

Harrisburg looks for EHT Trifecta

Gallatin County, Meridian, Union County (KY.) are the other favorites

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BY JACK BULLOCK

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Pat Riley of the Los Angeles Lakers coined the term “three-peat” in hoping that his Lakers, back in 1988, would win a third consecutive NBA crown. ABV won't use the phrase here, but the **Harrisburg Bulldogs** will capture their third-straight Eldorado Holiday Tournament championship if they can win four-consecutive games on December 27-29.

This dogs have chewed up 10-0 straight opponents in 2012-13, including an sensational win 78-55 win over Calloway County (KY.) and an even more impressive 62-53 win over 3A Alton Marquette Catholic at the SIU Saluki Shootout back on December 8.

This program has a trio of veteran players leading the way with Tyler Smithpeters, a 6-foot-4 senior guard (18.5 p.p.g.) and 6-foot-3 senior Capel Henshaw (14.2 p.p.g.) boasting as strong of a backcourt as any in the state in 2A. Eli Taborn-Scott is a 6-foot-4 junior forward who tosses in 11-points a night.

Gallatin County (9-1) was one of Harrisburg's victims, 57-42, back on November 26 at the Harrisburg Invitational Tournament. The Hawks are led by 7-foot senior center Andrew Drone.

This Division I signee, having agreed to attend Rice University, is racking up a lot of statistical basketball data. Drone is averaging a “mind boggling” 32.7 points a game to go with 15.0 rebounds. He is just 40-points away from 2,000-points in his career, sitting at 1,960 heading into the tournament.

Patrick Lowe, a 6-foot-6 senior forward, has netted 11.1 points a night for Coach Robert “Radar” Patton while being the second leading rebounder wearing Orange and Blue, grabbing 8.4 a contest. Senior guard Daine Hish, a 5-foot-10 lefty, is added 12 points a night for the Hawks, who have a signature win, 60-59, over highly regarded Goreville at the SIU Shootout.

The third seed is **Meridian**, champions of the Vienna Thanksgiving event known as “The Classic,” are sitting at 11-1 with the Bobcats only defeat coming in a lopsided fashion at Missouri small school powerhouse Charleston back on December 11. Coach Jeff Mandrell's program has had a long run of success in southern Illinois.

The Bobcats also have a high-octane offense featuring 6-foot-4 senior Joshua Jones. Jones is pacing the Meridian attack with 23.9 points a game. Michael Schoffner is a junior guard tossing in 13.7 p.p.g. for Meridian while teammate Khor Powell, a sophomore guard, is adding 11.8 p.p.g. David Davis, another young gun (sophomore) is chipping home nine a game for Coach Mandrell's team that is scorching the opposition at 84.2 points a night. A big win for the Cats came on November 24 when they outlasted Massac County, 93-84, in overtime in the title game at Vienna.

The newcomer to the field is **Union County (KY.)** who takes the place of Pope County this season and sports a 7-3 mark heading to Little Egypt. The Braves are part of what is Region 2 in Kentucky sports and their two losses are to Evansville (IN.) Day School, 48-34, Muhlenberg County (KY.), 65-63, and Carlisle County (KY.), 50-47.

Coach Mike Hensley's team has nearly as many wins this season (7) as they had all of last season (10-19) and the Braves appear to be a challenger for the EHT title. Khilan Davis is a 6-foot-3 senior who started last season for the Braves, as did 6-foot-1 senior Myron Ricketson. Others in the lineup include 5-foot-5 senior guard Ali Cruse, 6-foot junior Jashaud Fleming and Zach Chaykowsky, a 6-foot-1 junior.

Massac County (7-3) has always played well in this long running classic and Coach Joe Hosman will bring another quality Patriots' crew into the EHT this week.

Dalton Mitchell, a 6-foot junior guard, is leading the Pats with 18 p.p.g. Ethan Schulte, a 6-foot-6 senior, is averaging nine points and nine rebounds for Coach Hosman. Five-foot-ten senior Dazmeon Nickerson adds 11-points to the totals each night on average. The Patriots are coming off of a 47-37 win over Murphysboro on December 21.

Herrin is the sixth seed in the event but the Tigers and the tough schedule they tackle each season will have them ready for this event. Coach Irv Lukens' team has finished second two years running at the EHT and

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they wouldn't be out of the question for another trip to the final. Coach Lukens' son, 5-foot-11 senior guard Justin Lukens, runs the show for Herrin and is averaging 15.0 points a game. Austin Butler, a 6-foot-1 senior, is averaging 5.8 points and 5.5 rebounds a contest for Herrin. Six-foot-one senior Jerral Pirtle, is second on the club with 7.8 points a game. Those Tigers have wins over Pinckneyville, Salem and West Frankfort and have a loss to Harrisburg heading into the tournament.

Eldorado (4-7) is the seventh seeded club and Coach TJ Zurliene's club will need a big effort this week. Tyler Deaton (15.4 p.p.g.) and Joel Boulds (14 p.p.g.) key any chance that the hosts will make it to the final day of the event. Dillon Street averages nine points a game for Eldorado.

Fairfield (6-4) is the eighth seed and Coach Scott McElravy and his program have had some success in this event. The Mules have lost games to Teutopolis, Olney East Richland, Harrisburg and Eldorado and are led in scoring and rebounding by Nathaniel Lackey, a 6-foot-6 sophomore, who is tossing in 15.7 points a game and grabs 6.9 rebounds. Joe Rodgers and Bo Fry are both netting over eight points a contest for Fairfield, who will open the tournament with a game against **West Frankfort**.

The Redbirds were just 2-51 the last two seasons but already have that many wins in 2012-13. Coach Dan DeWerff and his club have topped Eldorado and Carmi-White County. Trenton Easley, a 5-foot-8 senior guard, with 10.3 points a game leads the Birds. Five-foot-ten Braxton Koehl and 6-foot-3 Christian Dunning are sophomores who are both averaging 9.3 p.p.g.

Anna-Jonesboro (1-8) has struggled finding a way to win games, with just a victory over Cobden to show so far this season. Coach Mike Chamness (an AJ alum who played on the runner up team at Eldorado in 2003) has a good sophomore who is developing into a solid backcourt specialist. Noah Fuller is a 6-foot-1 second-year player for the Wildcats and he is leading the squad with 9.8 p.p.g. Tyler Vaughn and Ben McFarland are at 8.5 and 8.3 points a game respectively.

Hamilton County (4-5) have Carmi-White County (2), Vienna and Eldorado on the win list. Coach Keith Welch has four players all averaging good totals in points heading into the EHT. Leive Lueke is a 6-foot-1 senior (9.7 p.p.g.) who leads the group. Also juniors Logan Billington (7.0 p.p.g.) and Balee Gay (6.4 p.p.g.) are helping out as is 6-foot-5 senior Garrett Biggerstaff (5.9 p.p.g.).

Carmi-White County (2-7) are lead by three juniors with 6-foot-1 forward Andy Vaughan, 5-foot-9 Brodie Brown and 6-foot-5 Jamey Steed. All are averaging nine points a game while Vaughan leads the team with five rebounds each try.

Norris City-Omaha-Enfield has a new coach who is getting acquainted with all the nuances of southern Illinois hoops. Bryon Graven (Auburn, Illinois) is the head coach for the Fighting Cards and his team is playing hard and have six early wins to show for it. Dakota Wheeler is averaging a team-leading 11.9 points a game while he is getting help from Dylan Martin (11.7 p.p.g.), Cole Tucker (9.5 p.p.g.) and Blake Karns (8.2 p.p.g.). Martin is grabbing 6.7 rebounds for the Cards (6-5).

Carrier Mills (3-8) is in a rebuilding mode and have struggled this season. But the Wildcats have played some good teams tough, dropping tough games to Century, Sesser-Valier and Vienna by a combined seven points. Coach Mark Motsinger has Cameron Taborn, a 6-foot-2 senior, and 5-foot-10 senior Josh Bailey who have carried the Carrier Mills scoring load along with 5-foot-9 sophomore Slayden Figg. Bailey is averaging 12 points a game, while Taborn and Figg are adding 10 each to the mix.

Hardin County (2-9) and head coach Rodney Lane have wins over Elverado and Joppa. BJ Austin, a 6-foot sophomore, leads the Cougars with 15 p.p.g. Jeremy Hicks (12 p.p.g.) and Colton Winters (11 p.p.g.) also help with the scoring.

Galatia has just a lone win (1-8) over the Grayville JV at the Grayville Thanksgiving Tournament. Coach Kendall Hankins has 5-foot-8 junior Bodie Beckman and 5-foot-7 junior Zane Stanley each averaging right at 14 p.p.g.

Jack Bullock is the editor/web publisher of **A Baseline View.com**. Southern Illinois' Only Boy's High School Basketball Web Publication providing Previews, Rankings, Schedules, Scores, Standings and Tournament Information for over 100-teams.