

Young Indians think the future is now

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Marion High School girls basketball team has a bunch of talented freshmen and sophomores on the squad, but they don't want to wait until they are juniors and seniors to compete for a state title.

They think the future is now.

The Indians fashioned a 17-6 record last season with several freshmen playing prominent roles. Now they've been joined by another talented rookie class heading into the 2015-16 campaign.

Coach Corby Laube lists a total of 12 freshmen and sophomores on his 16-girl outfit and he agrees with his players: The Indians have the ingredients to become a state contender this season.

"I think our goal right now is to be at that level," he said Wednesday. "We feel like we've put in the work and we've got the players that we can compete and beat anybody.

"We've been pleasantly surprised in how it's all come together," he said. "We'll see if it translates to success on the court, but right now those kids look really good.

"I think their goal is to go to state and make a run at state this year," he remarked. "I think they see that as a realistic goal."

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Laube said he's normally "humble" and cautious in preseason remarks. He also knows there are no guarantees and that having an ultra-successful season will require some breaks and more hard work.

"Anybody can beat us," he cautioned. "We get that."

Chloe Rice, Mia Laube and Caitlyn Smith excelled as freshmen last year.

Rice averaged a team-high 12 points, 3.5 rebounds and 3.3 assists last season as a talented 5-foot-10 point guard. She already has a college scholarship offer from North Dakota and Colorado called Laube Wednesday morning to talk about her. Other Division I schools are interested as well, including the in-state clubs.

"She's another kid who has a high passion for the game," said Laube. "Chloe works on her game all the time. She absolutely loves basketball."

Rice was named third team all-state last year by the INA.

Laube, the coach's daughter, averaged 9.7 points. Smith, who excelled on the Marion volleyball team this fall, averaged 6.9 points.

Some of the top new freshmen are Randi Wright, Maddie Knapp and Sophie Willette. There are currently seven freshmen on the squad, all vying for playing time this season. Laube described many of them as "gym rats" who got an early start in basketball.

Many of the current sophomores were the same way.

"They've probably played 5,000 games since they were little, so their basketball age is probably

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a little higher," said Laube.

Laube said many of his players have successfully competed on the AAU circuit at the highest levels through the years. They've faced some of the top competition in the state and elsewhere and done very well.

"Last year what helped us, there wasn't any fear," he said. "They've beaten those kids, they've beaten those kids in AAU tournaments."

Marion lost two talented seniors when Amanda Sahm and Michalyn Mohr graduated last year. Sahm, a consummate team leader, averaged 10.4 points and was named first team all-Wamac. Mohr, one of the top rebounders in school history, averaged 8.6 points and 6 rebounds and was named second team all-conference.

Laube said replacing Sahm and Mohr will be two of the keys to this year's success.

Isabella Sade, a 6-foot-2 junior who also starred for the volleyball team this fall, is an important piece of the puzzle. Sade is thin, but deceptively strong.

"She's a lot stronger than she looks," said Laube. "She got a lot stronger from last year to this year. We're excited to see what she can do. I think she'll definitely surprise a lot of people."

Tessa Jordan, a senior, has been on the varsity since her freshman campaign and is an important part of the team. So are junior Camryn Cannoy and senior Dani Dunne.

The Indians open the season with a home game against Maquoketa on Tuesday, Dec. 1.

ROSTER

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Kenzie Redmond, 5-3, Soph
Maddie Knapp, 5-3, Frosh
Chloe Rice, 5-10, Soph
Caitlyn Smith, 5-9, Soph
Randi Wright, 6-0, Frosh
Camryn Cannoy, 5-7, Jr
Dani Dunne, 5-2, Senior
Mia Laube, 5-9, Soph
Sophie Willette, 5-11, Frosh
Elle Herold, 5-5, Soph
Sydney Nielsen, 5-7, Frosh
Miranda Beik, 5-9, Frosh
Isabella Sade, 6-2, Junior
Tessa Jordan, 5-11, Senior
Hallie Kephart, 5-9, Frosh
Olivia Draves, 5-9, Frosh