



Friday, November 20, 2009

Physical Indians vow not to be pushed around

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LAWRENCEVILLE - Armed with an abundance of bulk, third-year Lawrenceville High School basketball coach Jason Green vows that if nothing else this season, this year's Indians won't be pushed around.

"We're going to be physical, maybe more physical than we ever have before," said Green, who enters his third year at the helm with a 23-31 mark. "I think we'll go as far as that physicalness takes us."

Leading the way are a pair of 6-6 seniors, Dane Kelly and Nick Potts, who return to the starting lineup from a team that finished 18-9 last season. Another 6-6 senior, Aaron McCullough, will be waiting in the wings.

Kelly, who weighs 185 pounds, averaged 9.7 points a game last season and worked hard to improve in the off-season.

"Dane's worked on his guard play," said Green, a former Lawrenceville player "We think he can step out and shoot from the outside now."

Potts, who tips the scales at 260, returns after scoring 9.0 points a game and leading the team in rebounds.

"If we can get him the ball, it'll be hard to stop him," Green said. "There aren't a lot of people his size around to battle him."

If that's not enough, muscular sophomore Zach Benson (6-1, 220) will be the Indians' point guard, after seeing action in 18 games last season. Other probable starters are 6-2 junior Michael Leighty, who averaged 1.7 points a game coming off the bench a year ago, and 5-11 senior Drew Goins, a "gym rat" who played in eight games last season.

Depth and experience are a concern for the Indians, who open the season a week from today in the annual Basketball Capital Classic. Aside from McCullough, who played in 15 games last season, the only other seniors on the roster are imports from the cross country team, 5-8 Eric McClure and 5-6 Evan Shuff.

"McClure's surprised us," Green said. "We didn't know what he had, after missing two years. He's a hard-nosed kid who's not afraid to mix it up and we're counting on him for depth. Shuff should help, too. He's quick, can handle the ball, and shoots well from the outside."

Sophomores Eli Horner, 5-9, and Logan Cummins, 6-3, round out the varsity roster but will also see duty on the junior varsity squad.

"We have a lot of talent at the freshman-sophomore level, players who have good ability," Green said. "We're waiting for some of those guys to separate themselves in order to get an opportunity."

The obvious concern is ball-handling.

"We don't have anyone experienced to take care of the ball," Green said. "We're going to count on some younger guys. They've got to grow up fast, but I'm sure they can do the job."

Another concern is the team's intensity level.

"We have to play hard for four quarters," Green said. "It's been good early. We've had some of the best early-season practices I've ever had as a coach. Once the games start, we have to go as hard as we can, from start to finish, in every game."

Green says that even when the Indians lose, he wants the team to go down fighting.

"Last year when we lost, it seemed like we always lost by 30," he said. "This year, even against the upper-tier teams, I'd like for us to be in the game until the end. That's something we need to shoot for, from here on out."

The Indians will begin the Capital Classic a week from today, with an 11 a.m. game against Robinson.

LHS schedule

Nov. 27-28 CAPITAL CLASSIC

Dec. 1 PARIS, 6:15

Dec. 4 Marshall, 6:15

Dec. 8 Casey, 6:15

Dec. 11 EDWARDS CO., 6:15

Dec. 19 Washington Catholic, Ind., 5

Dec. 28-29 Pinckneyville Tourney

Jan. 5 Red Hill, 6:15

Jan. 8 CUMBERLAND, 6:15

Jan. 11 CASEY, 6:15

Jan. 12 CARMi, 6:15

Jan. 15 HUTSONVILLE, 6:15

Jan. 19 Flora, 6:15

Jan. 23-29 LIC Tourney

Feb. 2 MOUNT CARMEL, 6:15

Feb. 9 RED HILL, 6:15

Feb. 12 Mount Carmel, 6:15

Feb. 16 Oblong, 6:15

Feb. 19 FLORA, 6:15

HOME GAMES IN CAPS