

Gone to graduation are Cole Kinnamon and Jorge Calleros. The duo provided countless memories over the past four seasons and contributed 26 points a game last season. Triston Long and Alexis Villanueva added 10 points a night and were part of that senior class that posted a career 95-6 record.

The Tigers get back 6-4 senior Chase Fisher, who earned an all-state honorable mention last year after averaging 13 point and four rebounds a night. Senior Quincy Smith returns as a capable guard who averaged four points, three rebounds, and three assists a year ago. His role increases

this year with the graduation of Kinnamon and Calleros.

At 6-7, sophomore Tanner Hanner will be a target inside, and junior Eddy Calleros returns with varsity experience. Senior Braden Witt is yet another six-footer at 6-3.

"We do return several guys that played a lot of minutes in varsity games the last two and three years," Kinnamon said. "We have a team full of guys that really like each other and will share the ball."

Lady Tigers enter season ranked No. 9

With the likes of Central Plains, Hoxie, Wabunsee, Jeff Co. North, Olpe, Moundridge, and Meade - just to name a few - Class 2A has been a tough place to be in recent years. St. John can perhaps breathe a little bit easier back in 1A, where the Lady Tigers won a title in 2009 and finished second in 2012.

Danny Smith was on the sideline for those runs and returns with a small squad in 2017-18.

"One area of concern is simply our depth," he said. "We might have as few as eight or nine girls on our roster. This really limits what you can do during practice every day and influences what you may or may not be able to run. We won't lack for effort, but we must stay healthy. I'm interested to see what these girls can do."

St. John posted an 11-11 record last year and loses leading scorer Bailey Burns, a 2A all-state honorable mention.

Smith does have back Tara Nelson. The 5-10 senior averaged 15.5 points and six rebounds a night last season.

"We will also return several other starters on this inexperienced team," Smith said. "We aren't young, but we are inexperienced as far as basketball knowledge goes. I had a core group of girls spend a lot of time in the weight room and on the court this summer working to get

better. I'm encouraged by their desire to improve."



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St. John basketball 2017-18

Dec. 1	@Skyline
Dec. 5-9	@Keady Classic
Dec. 12	CENTRAL PLAINS
Dec. 15	@Cunningham
Dec. 19	@Kinsley
Jan. 5	@Ness City
Jan. 9	ELLINWOOD
Jan. 16-20	MID-WINTER CLASSIC
Jan. 30	@Norwich
Feb. 2	@Central Plains
Feb. 6	LACROSSE
Feb. 9	VICTORIA
Feb. 13	SOUTH CENTRAL
Feb. 16	@Macksville
Feb. 20	OTIS-BISON
Feb. 22	CIMARRON
March 1-3	Sub-state TBA
March 7-10	State