

Indians adjust to new 'pods' in Wamac

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Marion Indians are members of the West Division in the Wamac Conference, but they'll play two-thirds of their boys basketball games against teams from the East Division this year.

It's a temporary arrangement as the venerable league deals with having only 15 members instead of 16. Waterloo Columbus left the Wamac after the 2012-13 school year to join the NICL, so Wamac officials decided to split the 15 remaining schools into three "pods" of five teams apiece.

Marion was placed in the same "pod" with Mount Vernon, Solon, Maquoketa and DeWitt Central and will play those teams twice apiece for eight conference games. The Indians will have single meetings with the 10 teams in the other "pods" for a total of 18 league contests.

If you break it down further, you see that Marion has only six games against teams from the old West Division and 12 games against teams from the East Division. That concerns Marion boys basketball coach Mike Manderscheid, because he has only "OK" height this season.

"The problem is, we're going to play 12 games on that other side this year, where they are bigger and more physical," he said.

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The Wamac Conference is scheduled to have 16 schools again next year when South Tama joins the league, but for now everyone will have to get used to the "pods."

Quinn Cannoy is Marion's tallest player at 6-foot-4. DeShaun Quinn, Devin Quinn and Tyler Lumbard are all 6-foot-3, so Manderscheid can put taller players on the floor if necessary. On the other hand, some of his top players are 5-foot-8 point guards.

"Guard play will be a strength," the coach said. "We could potentially play three point guards out there. The flip side is that we'd have three point guards out there."

Manderscheid will ponder the "big" versus "small" issue as the season unfolds, but he likes what he's seen overall of the Indians so far in practice.

"Our energy level has been great," he said. "The senior leadership, which is key coming in, has been great. I've been pleased. We've been pleased with how it's gone so far."

Manderscheid described his club as "Scrappy, competitive. We won't be an easy out for anybody."

The Indians broke even last year with a 12-12 club. Daly Quinn is the top returning scorer at 9.6 points per game. Cannoy (6.0 ppg), Craig Engle (4.0 ppg), Trevor Hardman (3.8 ppg) and Jeremy Schneiders (1.8 ppg) give Marion five experienced players.

"Right now, after that, it's kind of battling for spots," Manderscheid said. "Nobody has jumped out yet."

He mentioned Cody Alberts and Jacob Manderscheid as two other players who could lend a hand this season. Manderscheid is the only sophomore on the team.

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Marion will play Linn-Mar in the Metro Sports Report Classic on Saturday, Nov. 30 at 1:15 p.m. at Kirkwood Community College in a Pride Challenge event. The Indians open the regular season on Tuesday, Dec. 3 by hosting Anamosa.