

Ellinwood boys looking to rebuild after several key losses

By MIKE COURSON

The loss of four-year player Tyson Martinez would have been enough to change up some things in Ellinwood. In the offseason, the Ellinwood basketball team continued to lose members. Now, coach Derek Joiner is looking to a largely new squad to continue the program's recent success.

"I like the personality of our team," Joiner said. "These guys have the courage to face the challenge of a roster overhaul. They have the willingness and toughness to work hard daily and be pushed by their coaches. They are not afraid of putting themselves out there and seeing what they can accomplish at the varsity level."

"With a smaller group, we can spend a lot more personal time with each player so we



2017-18 Ellinwood Eagle basketball team, front row from left: Lane Klepper, Gage Hossman, Nathan Ringwald, Wyatt Standlee, Destin Baker, Blake Garman, and Kaden Ritterhouse. Back row: Nathan Monday, Kodie McFarren, Keaton Robl, Tyler Knop, Luke Wondra, Brandon Carr, Keaton Erb, and David Hammeke. (photo courtesy of EHS)

can maximize this team's potential. I am ready to see how quickly some of these guys can be quality

varsity players and consequently a solid varsity team."

Martinez could score

points in a hurry and led last year's squad at 14.3 ppg. In all, Joiner loses five of his top-six scorers who accounted for about 37 points a night.

The big returner this year is senior Nathan Monday at forward. As

a junior, Monday was second on the team with 9.9 points a night, and his 4.1 rebounds a game led the team.

"We will rely a great deal on Nathan," Joiner said. "He's gotten stronger physically this year,

and he's grown so much personally. I am excited to see his improvement. This will be the fifth year I have coached Nathan, and I will be sad when I don't get to see him all winter."

"He's a very versatile player that can play on the perimeter or inside. He's set up for an all-league player-type campaign."

Offense begins with guard play and that's where the Eagles were hit hardest as all four players with varsity experience at the position are gone. Junior Brandon Carr and sophomore Luke Wondra will take over the ball handling and back court roles.

"Both showed glimpses last year as JV players," said Joiner. "Both are working hard in practice to improve their skills."

Junior Kodie McFarren and sophomore David Hammeke are the other two likely starters, both at forward. McFarren saw varsity action in nine games last year, and Hammeke played in three contests.

"Kodie has played some varsity as role player," Joiner said. "We will need him to stay confident in his increased role on our team."

"David has some very natural length, talent and touch. He can get a little wild, but he's learning how to play controlled without losing his aggressiveness. He's one to watch as a potential breakout player."

Other players to watch for this season include sophomore Blake Garman, Lane Klepper, and Destin Baker.

With another tough go-round in the Central Prairie League, Ellinwood will have to work hard to improve upon last year's 6-16 record. The league portion of the schedule includes games against Central Plains, St. John, Otis-Bison, and Ness City - four teams ranked in the top-five of their respective classes. Tournament play could mean more games against those teams and larger schools. The Eagles will also see a ranked Plainville squad and Class 3A Haven.



Ellinwood senior Nathan Monday, seen here in last year's Keady Classic, will bring leadership and scoring ability to a relatively inexperienced Eagle squad this winter. (photo by Mike Courson)



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