Improved Falcons shoot for success

SPECIAL WRITEA

After a season in which his
team havered near the bottom of
the Western Lakes Activities Association standings, Farmington
girls basketball coach Brista
Swinchart is hoping big things
come in small packages.
Coming off a 5-17 season in his
rookie year with the Falcons,
Swinchart predicts improvement
but will have to rely on an eightplayer moster.

player roster.

"I have eight kids who work hard and do things the way you want them to be done, Instead of having to deal with attitudes and kids who don't want to put forth the effort," Swinehart said.

The reason for the small num-ber of players is due to commit-tant and a desire to play.

ment and a desire to play Swinehart said. During the offseason, many players improved their games by attending camps and playing in summer leagues.

"The younger players were will-ing to put forth the effort and some of the older ones weren't," he some of the older ones weren', 'he said, "We have no juniors and only two seniors. Maybe some of the older players saw the effort and the improvement of the younger players and saw the writing an the wall.

ing on the wall.

"I'm not disappointed with eight players, though. I'm looking forward to this season and I think we definitely should imprave on our five wins from last season."

Three starters and one partitime starter have graduated. Guards Danielle Salyer and Armani Platter and centers Becky Washnock and Rebekah King have left a vold for the Falcons.

But center Tammy Allen returns for her senior year after leading the team in scoring (18 points) and rebounds (10) per game.

"I want Tammy to continue her strong rebounding and maybe pick up her scoring average to 20 a game," Swinchart said. The other returning senior is

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gund Nicole Bingamen, who aver-eged five points and started in half the games.
"Nicole has improved her out-side shooting." Swinehart sald.
"She's a tough and physical play-er, and she really gets on it on de-fense."

tallest player at 5-feet 11, will have a big impact on Farmington's offensive output this season.
"She'll be running the point for

us and also be playing the wing," Swinchart said. "She handles the ball well, and her strength is tak-ing the ball to the hole."

Swinehart thinks sophomore guard Bridgette Fleet, a transfer from Northville, will improve this year's squad. Fleet will miss the first three games with a stress fracture in her foot.

fracture in her foot.

Rounding out the roster are a pair of sophomores and freshmen. Sophomore Jennie Neu and freshman Stephanie Timocko will add depth at the gueris, while sophomore Stefanie Rentie and freshman Kim Washnock will spell the year talears.

man Kim Washnock will spell the past players.
With the short bench, Swinehart won't turn conservative and go to a Suv-paced game.
"We have girls that can get up and down the court, and we will run when we can," Swinchart said.
"It will be important that we stay out of foul trouble. But in the past I've usually played only about seven players."

en players.

Swinehart remains optimistic about this season, partially because of the just performances of Allen and Salyer.

Allen and Salyer.

"Tammy is one of the top players in the league, and Andrea is not far from being one of the top."

Swinchart said.

"This year we took the plunge down to eight players, but the kids we have are serious, willing to work hard and get it done on defense. I hupe we will be competitive in all our games, but I think we will be better than last year."

Farmington's first test comes Tuesday in the Troy Tournament.

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BY STEVE KOWALSKI STARR WRITER

BY STEVE KOWALSK!

STATE WAITER

When Liz Weber starts at point guard tonight for the Farmington Hills Mercy basketball team, she'll join select company.

Weber will become only the third freshman to start the season opener in Larry Baker's 17 years as coach.

The starting role not only reflects Weber's talent, it also shows Mercy's youth.

The Mailins last fall reached the Class A state final before losing to betroit Martin Luther King, Graduated from the 18-12 team are Laure DeMattle, Kathleen Bertigan and Mary Bleniewicz, who accounted for about 70 percent of Mercy's scoring.

Mercy plays a rugged schedule,

Merry plays a rugged schedule, starting with tonights "320 home game against Walled Lake Central. "The first thing that Jumps out at you about us is our youthfulness and the strength of our schedule," Baker said. "The returning seniors provided the nucleus to last year's team. This year were working hard to find our own identity and there's

Mercy's team resembles the one put on the floor two years ago by Plymouth Canton, now a state title contender

Mercy has five returning seniors who lettered in '91, but Baker wouldn't be surprised to see Weber and 6-foot sophomore center Julie Angell lead the Marlins in scoring. The 5-1 Weber led Parmington St. Falian last year to the Catholic Youth Organization champlonship and already is the Marlins' best three-point shooter, according to Baker.

Mercy also has a capable point guard backup, junior Maggie Clinton, who filled in nicely for Berrigan during parts of the Class A semifinal win over Saginaw last year.

"If Liz wasn't special, she wouldn't be playing." Baker said.
"But she's got to earn her apure, too. Hopefully, she can continue our legacy of great point guards."

Angell, meanwhile, grabbed a combined 29 rebounds in last year's district games and scored 18 points

against Saginaw later in the tourna-ment. All that came after being promoted from the Junior versity

Bringing up Julie Angell and in serting her in the lineup proved to be a catalyst for our tourney run," Baker said

A trio of seniors who lettered on last year's team is expected to bol-ster the frontline. Katie Heffernan, ster the frontline. Katie Hefferman, a-58 senior forward, averaged about five points per game and will atart for a third straight year. Baker said Hefferman has been one of the most steady Mercy socrets in presenson. Dana Wade, a 5-10 senior post player, and Marshelle Brooks, a 5-8 senior post player, also return after grabbing 85 rebounds aplece a year aco.

ago.

Rebecca Calice, another senior
post player returnee, is expected to
contribute when she recovers from a
stress fracture suffered earlier this

The shooting guard is a three-way battle between 5-4 senior Valire Jones, 5-4 junior Zendre Simmons and 5-6 junior Nadine Clchonski,

the most valuable player on last year's JV.

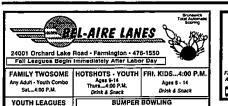
"I'm looking for someone to do the job at both ends," Baker said,
"Valire is the most experienced with the best skills, but she's been inconsistent during practice. Zendre has come on defensively, and the other girl with her hat in the ring is Nadine."

A trio of sophomores — Piper Metz (forward), Felicia Brooks (post) and Glenda Lee (a guard and transfer from Southfield High)—could also challenge for playing_time, Baker said.

time, Baker said.

The Matilina are among toughcompany in the Catholic League's
Central Division. Harper Woods
Region is the defending champion
and returns most of its players, Birmingham Marian has one of the,
state's best players (Stephanic,
Storen) and Livonio Ludywood is a
rising team.

"This sure will provide big-time growing pains for our young players, but that's the best thing for them," Baker said.



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