

Metro boys basketball on the rebound

Written by Jim Ecker
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Boys basketball in the Metro area could be a lot better than people think this year.

We're not talking about the glory days of a few years ago when Marcus Paige, Jarrod Uthoff, Josh Oglesby, Matt Bohannon, Wes Washpun and Kasey Semler were performing for local clubs on their way to Division I colleges.

We may never reach those heights again with such a galaxy of stars all gracing Metro teams at the same time.

However, the 2013-14 campaign should be better than last season when we had a collection of clubs that flirted with the .500 mark for much of the year.

Linn-Mar finished with a 13-10 record, Jefferson went 13-11, Kennedy was 11-10, Marion was 12-12 and Xavier came home 11-12. Washington went 7-16 and Prairie was 6-17, giving the seven major schools a combined mark of just 73-78.

Cedar Valley Christian finished 14-9 record at the Class A level, which means the eight Metro teams posted an 87-87 record last season. That's the definition of nothing special.

The Xavier Saints may have the best shot of reaching the state tournament this season among Metro schools. The Saints have dropped from Class 4A to Class 3A this year and could have a very solid club.

The Washington Warriors appear to be a vastly improved team with lots of weapons and could surprise a lot of folks, especially when their younger players get some experience.

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Let's start with a preseason All-Metro team and go from there. You could put a pretty salty unit on the floor with Jacob Olson of Jefferson, Calvin Winker of Xavier, Adam McDermott of Xavier, Jordan Bohannon of Linn-Mar and Matt Nelson of Xavier in the starting lineup.

That gives you a combination of size with Nelson in the middle at 6-foot-8 and a nice blend of ballhandlers, shooters and wing players.

Olson, a clever point guard with lots of tools, gets the nod as the Preseason Player of the Year in the Metro, but he'll have lots of players sniffing at his sneakers as the season unfolds.

Notice that Xavier grabbed three spots on the All-Metro Team. That's no accident. Coach Ryan Luehrsmann has a good-looking club, especially if young point guards Connor Ramlo and Mitchell Burger continue to blossom.

The Washington Warriors did not land anyone on the preseason team, but watch out for Coach Adam Sanchez and his club this year. The Warriors have a half-dozen guys who could make their presence felt this season, with shooters like Jake Kramer and Jared Printy and a promising 6-foot-5 junior named Maurice Arrington.

Jefferson looked like it might be in trouble when Layne Sullivan decided not to play basketball this year as a senior, but Coach Stu Ordman could be fashioning a surprisingly good club with Olson complemented by Lucas Larson, Jake Van Oort, Adam Van Oort, Brandon Wiederin and Tyler Konigsmark.

The Linn-Mar Lions, always strong on fundamentals, have a deeper squad this year with a lot of athletes who can play the game. Bohannon, who started last year as a freshman, is noticeably bigger and stronger this season and has terrific bloodlines. It would be a mistake to overlook a program that has won three state titles in the past 10 years, although this group does not appear to be a title threat due to an overall lack of size.

The Kennedy Cougars are going through a makeover with new coach Jon McKowen, who wants to get out and run this season. The Cougars were a methodical group the past few years

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under Bob Fontana, but McKowen likes A.J. Carter at point guard and they could be fun to watch.

It looks like Prairie has more work to do to reach the .500 mark, but James Moses is a creative coach who will give lots of guys a chance to prove what they can do.

The Marion Indians don't have much size, but Coach Mike Manderscheid has some talented guards who can shoot and take the ball to the basket.

Cedar Valley Christian is starting over this season with a raw group of players, but Jeff Pospisil is a patient coach who will take things one step at a time.

All of the Metro teams will get into action this week after participating in the Metro Sports Report Classic on Saturday. Let the fun begin.