

Flora, Vandalia top seeded at Vandalia Holiday Tournament

Pana, Wesclin, St. Elmo, Altamont look to challenge for title

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VANDALIA – The 40th annual Vandalia Holiday Tournament has some outstanding teams who all appear capable of a four day run to the championship.

The **Flora Wolves** enter the tourney on a roll with a 10-1 mark which includes some quality wins over Marshall, Oblong, Red Hill and Mount Carmel in regular scheduled games along with tournament wins over Belleville Althoff, Charleston and Mattoon.

The Wolves lone loss was to Breese Central, the ABV 2A preseason number one squad, in the title game of the St. Anthony Thanksgiving Tournament.

Coach Phil Leib's club is led by a scoring duo who are capable of leading this Little Illini Conference team back into the title picture.

Six-foot-one senior guard Paul Knapp is a four year starter for Flora and averages 18.9 points a night. Knapp is on pace to break the school's all-time career scoring mark held by Tim Locum.

Knapp stands at 1,750 points and is within 324 points of Locum's mark (2,074).

The other member of this pair is 6-foot-5 senior Nick Painter who averages 16.1 points a night while leading the way with 6.5 rebounds per outing.

One can do damage from the outside (Knapp has hit 32 3's heading into the tournament) while the other can control the paint (Painter is hitting 57 percent of his 2-point attempts).

Ethan Leib (9.0 p.p.g.) and Christian Taylor (8.3 p.p.g.) can keep the opposition honest along with Dexter Burgess, who has chipped home 3.9 points a night.

After a great start of the season the host **Vandalia Vandals** have hit a rough patch in the road, dropping recent games to Carlyle and Hillsboro to fall to 8-2.

Coach Kevin Jackson witnessed his club winning all four games (Cairo, Waltonville, Du Quoin, Benton) to capture the Du Quoin Tip-Off Classic in an early season event.

They also have triumphs over South Central, Greenville, Litchfield and East Alton-Wood River.

The Carlyle loss was an overtime defeat 82-75 while Hillsboro downed the Vandals 71-65.

The Vandals guards are veterans with Dathan Berning, a 6-foot-1 senior guard, leading the way along with point guard Tim Ritchey, a 5-foot-9 senior.

Leyton Godoyo is also in the mix as is Bryan Hosick, a 6-foot-1 senior forward and 6-foot-1 Quenten Austin.

The Pana Panthers and head coach Gary Bowker enter the tournament as the only unbeaten club. The Panthers are 7-0 this season with a good collection of wins.

Roxana, Nokomis and Central A&M are the best of those wins.

The Panthers have two scorers hitting double-figures with 6-foot-3 senior Jared McMillen and 6-foot-4 Mitchell Beyers.

McMillen tops the list with 14.9 points a game while Beyers nets 11 per contest.

Allen Kile has also contributed with 8.9 p.p.g. while Garrett Claxon and Avery Hrabak are both chipping in about six per outing.

The defending tournament champs the **Wesclin Warriors** have enough coming into the tournament to make another title run.

Head coach Andrew Wilson has had his team on the floor with two of the top teams in the south this season.

Marquette Catholic and Breese Central have both beaten the 4-4 Warriors.

But this tough schedule of games will eventually help this club get better.

Coach Wilson has been led by 6-foot-2 senior Alex Wilken and 6-foot-4 sophomore Michael Klein.

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Wilken averages 13.2 points a game for the Warriors while Klein adds 11.2 to the stat sheet. Brady Kunz, a 6-foot-4 sophomore, also is productive, chipping in 9.5 points a game.

Alex Sopiers is a 6-foot-2 senior averaging eight points a game for Coach Wilson while Eric Deterding, 6-foot senior, tosses in 7.3 points a game.

The Warriors wins have come against Nashville, Freeburg and Lebanon at the Lebanon Thanksgiving Tournament and one other win against Columbia.

None of those four teams have a winning record as of the tournaments' beginning.

St. Elmo is the fifth seed and the Eagles have just a loss to Effingham St. Anthony on their 6-1 record after winning three consecutive games to capture its own Holiday Tournament on December 17.

Coach Greg Feezel has a veteran group led by Blake Pruett, a 6-foot-2 senior forward, who helped carry the Eagles to a 56-46 title game win over Altamont.

Other seniors on the squad include Jake Mansker, a 5-foot-9 senior guard, and 6-foot-2 senior forward Ben Sperry.

Connor Beasley, a 6-foot-4 junior, is another of the St. Elmo players capable of scoring a lot of points.

Five-foot-ten senior guard Blaine Scholes, 5-foot-11 Patrick Schaal and 5-foot-9 sophomore Lee Maxey have all contributed.

After a long run into the football playoffs, the **Greenville Comets** are just now getting into basketball mode.

Coach Todd Cantrill has his club at 4-4 with some rugged losses to Marquette Catholic, Vandalia and Carlyle.

Bookend senior guards Dylan Bone (13.6 p.p.g.) and Brad Perry are both 5-foot-10.

Brady Huber, a 6-foot-3 senior forward, and 5-foot-7 Dannon Young (13 p.p.g.) lead the club.

The Comets have wins over Dupon, Mascoutah, Hillsboro and Metro-East Lutheran.

The **Altamont Indians** opened the season with six consecutive wins before falling to St. Elmo in the title game of the St. Elmo Holiday Tournament.

Coach Doug Hill will have the Tribe ready for the VHT.

After losing all five starters from last season, the Indians didn't miss a beat as they rattled off six wins in succession to open 2011-12. Four seniors have led this club.

Cody Drone, a 6-foot-1 forward, 6-foot-3 senior center Jason Hooks, 6-foot guard Dustin Gordon and 5-foot-11 Mitch Wolff have all played a role in the fast start.

Stewardson-Strasburg will enter the tournament with a 6-1 mark with just one loss to highly-regarded Dieterich and wins over Windsor (2), Arcola, Shelbyville, Arthur, Okaw Valley.

Coach Shane Smith has Zach Rincker, a 5-foot-11 senior play maker, who has helped lead the Comets to some early season success along with Nick Ferris is a 6-foot senior guard.

Justin Fulk, a 6-foot-3 junior, and 6-foot-4 senior Austin Carson also have been helping out.

The **Shelbyville Rams** have three players that average double figures in Nate Standerfer (11 p.p.g.), 6-8 Brody Bence (10.9 p.p.g.) and Darin Breeden (10.3 p.p.g.) and have a recent win over Monticello.

South Central is just 2-7 on the season with wins over Odin and Ramsey. However the Cougars played St. Elmo tough in an early season double-overtime loss. Fisher Tharp, a 6-foot junior, is the top scoring threat.

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