

Bluejackets take court with veterans

By Josh Shepherd

Of The Caucus Mascot

Having only a short time to get ready for the 1991 basketball season, the upperclassman dominated Nicholas County Bluejackets have experienced a slow start in pre-season play. But, according to Nicholas County Head Coach Ed Oakley, the prospects for a strong season at the hoop are good.

Pre-season scrimmages against the St. Henry Crusaders and Franklin County Flyers did not result in scoring wins for the Bluejackets, but there was plenty of evidence that the team has the stuff to compete against many of the traditional high school basketball powers on the '91-'92 schedule.

"I don't put much in the scores in scrimmage games because, simply, they don't count. So I haven't been disappointed in the team's performance. They haven't had as much time on the court as other teams," Oakley said.

Pace control in the ball game is everything to the Bluejacket's offense, Oakley said. There has been a tendency on the jacket's part to fall into playing into their opponent's style. In the Crusader scrimmage, for example, the opening minutes of the game the Crusaders immediately gained the basket and the starting five hit the bait, charging down the court and just throwing the ball up, Oakley said.

They need to break down into the half court offense and work on moving the ball around, choosing their shots because the team misses the speed needed to be a run and gun squad.

"If we can keep the scoring into the high 50's and low 60's, then we have control of the game. Much of

a team's success comes from not only being able to make the score, but to press down on defense. It's obvious that once we settled down in the scrimmages, we can keep pace and even catch up to the team. But our defense can't give up the early game. We can't let the score get away from us because we're a pressure team. If you look at last year and even in other sports, we put up our best showing in the last few minutes of the game," Oakley said.

The Jackets start up the season sporting an experienced front five lineup, four of which have been used to starting for at least one previous season. The only new starter, Kevin Morris, has seen a good deal of playing time from last year and has filled in a needed slot on the team. Offensively, the team is well balanced. Jarrod Wills and Daniel Brown have an established outside shooting game while Travis Sims and Jamie Simons work well inside the boards. With Morris proving his ability on mid-range shots, the Jackets' offense will test the mettle of any defense.

But Oakley admitted that the team needs to pick up on its inside defense, especially blocking out and rebounding the ball. "The team in general seem a little reluctant to get inside and use the body to force yourself inside. You can't jump over kids six feet six inches tall, but you can move them out of your way. But there are times when they seem to stand and watch the ball instead of fighting for position inside and eventually that'll start to work against you," Oakley said.

Looking at 37th district competition this season, there is no team with a distinct advantage over the other. In the season's early going,

it appears Harrison, Bourbon, Paris, MMT, and Nicholas are on equal terms which should make for quite a run off come tournament time.

In sum, the Nicholas County Bluejackets have the right combination of athletes to make for a winning team this season. They have a good sense of teamwork and a commitment to working hard this season, Oakley said.

"All the coaches for any team here stress the importance of working as a team, not as a bunch of individuals trying to overshadow one another. True, we have a few standout players. But we don't have a single player that can carry the Jackets through. Everybody has a role to play and they, hopefully, know how to use it. If the shot isn't to the inside, we can dump it off to the outside for the shot and vice versa," Oakley said.

Fan support is a must to the success of the Jackets, Oakley said.

A good team plays a thousand times better if the stands are full of supportive, positive fans behind it.



Ed Oakley

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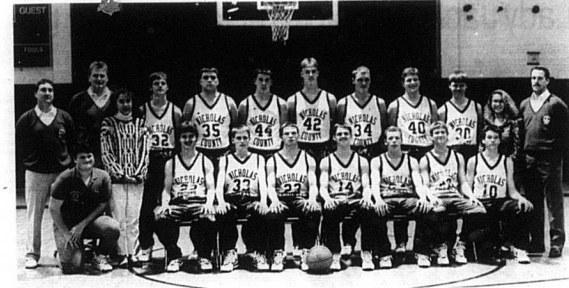
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Blue Jackets



Pictured above is the Nicholas County High School Boys Basketball team for the 1991-92 season. On the bottom row, from left to right are Chris Smoot; Team Manager and Trainer, Raymond Brown, Jason George, Jarrod Wills, Daniel Brown, Kevin Morris, Mike Cain, and Israel Stacy. Back row: Assistant Coach Greg Letcher, Freshman Coach Bobby Storie, Rose Anne Farah; Statisticians, Bradley Brown, Travis Sims, Jamie Simons, Charles Nichols, Brian Ockerman, Chris Jones, Bradley Trussell, Julie Caswell; Statisticians, and Head Coach Ed Oakley.

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