



## Little Illini Conference Preview

BY JACK BULLOCK

The run that the **Marshall Lions** made a season ago broke all the important team records.

Marshall finished third in the state in 2A with a 32-1 mark that included a 31-game winning streak.

Coach Tom Brannan got the monkey off of his back in a big way as his club put it all together in running the regular season table to win the team's third consecutive LIC title.

Although the Lions are missing two of the best players from last season (Logan and Lucas Eitel) don't look for this team to give up the crown.

Taylor Duncan - a 6-foot-3 senior guard - returns after averaging 16.2 points a game.

Three other players that Coach Brannan is counting on are Dustin Morey - a 6-foot-6 senior forward and 6-foot sophomore guards Jacob Duncan and Logan Cannady.

"I'm extremely excited about the upcoming season with good players returning with size, toughness and shooting ability," said Brannan who is 340-138 in 17-years at the school. "Taylor Duncan is the best defensive player I've ever coached."



### LITTLE ILLINI CONFERENCE

#### Projected Order of Finish

1. Marshall
2. Flora
3. Red Hill
4. Casey-Westfield
5. Hutsonville-Palestine
6. Lawrenceville
7. Cumberland
8. Edwards County
9. Oblong

**Flora** returns one of the best sophomores in the South in Paul Knapp - a 6-foot guard - who averaged 19 points a game last season for the 12-16 Wolves.

Bryton Krutsinger is a 6-foot-3 senior who tossed in 11 p.p.g. and 6-foot-5 sophomore Nick Painter added eight points a game as a freshman.

"Providing that we can stay healthy we should be much more competitive this year," said Flora head coach Phil Lieb. "We only have one senior but all the kids returning have significant varsity experience."

**Red Hill** (16-11) made its way to a Sweet 16 berth last March - losing to eventually state runner-up Woodlawn in the sectional final.

Head coach Bryan Havill (105-89) returns four starters from the team - 6-foot-3 senior Matt Wirth and 6-foot senior guard Trevor Albertson. Albertson is the leading returning scorer at 11.7 p.p.g.

Senior Eli Latch - a 6-foot-3 forward - and 6-foot-3 junior forward Robert Young.

Others that Coach Havill think will help are Dereck Brewers - a 5-foot-11 senior guard - 6-foot-4 junior Andrew Jones and 6-foot-2 junior Cameron Lewis.

The Salukis look to have a lot of depth and experience heading into 2009-10 and begins the season ranked in the ABV 1A "Top Ten" Rankings.

**Casey-Westfield** graduated a pair of good seniors in Mitch Snyder and Kirk Shawver but according to new coach Brad Carrell the ones returning are going to be a good group.

Nine letterwinners are back with eight of the players in the senior class.

Six-foot-two senior Seth Brewer was one of the players mentioned along with Kruz Kusterman - a 6-foot-2 senior.

Chris Unzicker - a 5-foot-10 senior guard, 6-foot-1 senior Josh Thais and 6-foot-4 junior Clinton Scott were part of the Warriors' football playoff team as were

Riley Scales is a senior that should see action along with seniors Kaleb Barnhart, Lucas McVey and Ryan Shull.

"With nine returning letterwinners and eight of them being seniors we should have the leadership to turn things around from last year," said Coach Carrell. "This being my first season we are looking to change the attitude and face of the basketball program and get back to competing with the areas better teams."

Coach Justin Roedl led his **Cumberland** club to a 17-11 mark last season and returns four starters; Silas Gabel (12.6 p.p.g.), Reed Draper (6.1 p.p.g.) and Jatou McMeechan (4.7 p.p.g.) from a team that lost a two-point decision to Neoga in their own regional semifinal. "We lost a lot of height so we much defend well take care of the basketball," said Coach Roedl.

**Lawrenceville** went 18-9 last season with some big wins and finishes.

The Indians topped Robinson last winter and finished third at the Pinckneyville Holiday Tournament.

Coach Jason Green has a pair of 6-foot-6 seniors back from a team that lost to East Richland in the regional semi's last February.

Dane Kelly (9.7 p.p.g.) and Nick Potts (9.0 p.p.g.) are different types of players as Kelly can step out and shoot from the perimeter while Potts is a banger.

Both are effective defenders.

After playing several games as a freshman in 2008-09 - Zach Benson - a 6-foot-1 sophomore point guard - will be asked to run the Green offense.

Six-foot-two junior Michael Leighty and 5-foot-11 senior Drew Goins should fill out the starting lineup.

"We will be as good as our guard can be because we should be very strong in the middle," said Coach Green - who played for the Indians back in the 1990's. "For us to win games Potts and Kelly will need to play strong and stay out of foul trouble."

**Hutsonville-Palestine** has a new coach taking over as former player Travis Titsworth returns home to coach the Tigers - a team that went 13-15 last season.

Six-foot-three senior Blake Calloway is the top returning player for Titsworth to work with.

Austin Callahan - a 6-foot-4 sophomore - along with sophomore guard 6-foot-1 Casey Newlin and 6-foot senior Luke Mehler are the top returning players.

**Edwards County** finished 13-16 overall last season and the Lions have four starters back from that club that lost to Cisne at the 1A Edwards County Regional. Chad Smith - a 6-foot-2 senior guard - is one of the team leaders for Edwards County as he is one of nine seniors on the roster. Five-foot-nine senior guard Michael Aaron, 6-foot-3 senior forward Nathan Winemiller and 5-foot-9 senior guard Ryan Head were all starters for head coach Nick Toothman.