

Lots of hoopla, Catholic high schools ready for '86-87 roundball campaigns

By Richard A. Kiley

Buckle up hoop fans: another high school basketball season is upon us.

'Tis the season for pressure foul-shooting and buzzer-beating jump shots in high school gyms that rival busy airports for noise.

Who knows what to expect this year? Three of the six Catholic boys' basketball squads in the Rochester diocese are sporting new coaches, so get ready for anything and everything.

AT MCQUAID, Joe Marchese takes over the reins from Jeff Van Gundy, who is now a graduate assistant at Providence College in the Big East Conference. Although Marchese is no stranger to coaching—he headed the junior varsity basketball Knights, in addition to 10 years as a varsity assistant to football coach Tom Sprague—this is his first stab at being the top man on the varsity level.

"Our philosophies are similar in that we both stress aggressive style of play," said Marchese, when comparing his coaching style to that of Van Gundy. "We both strongly emphasize defense; the only significant change is that we will use (more) multiple defenses. We'll use more zone (defenses) than last year."

Junior Greg Woodard, who is receiving a lot of attention from many Division I basketball schools, according to his coach, is back at forward and will be bolstered by Glenn Taggart. Taggart brings his quick offensive and defensive play to the guard position, and Michael Holton, who transferred to McQuaid from a Virginia school, is also back from last year's 8-12 team.

One question mark for Marchese, who has been assistant principal at the all-boys' high school in Brighton for seven years, is whether or not 6'10" Scott Martzloff can rebound from osteomyelitis. Martzloff played for Marchese on the junior varsity level as a freshman, but was stricken with an infection in the bone of his ankle and missed all of last season.

"I'm expecting a lot from him (Martzloff)," said Marchese, who added that the junior is also receiving much attention from Division I basketball programs because of his size. "How quickly he gets back to 100 percent depends on how hard he's willing to work."

If Martzloff can respond with the play he's capable of, the Knights could be very tough on City-Catholic Division I opponents and make Marchese's first year as varsity mentor much easier.

"I'm guardedly optimistic; we should have a good inside and outside game," Marchese said. "But the young players have to prove themselves. While I am optimistic, a lot will depend on how the younger players progress."

Marchese is also looking for help from his bench, including Tom Zeltz and Joe Williams, two players who saw playing time last year.

The new coach, who graduated from McQuaid, also boasts that nine of his 14 lettermen have academic averages of 90 percent better. He hopes they can convert their prowess in the classroom to intelligent play on the court over four quarters.

Prediction: Look for McQuaid to reverse last year's 8-12 record and make some noise come sectional time, if Martzloff can assert himself



in the middle. The shooting of Taggart and Woodard could also take the Knights far.

MIKE RUFF HAS ALREADY made his presence felt at Bishop Kearney, conducting the school's first summer basketball camp ever and obtaining a highly touted transfer student from Irondequoit. Marcel Vernon will strut his stuff for the Fighting Kings this winter, after becoming disconcerted with the situation at his former school.

According to Ruff, who left his coaching post at Aquinas last year after a contract dispute, Vernon was unhappy at Irondequoit for a number of reasons.

"He became unhappy at Irondequoit after his coach left," said Ruff, who directed the Lit-

tle Irish to an unprecedented Section 5 basketball final last season. Ruff met the 6'4" power forward while coaching the AAU all-star basketball team last spring. The new Fighting King coach referred to Vernon as "a traveler," pointing out that his new player began his high school career at McQuaid, before moving to Irondequoit. "He felt the City-Catholic Division would provide the best competition."

No problem there. With East, a possible state championship team, and defending Class AAA champ Franklin, Vernon will face some of the best athletes in the state.

In addition to Vernon, Ruff, a marketing teacher at Fairport High School, will also look to 6'5" center Eric Jones. The senior center has

been on the varsity since his sophomore year. Also important to the revival at Kearney, whose varsity has seen a mere seven wins in the last 35 games, are Mark Young and R.D. Long. Young is a 6'2" forward who was a standout for the varsity football team last fall, and Long is a multi-talented sophomore.

Junior Darrell Harris will also be depended upon for his quick shooting.

Ruff brings to Bishop Kearney an array of offensive and defensive schemes that should leave opposing teams scratching their heads, as his coaching at Aquinas did last year.

But he wants to see control on the part of his players too. "We'll be more open-minded (than previous Kearney teams); we'll be a run-and-press team," Ruff said. "We'll play an aggressive type of city game, but we'll need to have a controlled game, too."

Ruff also admits his team has shortcomings. "I've got more talent than I had on Aquinas last year, but they (his Kearney players) haven't developed the team concept like we had last year," Ruff said. "Last year the team developed the (team) concept to a science. Right now I don't have that."

Judging from Ruff's track record, it's just a matter of time.

Prediction: Vernon is a franchise player, and if he can mend himself into the offensive scheme, Kearney will be a force to reckon with in the City-Catholic League.

How long it takes Kearney to find itself as a team will tell how well the season could go. Look for a slow start, but a fast finish for the Fighting Kings, who will compete in Class AA come tourney time.

ED NIETOPSKI BEGINS his 24th year as head coach of the varsity at Cardinal Mooney with many players the coach figures have "weathered the storm of the City-Catholic."

Nietopski lost two starters from last year's 12-8 team, which lost in the second round of the sectionals to East after disposing of Edison. Gone are Lee Campoli, the Cardinals' high scorer with an average of 13 points per game, and 6'4" Scott Lund. Also lost to graduation was Nietopski's sixth man, Greg Mason, a 6'2" forward.

Returning this season are senior Walt Cusick, a capable point guard, as well as Peter Mojsej and Kevin Khuns. Cusick averaged 10 points per game last year and Mojsej and Khuns are textbook shooters from the outside. Other returners include Kevin Canton (guard), John Mason (guard), Brian Puffer (center), Pete Leight (forward), Terry Beattie (center), Scott Trapp (forward) and Harry Reisman (forward).

Nietopski has also been impressed by the play of some juniors vying to start on this year's squad, including Keith Gaffney, a 6'4" forward, as well as Pat McCann, Mike Leonardo and Rob Hrankowski. One sophomore with a bright future at Mooney, according to Nietopski, is 6'9" center Mike McGwin. "He'll see a lot of action this year."

Nietopski, who also serves as athletic director at the Greece high school, hopes last year's learning experience will provide Mooney with

Continued on Page 11

New Aquinas mentor looks to rebuild Little Irish in 'post-Ruff' season

By Richard A. Kiley

Mike Dianetti, a 25-year-old basketball enthusiast with little coaching experience, is taking over an Aquinas team that, like its new coach, is not exactly seasoned, to say the least.

Remember the sectional heroes pulled off by Mike Ruff and his Little Irish last March? Eric Loewenguth's clutch free throws in the upset of the Class AAA tourney, when Aquinas knocked off East 61-59? And who could forget Paul Mancarella's inspired play in the third quarter of Aquinas' 63-60 win over Webster in front of a deafening partisan crowd at the War Memorial?

"Last year is history; the first six guys are gone. It's a new era, the Mike Dianetti era," said Dianetti, who graduated from Greece Arcadia in 1976. "The Mike Ruff era ended on a very positive note, but I don't concern myself with that. That was then, and this is now."

Much as school officials at Aquinas may have hired Ruff five years ago, they are banking on a young coach with only a scant coaching record.

This is not to say that Dianetti is an inexperienced coach. He was awarded a full basketball coaching license at Nazareth College, where he



where he led the freshmen to a 7-4 record. The former graduate assistant coach to Bill Nelson, who moved on to Johns Hopkins University earlier this year, has also coached and scouted for Greece Arcadia.

Since Dianetti left the Golden Flyers at Nazareth, he also became involved in the business world. Most recently he worked in the accounting department of General Motors Acceptance Corp. for six months. He was then going to pursue an M.B.A. degree at Syracuse University, but he "had an inkling to get back into teaching."

"I had no idea Mike (Ruff) was definitely going to leave (Aquinas)," said Dianetti, whose year under Nelson saw Nazareth win the eastern regional championship in Division III. "I was flipping through the paper and saw the ad (for a business teacher at Aquinas). It was by accident, really."

In a way, Dianetti's arrival at a school with a slew of talented players is only fitting. He has some new ideas that he hopes will become the framework for Aquinas' resurgence.

"It may take some time for them (the players) to adjust to what I want from them, and what Coach Ruff taught them," Dianetti said. "When I first came here, I

could tell they had a little bit of a tough time with what he (Ruff) believes in, and what I believe in."

Those differences are minimal though, the new Aquinas mentor added, with the only real variations coming on defense. Dianetti may employ more man-to-man coverage, whereas Ruff's players had the experience and the talent to play zone. Dianetti knows he may not always have the goods to do that.

In addition to contending with a multitude of talented opponents, Dianetti will also face coaches who are recognized as some of the most respected around.

"If you go back through history, you'll see that the coaches I'm going against have all won championships," Dianetti said, citing Chris Cornell at Wilson, Sam Rizzo at East, Ed Nietopski at Mooney, and Ruff to name a few. "I'm looking forward to going against a lot of these coaches. I've got a lot of respect for them. It will be exciting, but I'll be very nervous."

Dianetti added, "Coaching is coaching. I want these kids to get what I got out of basketball. I met some of my closest friends through basketball. I've always loved the game, and I always had a dream of coaching."