

Hawks open tonight: Carrollton once again loaded with talent for boys basketball season

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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CARROLLTON - Football in Carrollton is what a lot of folks have been raving about for the past four seasons because the **Carrollton Hawks** have had undefeated or one loss regular seasons and then make deep postseason runs.

That's all great and most everybody in Hawk country enjoys the football teams success, but for the basketball only players and coaches, they'd like to start practice with a full squad as soon as possible.

"We started last Wednesday (Nov. 18)," **Carrollton head basketball coach Jeff Krumwiede** said. "We had everyone in the stable and the non-football players were in on the (November) ninth. We should be much more prepared than last year."

The Hawks have had five practices and will have three more in by the time they open their regular season at 7:15 p.m. on Tuesday against the **Piasa Southwestern Birds** at Piasa.

That's a considerable upgrade from last year at this time when they only had completed one full team practice because the football team, who had several key basketball players, made it all the way to the state championship game on a Friday and then had to play Southwestern the following Tuesday.

"I think we can get everything that we need to get in," Krumwiede said. "That's what makes summer basketball so important these days is the fact that you hit the ground the running because of all the things as far as the role descriptions for kids and the replacement of the kids that graduated."

Carrollton took their summer basketball campaign very seriously in terms of their record as they went 22-2 over a span of a month.

It will also be difficult to replace three special seniors that guided the Hawks to a 27-5 season last year in Luke Palan, Cody Leonard, and Jacob Smith.

Palan accumulated over 1,000 points in his career and was one of the best pure point guards in school history.

Leonard, also a 1,000-point scorer was a small, but talented forward with exceptional jumping and rebounding ability.

Smith was a role player with great leadership and scoring ability.

"I can't say enough of those three seniors that graduated and it's going to be difficult to replace those guys," Krumwiede said.

With all of that being said if there was one word to describe this season's Carrollton Hawks team then it would be the word loaded.

Krumwiede brings back a couple of familiar faces in Cole Brannan, a four-year starter, and sharpshooting Luke Gillingham.

The Hawks return their entire bench including key reserves and an undefeated JV team that are all looking to step up to another level.

“I really feel good about our opportunities,” Krumwiede said. “We truly will go ten, 12 deep and maybe a little deeper at times. I’m excited about that and I hope the guys are.”

Brannan (5’7”, 160 lbs) was recently nominated to the IHSA Class 1A First Team All-State list for his impressive display on the gridiron and looks to transform his skill set and tenacity onto the court, which he’s done well for four years.

Last season, Gillingham (5’7”, 150 lbs.) was the leading scorer last season, despite missing five games due to an ankle injury.

He is a hostile threat beyond the arc, which teams respect and will make sure to close him down.

Gillingham is not bashful at attacking the rim as well, despite his height and dishing the ball at the same time.

“He’s got the ability to do a lot of different things offensively,” Krumwiede said. “Trying to take advantage of his shooting ability will be something we’ll do offensively. He’s a nice and all-around player which is why he’s a three-year letterman.”

Gillingham enters the season with 863 career points, 137 away from 1,000.

Jerrett Smith (5’11”, 180 lbs.) has grown two inches since the season ended in March and added a lot of muscle to his body thanks to his offseason day-to-day dedication in preparation for the football season.

He will mainly play as a forward, but is very capable of playing as a guard.

Smith has the capability of snagging an immense amount of rebounds with his strength and impressive leaping ability.

He and Brannan add an abundant amount of speed and aggression.

“They both bring different things to the table that help us both offensively and defensively,” Krumwiede said.

Jeremy Watson (5'11", 160 lbs.) was the leading scorer on JV last season and is a strong contender to earn a spot in the starting five with scoring ability and range.

Krumwiede believes that the Hawks could have a different leading scorer on any night with the good balance of depth the team has.

"There's going to be a lot more sharing that maybe some people are used to, but if they buy into that then we can really be affective," Krumwiede said.

Carrollton has an embarrassment of riches with players ranging from 5'9" to 5'11" that are scrappy, fast, and can knock down open shots.

"As far as fatigue is concerned that shouldn't be a factor," Krumwiede said.

Brody Howard (5'9", 165 lbs.), Tyler Frye (5'11", 140 lbs.), Phillip Walker (5'10", 140 lbs.), and Logan Kaiser (5'9", 165 lbs.) are all seniors that will bring energy off the bench and have the ability to make impacts.

Juniors Brendan Settles (5'11", 150 lbs.) and Jayce Arnett (5'9", 130 lbs.) will add to the Hawks array of depth. Settles and Arnett both have good shooting ability to go with their quickness.

"As far as being interchangeable with a lot of lineups, being difficult to prepare for, and all those things our depth should really give us some advantages," Krumwiede said.

Krumwiede has usually gotten the short end of the stick when it comes to overall height, but its safe to he say he gotten a piece of the bigger side this season.

He welcomes back forward Levi Hinderhan (6'2", 180 lbs.) who started in a handful of games the year prior.

Hinderhan has grown an inch and added strength in the off-season.

He'll be posting up quite a bit in the paint, but won't be afraid to show off his mid and long-range game if given the opportunity.

Chase McAdams is undoubtedly one of the tallest basketball players around as he's listed at 6'9" and 250 lbs.

McAdams played sporadically last season, but will most likely contribute more often this season.

“McAdams provides something that nobody else can,” Krumwiede said. “He’s lost a lot of weight, he’s gotten himself in better physical shape this year to run the floor and do things defensively.”

Two other juniors, Jacob Stendebach (6’4”, 190 lbs.) and Matthew Campbell (6’1”, 230 lbs.) will be added to the post presence mix.

A new, exciting part of the Hawks season is that they will be playing in the historic Waverly Holiday Tournament as one of the newer additions to the 16-team tournament.

“It’s going to be good for our fans to see something different and a lot of teams from the north and east that we normally won’t ever go against,” Krumwiede said.

The first half of the Hawks season will be difficult with being on the road for the whole month of December and then playing in the Winchester and Beardstown Tournaments.

The WIVC is no cakewalk either with Calhoun, Greenfield, and West Central looming large, but Carrollton will have a target on their backs because of their talent and tradition.

Then when the playoffs come rolling in the Hawks may possibly go through the likes of Okawville, Metro East-Lutheran, Madison, and Gibault Catholic.

“It’s going to be a very difficult road from our area to get through, but I think realistically they should have an opportunity,” Krumwiede said. “On a given night we can compete with all those guys. When postseason comes around I think we’ll be a tough out for anybody.”

The Hawks biggest advantage going into every game will be their ability to being hard to prepare for because of their vast array of players that will get a lot of minutes and their ability to make an impact.

Carrollton has eight seniors and seven juniors, which is a wealth of leadership and experience.

“It’s going to be a cornucopia of kids that we can pick from and show different lineups and different options,” Krumwiede said. “It’s going to be interesting as a coaching staff to make sure that we find the right one on a given night against a given opponent.”