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HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS' BASKETBALL PREVIEW: TRI-VALLEY LEAGUE

East Juniata, Newport early TVL favorites

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EAST JUNIATA Tigers

Coach: Travis Quici. 2007-08 record: 26-3 (15-1 league champion).

Top returnees: Megan Shipe (5-9 sr G), Steph Yetter (5-10 sr F), Marah Leister (5-7 sr G-F).

The big picture: Still a force as the defending league champions with its two best players, Shipe and Yetter, in the fold. Shipe was the TVL Player of the Year last season. Combined, that duo averaged nearly 30 points a night. The Tigers did lose a pair of sharpshooters who combined for more than 100 treys last season. Needs a third scorer to step up and takes some of the heat off.

GREENWOOD Wildcats

Coach: T.J. Weller. 2007-08 record: 4-18 (2-14 league).

Top returnees: Andrea Matter (5-6 sr G), Marissa Hoffman (5-4 sr G), Autumn Pellman (5-9 so F), Rebekah Goodling (5-6 so F).

The big picture: New coach has four starters back from a team that struggled to stay in games for long stretches a year ago. Pellman had a solid freshman season, averaging 11.1 points a game, and the top two scorers are back. But the Wildcats averaged only 36.1 points a game. That's the key number for a club that will start only two seniors.

HALIFAX Wildcats

Coach: Tricia Schultz. 2007-08 record: 13-12 (6-10 league).

Top returnees: Jenny Kauffman (5-8 sr F), Myranda Cox (5-7 sr F), Rebekah Hoffner (5-6 sr G).

The big picture: Under Schultz, Halifax has become a team that prefers to get up and down the floor to score as many points as possible. It's fun, but has a dangerous edge to it. This year, there's one solid starter and two part-time starters to anchor the ship. Kauffman averaged nearly 14 a game. Interesting, only outscored the opposition in the fourth quarter in eight of 25 games.

JUNIATA Indians

Coach: Megan Geedey. 2007-08 record: 5-17 (4-12 league).

Top returnees: Randi Miller (5-7 sr G), Janelle Lupolt (5-9 jr F), Tessa Gilson (5-2 sr G), Lindsey Haubert (5-4 jr G).

The big picture: Second-year coach does have some guards to work with, but almost all their size was lost to graduation. With three starters back, the Indians are ahead of most of the other teams in the league in terms of experience. And the trio averaged about 21 points a night. But with a lot of freshmen and sophomores in the mix, getting four solid quarters will be tough again.

LINE MOUNTAIN Eagles

Coach: Mike Reed. 2007-08 record: 10-14 (9-7 league).

Top returnees: Lindsay Michael (5-3 sr G).

The big picture: Hit hard by graduation, this was a team that gave everything it had for being so undersized. Michael is the leader of a group that features three part-time starters to go along with the 5-3 senior who averaged 11.2 points a game and tossed in 43 triples. A pair of sophomores who combined for nearly 10 points a game will have to reach the next level to clear .500.

MILLERSBURG Indians

Coach: Tonia Fulkroad. 2007-08 record: 6-17 (3-13 league).

Top returnees: Megan Boyer (5-11 jr F), Amber Brosius (5-10 sr F), Kaitlin Kelley (5-8 so G), Colleen Loncar (5-6 jr G).

The big picture: These Indians will have more size than anybody, so they will be tough to match up with player-for-player. Shooting has been a real problem, and it will continue to be an trouble spot. So defense will be the No. 1 priority, and with 10 players in the rotation that kind of depth will help. Better shooting is the key to qualifying for the postseason.

NEWPORT Buffaloes

Coach: Bill Reighter. 2007-08 record: 17-9 (12-4 league).

Top returnees: Emily Livingston (5-4 sr G), Courtney Singleton (5-10 sr F), Mandi Albright (5-5 sr G), Becky Sheaffer (5-7 sr G-F), Sam Hendrickson (5-7 sr F), Steph Hendrickson (5-7 sr F).

The big picture: This is the window for the Buffaloes to make some serious noise. There's a core of six seniors who have played together since elementary school. There's experience, enough size and talent to be a force in the league. Combined the six average nearly 45 points a game, led by Livingston. Eight of nine losses last season were by double digits, so they need to show one more level of fight. Everything else is in place.

U. DAUPHIN Trojans

Coach: Dave Shadle. 2007-08 record: 9-16 (7-9 league).

Top returnees: Morgan Wynn (5-7 sr G), Karyn Ligon (5-8 sr F).

The big picture: Veteran coach will toss out a young team with only two returning starters from a group that underachieved at times last season and dropped nine of its last 10 games. Still plays a killer nonconference schedule, so all those freshmen, sophomores and juniors will get some good looks at the top level of competition. The two vets in the fold averaged a combined 11 points a night last season. So scoring will probably be an issue.

ANDREW P. SHAY'S TVL PICKS

1. East Juniata..... Couple of holes to fill, but two studs back is enough.
2. Newport..... Just a matter of getting everyone pulling on the same rope.
3. Line Mountain.....Like everyone else, has gaps to plug, but a scrappy crew.
4. Halifax.....Guards have to get the ball inside, and hold the fort on defense.
5. Upper Dauphin..... Young and inexperienced with questions on offense.
6. Juniata.....Plenty of help at the guard spot, but size is a real issue.
7. Millersburg.....Experience and size will help, but next step is results.
8. Greenwood.....Four starters back, but has to show it can be more competitive