

# Harrisburg eyes SIU trip as Peoria mission continues

Chester, Nashville, Mt. Carmel will need supreme efforts

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BY JACK BULLOCK

EDITOR/WEB PUBLISHER

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WEST FRANKFORT - The **Harrisburg Bulldogs** look much the best in heading into the West Frankfort 2A Sectional this week.

Coach Randy Smithpeters' club has gotten the job done on both ends of the court this season, a major difference in the past two seasons in which the Bulldogs banked on their high-scoring offensive prowess to beat teams with an onslaught of points.

The 2012-13 version of Harrisburg hoops is keyed on the defensive end of the floor as they have outgunned and shut down teams this season on an average of 71-44 and are sitting at 28-1 with a lone loss to Dyer County (TN.) 76-68 back on January 11 at a shootout in Tennessee.

Six-foot-four senior Tyler Smithpeters leads a balanced scoring attack with 16-points a game, just in front of 6-foot-3 classmate Capel Henshaw who adds 15 a night.

Those two senior guards have been around the gym a few times over the years, having been part of an eighth grade undefeated championship team in southern Illinois and have put together a great run, making it all the way to the supersectional last season where they lost to eventual state-champs Breese Central, 39-30.

Learning that they needed to get better defensively, the Bulldogs have "dawged" teams by forcing turnovers and picking up transition points.

In a 77-46 win Friday night over Benton to win the Eldorado 2A Regional title, the Bulldogs started the game by forcing five consecutive turnovers and led 24-1 before cruising to the title.

Eli Taborn-Scott is the key in the middle for the Bulldogs, this 6-foot-4 junior adds 10-points to the winning formula.

Ryne Roper, a 6-foot-3 senior, is another of the guards that Coach Smithpeters has turned loose on teams this season.

As a team Harrisburg is bombing away at 40 percent from behind the 3-point arc.

The fifth starter helps in the middle, 6-foot-6 senior Dakota Upchurch keeps opponents honest in the paint on the defensive end.

Harrisburg has a good crew coming off the bench, including 6-foot-4 sophomore Bahari Amaya and 6-foot-2 junior Snjofur Bjornsson, a foreign exchange student.

Justin Younger, a 6-foot guard also adds minutes as does Caleb Bartok, a 5-foot-10 senior. Harrisburg won all three of its tournaments and are heavy favorites to get to SIU Arena.

The team with the first shot at the defending sectional champs is **Chester**, led by Coach Brad Norman.

His Yellow Jackets became the first team in the school's boy's basketball history to post a 20-win season.

Chester took off on a big scoring run to finish off rival Trico to win the Murphysboro Regional title last Friday night, its first boy's regional title since 1975.

Jake Lochhead, a 6-foot-2 junior guard, is averaging 13.0 points a game for Chester, who finished second in the Black Diamond Conference and 21-8 so far overall.

Chris Schwartz has averaged 13.7 points a game. Schwartz is a 6-foot-2 senior.

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Kyle Landon, a 6-foot-6 forward, tosses in 9.2 p.p.g. while Caleb Arbeiter is right at 8.5 points per outing.

Link Cushman, a 6-foot senior, adds 7.1 p.p.g.

**Nashville** is from the opposite side of the River-to-River Conference from Harrisburg in the Mississippi Division as Coach Brad Weathers' team finished the regular season as league champs and are 23-7 after a decisive 59-44 win over rival Pinckneyville to win the Sparta Regional title.

Not many teams at the varsity level are led in scoring by a freshman but the Hornets have a good one in 6-foot-6 forward Royce Newman.

Royce has helped Nashville "roll" into the sectional by netting 11.8 points a game while grabbing 3.3 rebounds.

Nashville, as usual, are balanced on offense with 6-foot-2 senior guard Scott Brown tossing in 9.3 points a night.

Chance Rueter, a 6-foot senior guard, has added some scoring with 8.5 rebounds while Keegan Anderson, a 6-foot junior guard, is at 6.2 p.p.g.

Devin Holle, at 6-foot-6 and a senior, adds size and experience in the paint (5.9 p.p.g.).

Nashville won the consolation title of their own tournament and, after stumbling in their final regular season game against Du Quoin, they topped those same Indians and the Panthers to sweep Perry County out of the postseason for the program's 15<sup>th</sup> regional title in boy's basketball.

The Mount Carmel Golden Aces slipped past Flora to win the Hamilton County Regional championship on Friday night, 51-49.

Coach Tyler Buss has led his team to a very misleading 14-14 record. Considering that they play in one of the top Indiana High School Basketball Conferences (the Big 8) the slate of games got them ready for a regional that they won after wins over Fairfield and the top-seeded Wolves.

**Mount Carmel** is 9-3 versus Illinois teams and they are led by 6-foot-3 junior guard Reece Metcalf (16.6 p.p.g.) and 6-foot sophomore guard Levi Laws (16.5 p.p.g.).

Laws has been a point-guard extraordinaire, dishing out a mind-popping 7.1 assists a game for the Aces while grabbing 6.2 rebounds.

Metcalf has been good around the glass, ripping home 8.1 rebounds a game.

Six-foot-three junior Riley Raber adds some size and points (7.4 points, 3.7 rebounds) while C.J. Diel, a 6-foot-5 junior, is averaging 5.8 and 3.2 points and rebounds.

Five-foot-eleven junior guard Thomas Allen adds 3.3 points a game for Mount Carmel, a young team that could be a big postseason threat next season and can start their run with a big showing at West Frankfort this week.

### **ABV Projected Champion – Harrisburg.**

*Jack Bullock is the Editor/Web Publisher of A Baseline View.com. For the past 15-seasons, ABV has covered boy's high school basketball in southern Illinois. Previews, Rankings, Scores, Standings, Tournament Brackets and Game Stories for over 100-teams.*