

Metro players enjoy new Dynasty Hoops

Written by Jim Ecker

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CORALVILLE - High school basketball players from all over Eastern Iowa got up Sunday morning and drove to a grade school in Coralville to play a game before a few dozen folks.

They were happy to do it.

First of all, this wasn't a small grade-school gym with a hopscotch pad on a slippery floor. This was a first-class basketball court at the brand new \$11.5 million Norman Borlaug Elementary School in Coralville.

Second of all, these weren't just a bunch of ordinary high school players. Some of the top players from the Mississippi Valley Conference were there, including 14 from the Metro area of Cedar Rapids and Marion.

The occasion was Opening Day in the new Dynasty Hoops Fall All-Star League, the brainchild of two former Coe College basketball players and an instant success with the players.

Why get up Sunday and drive to Coralville to play ball? That was an easy question for Metro players to answer.

"Basketball is a way of life," said Linn-Mar senior Jimmy Roth, who has accepted an offer to play at Upper Iowa University. "We play basketball whenever we can.

"It's a fun chance to play against all new teams from 1A to 4A. It's just a good time, and we're all having fun out here."

Five players from Xavier, four from Linn-Mar, four from Jefferson and one from Washington made the trip. They joined players from Iowa City West, Lisbon, Solon, Western Dubuque, Benton Community, Vinton-Shellsburg, Mount Vernon and Iowa Mennonite.

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There are 40 players on four teams. For the record, Elite Lawn Care defeated Garment Designs 87-58 in the first game and First Federal trimmed Sports Clips 70-63 in the second contest.

"Basically we came up with the idea this summer," said league co-founder Kevin Gaster, who graduated from Coe last spring and is currently a volunteer assistant at Jefferson. "I'm really surprised with what we've got so far."

Gaster's partner in the new venture is Nate Meints, a former teammate at Coe who now attends the University of Iowa.

The new league features a dozen players from Iowa City West, which won the 2012 Class 4A title and is heavily favored to repeat this season.

Here's bad news for all the other teams in the Mississippi Valley Conference: Iowa City West appears to have some talented young players in the pipeline who will be wearing a varsity uniform soon.

Ky Kramer is running for the cross country team at Jefferson this fall, and he jumped at the chance to play in the Dynasty Hoops league.

"I just have to get back in the groove of things," he said. "It's been awhile for me since I've played in a real game like this."

"This is my only off day," he said. "That's why I need to do this, because I don't get much time in the gym during the week."

Linn-Mar senior Matt Lassen has a scholarship to play Division I basketball at Albany (N.Y.), but he also liked the idea of heading to Coralville for more hoops.

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"It's just an opportunity to get better," he said. "I saw it was a high league and he (Gaster) said the best from Eastern Iowa are going to be here. So I came to the tryout and there were some good players and I decided to e-mail him and say I'm in.

"It's just an opportunity to play more basketball."

The six-week season will run through Oct. 21, when the championship game will take place.