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Southern Illinois' Top Boy's High School Basketball Web Publication

## *New entry Herrin has the top spot @ Eldorado*

**BY JACK BULLOCK**

**ELDORADO** - Despite just having just a 5-4 overall record the **Herrin Tigers** - a first time entrant to the Eldorado Holiday Tournament - were awarded the top-seed and are one of the favorites to win the 45<sup>th</sup> Annual event held at Duff/Kingston Gym.

Coach Irv Lukens got his Tigers going early in the season – winning the Pyramid Plus Tournament on their own floor during Thanksgiving week.

They have wins over Massac County, Salem, Marion and Memphis (TN.) River City in going 4-1 to take home the championship. But since defeating West Frankfort on December 11 – Herrin has dropped its last three games to Murphysboro, Harrisburg and Pinckneyville and must turn things around if they are going to go on the four-game winning streak that it takes to win the title of the 16-team bracketed tourney.

Andre Brown - a 6-foot-8 slender senior center - has been a shot blocking machine wearing Orange and Black. Brown - who has signed with Division I Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville - is averaging 12.5 points, 9.5 rebounds and 5.3 blocked shots per game this season.

Last winter Brown swatted away 145 opponent field goal attempts. The Tigers have a good sophomore in DeMarlo Harris - a 6-foot-3 forward that averages 11.5 p.p.g. to go with 4.3 r.p.g.

The senior leader on the club is David Mallow - a 6-foot-3 senior guard/forward – who averages 10 points and seven rebounds. JoJo Hart - a 5-foot-6 junior guard - is fourth on the scoring list at 7.6 p.p.g.

**Mounds Meridian** (11-1) opened its season with 11-consecutive wins before dropping a 65-57 decision to Goreville on December 18.

Head coach Jeff Mandrell has a balanced attack with Endreco Amos and Devante McClung both averaging double-figures as the Bobcats grabbed the number-two seed in the EHT. Amos - a 6-foot junior guard - leads the club with 14.8 points per game while backcourt mate McClung - a 6-foot-2 senior - adds 13.8 p.p.g. to a potent offense that has scored 72.5 points a game in its first 12 contests.

Four other Meridian players average over six points a game. Six-foot-two senior Greg Nesby tosses in 7.5 points a contest. Tim Hackney - a 5-foot-8 senior guard - has stepped up from last season and is fourth on the team with 6.5 points a game. Six-foot-two sophomore Jerry Johnson is another of the Bobcats that can run the floor and finish. He is at 6.4 points a game. Add the name Brent Kennedy to the offensive threats that opposition has to worry about. The 6-foot-2 junior pitches home six points per outing.

Meridian won the Vienna Turkey Classic and has quality wins over Carrier Mills, Charleston (MO.) and Anna-Jonesboro. Coach Mandrell's crew blew out a pretty good Cobden team 104-43 on December 4 in their biggest scoring outburst of the season.

**Massac County** - the tournament's defending champion - has battled injuries and illness in the early part of a brutal schedule and are 7-6 overall after a win over Century December 21 to end its first half of the 2009-10 campaign. Head coach Joe Hosman has missed junior guard Cory Ayala for part of the season with a foot injury and hopes to get him back soon. Jarrell Johnson is a 5-foot-11 senior point guard who is averaging 18.1 points a game for the Patriots. The Pats have key triumphs over Mount Vernon, Salem and Harrisburg.

Those Bulldogs from **Harrisburg** finished 3-1 and tied for its own early season tournament title and are 5-3 heading into the EHT. Coach Randy Smithpeters has a club that is best when it is putting up 3-point shots.

In the early going this season 6-foot-1 senior guard Cain Sheldon has picked up from where he left off from last season in leading the Bulldogs in scoring. Reid Roper is a 6-foot-2 senior guard who - along with Sheldon - have been fearless in launching shots from the perimeter. A pair of freshman stepped to the forefront for Harrisburg in the early going this season as Capel Henshaw and Tyler Smithpeters have both

played a lot of important minutes. Lucas Elverd - a 6-foot-7 senior forward - is also an important player in the Bulldogs' tournament probability.

The **Carrier Mills Wildcats** (8-1) have just a lone loss to Meridian at the Vienna Tournament and head coach Mark Motsinger would love to see his club repeat its 2008 run to the title game at the EHT.

Seeded fifth this season CM has a good wins over Eldorado and Zeigler-Royalton on the title application. Wyatt Kirkland is 6-foot senior guard who is once again averaging double-figures (15 p.p.g.) while showing team leadership qualities.

Jordan Miller – a 5-foot-8 senior guard – along with 6-foot-2 senior forward/center Jordan Jackson have stepped in from reserve roles last season into more prominent positions this year.

**Anna-Jonesboro** (5-5) has opened the season with some difficult assignments. The Wildcats have played four of the top teams in South in losses to Meridian, Pinckneyville and Nashville holding a 66-50 win over un-dermanned Massac County December 22.

They finished 3-1 at the Harrisburg Invitational with a final day loss to the host Bulldogs. The victories on the season for head coach Robbie Wright's team include Hamilton County, Goreville and Carmi-White County. J.R. Woodward – a 6-foot-4 senior – is one of the top athletes in the SIRR conference as a multi-sport standout. Brady Wright – a 6-foot-3 sophomore – has been one of the scoring leaders for A-J along with 6-foot-1 senior guard Jordan Adams.

Seventh seeded **Norris City-Omaha-Enfield** (7-2) and head coach Doug Miller are looking for some respect heading into the EHT. The Fighting Cardinals won the Grayville Thanksgiving Tournament but have losses to undefeated Crab Orchard and county rival Carmi-White County since then. NCOE picked up hard fought 54-52 overtime win at Hardin County on December 18<sup>th</sup> in their most recent game. Jordan Weiss - a 5-foot-10 senior guard - is the Cards' leader.

**Carmi-White County** is the eighth seed in the EHT and head coach Jared Newell has leaned on a pair of returning vets. Clay Matheny - a 6-foot-2 senior - and 6-foot-5 junior Lawson Warren. The Bulldogs (5-3) have a win over rival Hamilton County and the NCOE win (57-53) in which Warren scored a career-high 32 points. CWC has won four straight games heading into the EHT.

**Fairfield** opened its season losing three straight games at the Lawrence County Capital Classic but has gone 4-1 since - including four Black Diamond Conference East Division wins over Hamilton County, Eldorado, Johnston City and Vienna to lead the league. Coach Scott McElravy has some good athletes – including 6-foot-2 senior jumping jack Tim Moore and Bryant Simpson - a 5-foot-9 senior.

**Hamilton County** (3-6) will be a formidable foe for Carrier Mills in the opening round. The Foxes have 6-foot-4 senior center Duke Greisemer playing well along with brothers Brandon and Justin Webb.

The host **Eldorado Eagles** (4-6) has a high-scoring 6-foot-4 senior forward Cody Lane and not much else so far this season. First year head coach T.J. Zurliene has a team that he hopes will improve throughout the season.

Six-foot-two senior Ryan Davis and 5-foot-11 senior Dylan Davis lead **Hardin County** (4-4) - who placed second at the Crab Orchard Thanksgiving Tournament but has lost three straight games.

Coach Radar Patton's **Gallatin County Hawks** are another young team – topped by a pair of vets in 6-foot junior guard Jared Hunt and 5-foot-9 senior guard Brody Lowery. The Hawks (4-5) also have a win over Eldorado but have lost three straight road games coming into the tournament.

**Galatia** (4-4) drew the short straw and begins its tournament with top-seed Herrin. The Bearcats have Denton Reed – a 5-foot-11 junior guard – along with 6-foot senior guard Kobe Watson and 6-foot-3 senior Joey Cullum.

**West Frankfort** (0-8) has yet to taste victory but have come close in recent games. Coach Kevin Toney saw his team put a scare into both Harrisburg and Benton in its last two starts – both narrow losses. Six-foot-three senior Kendrick Simelton and 6-foot-3 senior Ashten Ashtiani lead the Redbirds.

**Pope County** (3-5) has 5-foot-10 senior guard Kyle Benard – who has a 30-point game this season in a win over Dongola.

**Jack Bullock** is the editor/web publisher of **A Baseline View.com**. For more information about Southern Illinois Boy's High School Basketball—go to [www.abaselineview.com](http://www.abaselineview.com).