

Talented duo takes lead for Trojans

BY BRAD EMONS
STAFF WRITER

If you're looking for one of Observerland's best one-two punches in boys basketball, then try out Livonia Clarenceville's co-plaintiffs — Justin Villanueva and Albert Deljosevic.

Coach Rick Larson, whose team opens its season Friday at Redford St. Agatha, return a strong nucleus from last year's 20-11 squad.

Villanueva, a first-team All-Observer pick in football, is entering his third year on the varsity. Last season, en route to third-team All-Area honors, the 6-foot-4 senior center averaged 18 points and 11 rebounds per game.

Joining him will be Deljosevic, a 6-1 junior guard who has started on the varsity since a freshman. Last year Deljosevic averaged 16 points and four assists per game.

"I'm excited about this year because for the first time we have a good big man and guard combination," Larson said. "And there's no secret who we're going to go to."

Villanueva, whose first love is basketball, continues to improve.

"He works very hard," Larson said of his standout center. "We're going to get him on the wing and let him face the basket and play. And he should make us tough if we get him to finish on the break."

Deljosevic is also making

strides in all departments of his game.

"Al's starting to mature," Larson said. "He understands the game more than he ever did before."

"He shows good creativity in the open floor, but right now he's a lot more team-oriented."

Clarenceville will run the break, but whether the Trojans can contend for the Metro Conference championship will depend on Larson's seven other players.

Slated to start Friday are two junior returnees from the varsity — 6-foot wing Rick Murphy and 6-4 point guard John Wallace.

Newcomer Rick Barack, a 6-3 sophomore forward, will also get the call.

Other promising newcomers include Corey McKendry, a 5-10 sophomore guard; Joe Lucas, a 6-11 junior forward; Adam King, a 5-10 junior guard; and Tim Rydell, a 5-10 sophomore forward.

Ben Sterling, a talented 5-11 junior guard and transfer from Alabama, could be the missing link if he becomes eligible during second semester.

"We'll see how our new players react at the varsity level," said Larson, who lost starters Jason Merritt and Donahue Fulton to graduation a year ago. "Right now I'd say University-Liggett (Grosse Pointe Woods) is the favorite in our conference. They have three good players returning."

"Evan busts his butt every day in practice and is so positive. People behind the scenes know how much he contributes to the program, but people outside of it have no idea what he means to our team."

The varsity also includes five juniors — twins Shawn and Devon Louisa, Evan Feldman, Matt Kelmigian and Jason Melvin and sophomores Brian

Monroe dumps Salem

So much for state rankings. Plymouth Salem may have been highly-touted in the pre-season, but performances like Tuesday's won't keep them there for long.

"We played terrible," was Salem coach Bob Brodie's direct appraisal after the Rocks lost to Monroe, 66-59. "I can't think of one player who played well. We couldn't beat anybody the way we wanted tonight."

Salem had the early lead, up 16-14 after one quarter and 30-28 at the half. But the Trojans, behind the shooting of Jeremy Griffin (17 second-half points), outscored the Rocks 20-9 in the third period to take

a 48-39 advantage into the fourth. A final-quarter rally enabled Salem to get to within one.

Griffin finished with a game-high 22 points, including four three-pointers. Dan Cane added 14 for Monroe. Salem got 12 points from Jeff McKian and 10 from Matt Mair.

The Rocks committed 20 turnovers and were outrebounded 28-14.

"We didn't play well whatsoever," said Brodie. "They beat us in all aspects of the game. Everyone stood around waiting for someone else to take things over."

Monroe converted 19 of 25 free throw, Salem 11 of 14.

Raiders

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ready to play. If Ray plays well for us, we're a team that can be successful."

Pennala, a 5-9 shooting guard, is another player whom Swinehart expects to score from the perimeter. He has good basketball genes and follows in the footsteps of older brothers Rick,

Dean and Jon who played for Northern Michigan.

"We always kid Al about his shooting range," Swinehart said. "The kids joke and say, as soon as he steps off the bus, he's ready to shoot."

"The second half of the year he came on strong for us. He's a

tough competitor, he's a winner.

Pennala always step up and play well as seniors, and we look for Al to do that, too."

Campbell and Moundros are 6-2 post players who will be in the starting lineup.

Moundros started the last seven games after Rivers, who now plays at Kalamazoo College, was sidelined with a broken leg and played well.

An All-Observer running back in football, Moundros averaged four points and five rebounds last season and is a physical player under the boards.

"His added bulk from football should be a plus for us," Swinehart said. "Kirk told me he's as excited about basketball; he can't wait to start screening people."

"He's undersized at 6-2 but has learned to utilize his strength. He plays the game all out; he plays basketball the same way he plays football — hard-nosed, tough, physical."

Campbell is another football player (tight end/linebacker) who gives the Raiders strength and toughness on the boards. He averaged 4.5 points and 4.1 rebounds.

"Carter shows up on the glass every game and gives us a good, consistent effort," Swinehart said. "He's put himself in a position to have a real good senior

year. He's stronger and more physical. He has to be a physical presence for us inside."

Swinehart was undecided on the fifth starter, but Singer, Szirtes and Schlaff will have some playing time.

"(Singer) will distribute the ball and get the offense started," Swinehart said. "We won't put a lot of pressure on him to score, just keep the game simple and take care of the ball."

"Last year we were able to put (Szirtes) in crucial situations, because he does everything right. He doesn't turn the ball over, won't take a bad shot and is always in the right spot defensively. He has a good feel for the game."

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Shulman, Phil Watha and Bridget. All played on the JV, which had a 16-4 record.

Melvin (6-3) and Bridges (6-4) will help in the post, while the others are guards. After Moundros and Campbell, Watha is the next tallest 6-foot.

"(Watha) probably has one of the better all-around games as far as defense, rebounding, taking care of the ball and having a feel for the game," Swinehart said. "He developed last year as a JV player and played a lot in the summer."

"(Bridges) is the kind of kid who won't make mistakes. He takes care of the ball and plays within himself well. He's a real solid post player and great-passing big guy."

The Raiders have dealt with a lack of height in past seasons and have developed a reputation for being a team of three-point shooters.

Pennala had the highest percentage (31) from that range and Louisa made the most threes (31-of-103) for 30 percent. "On nights we shoot the ball well, we look great, and nights

we don't can be ugly for us," Swinehart said. "You're looking at a roster of mostly guards, so we're just that kind of team."

"Our goal on offense is to get a good shot and not turn the ball over. If we can do those things, we can be successful offensively."

"Defensively, things will vary. We will press. Sometimes we've slowed down teams to get the game at a snail's pace. At times we'll pick up the pace. It just depends on the game situation."

The Raiders will face strong competition in the Western Lakes Activities Association and were picked to finish 10th (among 12 teams) in one poll, but Swinehart believes North will do better than that.

"We're looking to be competitive in the league and steal a few wins here and there," he said.

"The kids who are now seniors have been with me the whole four years I've been here and have an understanding of the system and the way we want things done."

"We just want to be consistent night in and night out and play the game right."

Winners

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"Matt did a good job at point guard," coach Mikel said. "He had the first five points and got us off to a good start."

Both teams made 13 deuces. The Falcons were 8-of-12 at the free-throw line and the Corsairs 5-of-8.

Farmington outscored Mott 15-3 from the three-point range. Milus sank two triples; Gaines, senior Matt Orr and senior Ryan Gargol (four points) made one each.

Seniors Scott Fugate and Brent Courter scored nine and eight points to lead Mott, respectively.

"It was a nice team victory tonight," Mikel said. "We made it a point this year to have a good start and emphasized the fact we needed a couple early wins to help our confidence and carry us through the season."

The Falcons play again Saturday when they will be host to Bloomfield Hills Andover at 2 p.m.

"Every time you win, you're always looking forward to the next game," Mikel said.

Hawks sink Captains

Senior Matt Derocher started his senior season with a big game and led an otherwise balanced Harrison scoring attack with a game-high 20 points. He also led the Hawks with seven

rebounds.

Junior Lemar Wilson added nine points, junior Andrew Burt eight, senior Jerrard Johnson seven, senior Kareem Smartt six, junior Ricky Bryant six, senior Jared Hopkins six, senior Brian Lewis four and junior David Pest two.

For a team that only practiced together as a full team for a week before its first game, it was an impressive start for the Hawks.

"It was a tremendous effort," coach Mike Teachman said. "We played 11 guys in the first half. We were running 'em in and running 'em out. We did have a conditioning deal tonight."

"The old coach had to look the other way on a few physical errors, because the effort was great."

Harrison led 18-11 after one quarter. Derocher, who did all his scoring in the first three periods, scored 10 points in the second as the Hawks put up 21 and led 39-27 at halftime.

Harrison led by 13 and 14 points most of the second half until Kettering scored some late points to narrow the final difference.

"It was a good win for us, because Kettering always plays hard," Teachman said. "Six of our first nine games are away, so this is a good sign."

"We wanted to play fast and intense and take it to the rim, and we did that. We have some things to work on. We were susceptible to picks tonight, and we haven't had time to work on that."

Senior forward Jon Buckley scored 18 points and senior center Justin Karkovitch, who made eight of 11 free throws, 14 for the Captains.

Harrison was 19-of-28 at the line and 23-of-48 from the floor. Kettering made 21 of 55 field goals.

The victory helped to assuage Teachman's ire regarding the team's shoe situation.

The supplier told him the shoes he ordered would arrive Dec. 3. The shoes made it to the school late Monday afternoon — after the team bus had left for Kettering.

"We had kids wearing turf shoes, mud shoes; I think some guys were playing in slippers," Teachman said.

Reem (Smartt) played in shoes he wore in the Silverdome. Some guys played in last year's game shoes, which they used to mow the lawn last summer. At least they were green and matched our uniforms."

Young paces Shamrocks

Senior center Chris Young had career highs in points (32) and rebounds (19) to lead Detroit Catholic Central to an impressive season-opening win Tuesday over host Harper Woods Bishop Gallagher, 87-50.

The Shamrocks also received solid contributions from three players off the CC football team, which recently finished a Class AA state championship season.

Junior guard Nick Moore had 14 points and nine assists, and senior guard Joe Jonna had 12 points on four three-point baskets.

"I thought we ran well," CC coach Rick Coratti said. "Three of our top six players only practiced one week (because of the extended football season). In light of that, I thought we played fairly well."

"Nick Moore did a nice job of getting the ball to different people, and Chris Young did a great job of controlling the boards."

Calvin House had 22 points for Gallagher, which trailed 21-7 after one quarter and at half-time, 40-24.

CC kept the fast pace going in the second half, outscoring Gallagher 22-12 in the third quarter and the fourth, 19-12.

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