

Comley, Richter, Briar return to make Sterling a contender in 2017-18

By MIKE COURSON
 The stars had lined up for the Sterling basketball team last winter. Coming off a 17-6 season the year before, Derek Schneider's squad returned most of its firepower.

Then the clouds began to move in. Standout guard Kenan Comley injured his foot during the football season. Then Lucas Briar

went down with an injury before the season.

The Bears still managed a successful season. Behind Kyler Comley and Lucas Briar, Sterling posted a 14-8 record and knocked off top-ranked Hesston to end the regular season.

This year, Schneider loses four-year player Kyler Comley, but Kenan

Comley, Richter, and Briar are back to make the Black Bears a legitimate threat in the Heart of America League and in Class 3A.

"It's nice to have most everyone healthy this year entering the season," said Schneider. "So far practices have been very competitive and the guys are working hard to improve and make us a better team. Hopefully we keep that up throughout the season."

The 6-4 senior Briar put up 20.7 points and grabbed 9.2 rebounds a night to return as the leader this season as a third-year starter. He will have some help. Comley earned first-team All-Central Kansas League honors as a sophomore after scoring 17 points a game. He also led the team with 85 assists and 47 steals that year. And that was when Sterling still played in the more difficult CKL.

At 6-1, the senior Richter can do a little of everything on the floor. His sophomore season, he hit 30 3-pointers and averaged better than eight points and nearly four rebounds a game.

Schneider also has back senior Trent Jones and sophomore Brady Myers, both at six foot. Both picked up starting experience last year. At 6-5, senior John Schweizer returns to the middle as the big man on the team. Juniors Conan Ball (5-9), Max Dutton (5-11), and sophomore Caleb Lambert (5-8) saw time at the guard



2017-18 Sterling Black Bears

position last winter.

The Black Bears are flying under the radar to open the season. Despite the returning firepower, Sterling did not make the top-10 in the preseason ranks. Cheney, Norton, and Hesston complete the top of that list.

"I think we have to keep working each day to get better," Schneider said. "We won't put a lot of stock in rankings, because they won't help us win sub-state or state. The teams we play early in the year will know us well from previous years or see us in tournament games before we play each other. By the end of the first few games, everyone will have film anyway."

Sterling will play a tough schedule before the Christmas break. The Black Bears open the

season tonight against a Hillsboro team ranked No. 10 in 2A. Sterling will see some good competition at the Kingman tournament,

then take on Class 4A Nickerson before seeing top-ranked Cheney in McPherson in the penultimate game of 2017.



JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

Black Bears have to wait, but both Comleys set to play in 2016-17

Kyler Comley (standing) and Kenan Comley graced the cover of last year's Winter Sports Preview. Injuries hampered last year's squad but the Bears feature a healthy roster this season. (photo by Mike Courson)

Wilson leads group of returners in Sterling

By MIKE COURSON
 The Lady Black Bears can say goodbye to Hugoton. At least partially. Last year, Sterling not only had to deal with the loss of some four-year players,

but Hugoton made a brief stop in Class 3A, beating Sterling in the championship of the Sterling Invite in January, then ending the Lady Bears' season in the sub-state finals. Oh, Hugoton went on to finish the season at 26-0, winning three state games by an average of 20 points.

Those two losses to Hugoton represented one fourth of Sterling's bad nights on the year as Jill Rowland led her squad to a 14-8 campaign. Two more losses came against a Kingman team that spent most of the season ranked, and another loss came against a Berean Academy team that advanced to state in Class 2A.

Like last year, Rowland will be dealing with some key losses to graduation as the program says goodbye to Maddie Thrasher, Lindsay Gilmore, and Elise Kelley.

"Maddie did a great job at the point defensively and running our offense," Rowland said. "We will still try and run the ball with an up-tempo game and to be hard nosed defensively. We will have kids with some

varsity experience but they will have to expand their roles this year."

Rowland will have to replace the scoring ability of Thrasher (8.6 ppg) and Gilmore (8.6 ppg).

Having senior Taya Wilson back helps. Wilson led the squad in most statistical categories at 15 points, five assists, and five rebounds a night. She is joined by fellow seniors Aniston Ramsey at guard, and Camille Schweizer Alley Rowland down low. Schweizer averaged seven points and 3.5 boards a

night last season.

Junior Grace Rowland leads the juniors on the team after averaging three points, three assists, and two rebounds a game. She's joined by classmates Kaylie Zimmerman, Deb Schmidt, and Morgan Simpson.

Sophomore Kinzie Comley returns after picking up varsity experience as a freshman, averaging four points, 1.5 assists, and 2.5 rebounds per contest.

The Lady Black Bears should see plenty of top competition this year.

Right away, Sterling could see Kingman in tournament play. The Lady Eagles are ranked No. 1 in Class 3A.

Also before Christmas, Sterling hosts No. 10 Moundridge on Dec. 19. After the break looks to be even more difficult as the Lady Black Bears host their own tournament, host Kingman on Feb. 16, then travel to No. 6 Hesston to close out the regular season on Feb. 20. Also in February is a league game against a perennially-tough Berean Academy squad.



2017-18 Sterling Lady Black Bears, back row from left: Kinzie Comley, Thomassyna Prebble, Kiah Zambo, Lauren Frederick, Maddie Chesney, Debi Schmidt, Kayla Morris, and Cara Cabral. Middle row: Grace Rowland, Alley Rowland, Kidist Wilson, Aniston Ramsey, Camille Schweizer, Isabelle Christensen, and Natalie Schweizer. Front row: Taya Wilson, Haddie Boeken, Avrey Holliday, Esmeralda Castillo, McKiah San Miguel, and Elizabeth Horsch. Not Pictured: Macy Brownlee and Kaylie Zimmerman. (courtesy photo)

Sterling basketball 2017-18

Dec. 1	HILLSBORO
Dec. 5-9	@Kingman Tourn.
Dec. 12	@Nickerson
Dec. 15	Cheney @McPherson
Dec. 19	MOUNDRIDGE
Jan. 5	@Bennington
Jan. 9	@Hutch Trinity
Jan. 12	REMINGTON
Jan. 15-19	STERLING INVITE
Jan. 30	@Inman
Feb. 2	@Marion
Feb. 6	ELL-SALINE
Feb. 9	BEREAN ACAD.
Feb. 13	@Sedgwick
Feb. 16	KINGMAN
Feb. 20	@Hesston
March 1-3	Sub-state TBA
March 7-10	State

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