



Thursday, December 03, 2009

## Indians, Salukis to face LIC foes in road outings

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Lawrence County's high school basketball teams will enter Little Illini Conference play Friday, as both face games against teams that have been traditionally hard to beat.

Lawrenceville will take its 1-3 record to Marshall, to face the Lions, who have yet to play. Red Hill, in the meantime, will put a 2-1 mark on the line when it travels to Flora (3-2).

Lawrenceville (1-3)

at Marshall (0-0)

The Indians have already been tested, having won one of three games at last weekend's Basketball Capital Classic, before dropping a 61-55 decision to Paris on Tuesday. Marshall, on the other hand, will be making its debut. The Lions were unable to defend their Basketball Capital Classic championship, due to the success of their football team, which reached the Class 2A semifinals before falling to Maroa-Forsyth, 31-14.

Although the Lions have had two weeks to get ready, they're still not going to be at full strength. Taylor Duncan, a 6-4 senior and a standout on last year's team that placed third in the Class 2A state tournament, will miss the game with a slight tear in his medial collateral ligament. Duncan, the Marshall quarterback who will play football at Eastern Illinois, is expected to return when the Lions play Flora on Dec. 12.

"Taylor's OK," Marshall coach Tom Brannan said. "He's practiced with us, and he's getting better. I just think it's best to put him on hold. I'd rather have him playing in March than in December."

"I heard he'd been injured," LHS coach Jason Green said. "I think he's one of the best players around. It's a huge break for us."

The Lions will still put a quality lineup on the court. Dustin Morey, a 6-6 senior, was a full-time starter for last year's team that finished 33-1. Jake Tucker, a 6-2 senior, and 6-0 sophomores Logan Cannady and Jacob Duncan also gained plenty of experience last season. The fifth starter is another 6-0 sophomore, Jordan Grooms. All but Tucker were members of the Marshall football team, and have been practicing for only a couple of weeks.

"We're definitely curious to see where we are in terms of not only skill, but also conditioning," Brannan said. "I think we play hard, and we take a lot of pride in that. When you play with that intensity, and you play an uptempo game, if you're not in shape, you tend to make mistakes."

The LHS lineup includes 6-6 seniors Dane Kelly (13.5 ppg) and Nick Potts (13.5 ppg), 5-11 senior Drew Goins (4.8 ppg), 6-2 junior Michael Leighty (9.5 ppg) and 6-1 sophomore Zach Benson (7.3 ppg).

"We expect to see a lot of pressure, and a lot of trapping," Green said. "We'll have to take care of the ball. That's something we've not done exceptionally well so far."

Game notes: Friday's game will be broadcast on Marshall radio station WMMC, 105.9 FM ... Marshall defeated the Indians three times last season, by scores of 82-53 in the Capital Classic, 75-48 in a regular season game and 68-36 in the Little Illini Conference Tournament ... Green has a record of 24-35 in his third season at LHS, while Brannan is 341-148 as he begins his 18th season at Marshall. Brannan's only losing season was when the Lions were 10-15 in 1993, his first year at the helm.

Red Hill (2-1)

at Flora (3-2)

It's the first conference game for both teams, but it could have a big outcome on the final standings.

"Sometimes this game is kind of insignificant in the conference standings," Flora coach Phil Leib said. "But that's an

exception this year. You have two viable teams that could be fighting for the conference championship, and here it is, the first conference game of the year."

"This is a really important game, when you're talking about the LIC race," agreed Red Hill coach Bryan Havill. "Winning this game could go a long way toward helping one team or the other out quite a bit."

The Wolves enter on a three-game winning streak. They lost to Charleston (67-56) and Breese Central (50-39) in Thanksgiving tournament play at Effingham St. Anthony, then downed Mattoon (71-47) and Vandalia (49-33). On Tuesday, the topped Mount Carmel, 51-47.

Red Hill brings a 2-1 mark into the fray, after playing in the Basketball Capital Classic last weekend.

The Salukis will go with a lineup that includes 6-3 senior Matt Wirth (12.3 ppg), 6-0 senior Trevor Albertson (16.0 ppg), 6-2 junior Cameron Lewis (5.0 ppg) and 5-11 senior Dereck Brewer (7.0 ppg). The fifth starter will be either 6-2 junior Robert Young (6.3 ppg), who is still slowed by a pulled muscle, or 6-3 senior Eli Latch (0.0 ppg).

Flora's main weapon is 6-0 sophomore Paul Knapp, who is averaging about 20 points a game. Other probable starters are 6-5 sophomore Nick Painter (11 ppg), 6-3 senior Bryton Krutsinger (9 ppg), 6-3 junior Kole Greenwood and 5-11 junior Austin Lewis.

"I think they're somewhat similar to Dieterich, as far having the ability to shoot well," said LHS coach Bryan Havill, whose team needed overtime to beat Dieterich, 68-60, in the third-place game at the Capital Classic. "But they have a lot more size. It'll take a great effort for us to win."

Game notes: Friday's game will be broadcast on Lawrenceville radio station WAKO, 103.1 FM ... The Wolves and Salukis split a pair of games last season. Red Hill won in the regular season, 57-41. Flora turned the tables with a 56-53 win in the Little Illini Conference Tournament ... Havill is 92-76 in his seventh season at Red Hill. Leib is 141-140 in his 10th season coaching the Wolves, including a trip to the Elite Eight in 2005.