BASKETBALL SQUADS HIT THE ROAD

Men’s Team (9-6) Heads To Lone Star State Jan. 6-9

Marking a program first, the men’s basketball team will take their 9-6 record and 24 consecutive winning seasons to the Lone Star State for a series of three games in the Dallas, TX area Jan. 6-9. STLCC-Meramec takes on Mountain View Jan. 6 at 7:00 pm, Eastfield Jan. 8 at 7:00 pm, and Richland Jan. 9 at 2:00 pm.

The Magic are riding a three game win streak following wins over Lincoln Land, Florissant Valley, and Harry S. Truman. They are 1-0 in Region XVI action with the win over Flo. Seven more regional games are remaining, which determine seeding for the post season tournament, to be hosted at Meramec this year.

A big part of the team’s success has been walk-on freshman guard Dietrick Sooter (Pierce City, MO). Sooter has quickly evolved from reserve to starting guard who is looked to for points production with his uncanny three point shooting. Sooter set two new school marks against Lincoln Land Dec. 22 - he nailed a mind-boggling seven threes in the first half, and added one more in the second half, finishing the game with 28 points. Sooter now owns school records for most threes in one half, and in a game. He is hitting 86% at the free throw line.

Sophomore center Dallis Johnson (Lafayette) has also been a vital part of the Magic’s offense, dominating in the paint with both scoring and rebounding, averaging 14 points and almost 7 rebounds a game. An injured Johnson entered the second half of the game versus Florissant Valley Dec. 19 and boosted the team to a win with 10 points.

Steady scoring has also come from sophomore Josh Dale (Affton) with 11 ½ points a game, and freshman Alen Hadzimahovic (Fox) with almost 12 points a game. Sooter is averaging 9 points, while sophomore forward John Alexander (Oakville) is adding 8 per game along with 6 boards.

January is a traditionally critical month schedule-wise for the Magic and this year is no different. Meramec will face regional opponents Forest Park, North Central, and Penn Valley. They’ll also get a re-match with conference foe Lewis and Clark, who upended Meramec at the Edward Jones Dome Nov. 10.

Women’s Hoops Team Heads To Tennessee For Pair Of Games

Meanwhile, the women’s squad (5-7) will also head south, heading to the Volunteer State for a pair of games Jan. 5-7, taking on Jackson State Jan. 5 at 6:00 pm, and Dyersburg State Jan. 7 at 6:00 pm.

The team is looking to bounce back from a three game skid against a trio of quality opponents: Three Rivers, Mineral Area, and State Fair.
Kasei Evans (Hazelwood Central) has turned into a powerhouse scorer for the Magic, averaging almost 15 points a game. The freshman center uses a power game in the paint as well as a mid-range jump shot to befuddle defenders. She also leads the team in rebounding with 8 per game.

Complimenting Evans is sophomore forward Aretasha Barry (Hazelwood East). She’s pouring in 13 points a game to go with 7 rebounds for a strong one-two punch in the paint. Among the guards, freshman Courtney Panus (Pattonville) has excelled with her steady play. Panus is averaging 8 ½ points along with 5 ½ rebounds.

Freshman guards Brandi Duncan (Licking, MO) and Brandi Reed (McCluer North) have also played well. Reed leads the team in assist with nearly four a game, while Duncan leads in free throw percentage at 80%.

Following the Tennessee jaunt, the Magic hosts Region XVI rival Cottey College (Nevada, MO) Jan. 9, and also faces other regional foes in Forest Park (Jan. 13), North Central (Jan. 16), and Florissant Valley (Jan. 20).

Wrestlers Turn To Dual Meets; Host Meramec Duals Jan. 29-30

In the pivotal portion of their season, the STLCC-Meramec wrestling team transitions with the semester break into the predominately dual meet stretch run of the year. The team resumes action on the road at the Neosho Duals Saturday, Jan. 9.

It will be a busy month for the Magic, with the Lincoln Duals on Jan. 16, followed by the Wabash Duals Jan. 23. The team completes the hectic month with the traditional Meramec Duals Jan. 29-30.

The squad will be looking to freshman sensation Travis Spencer (Belfast, Maine) at 197 lbs. Spencer was the Maine Wrestler Of The Year for 2008-'09. Spencer medaled for the Magic at the Oklahoma City University Open Nov. 8 and at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside Open Dec. 5.

Craig Chiles (Hillsboro) is also a major player for Meramec. The 133 lb. returning national qualifier placed for the Magic at the Lindenwood Open and took a strong third place finish at the prestigious Oklahoma City University Open.

John Vogt (Ste. Genevieve), a quality grappler at 174 lbs., looks to get untracked, as does heavyweighy Chris McMullin (Willard, MO).

Statesmen Take Home 5th Holiday Tourney Championship

In yet another thrilling championship game that went down to the wire, the Webster Groves Statesmen outlasted number one seed Hazelwood Central 62-56 before a packed house to win the 32nd Annual Meramec Holiday Tournament title, and fifth in program history (‘85, ‘86, ‘93, ‘04). It also marked Webster’s 12th title game appearance in the tourney’s 32 years.

The second-seeded Statesmen arrived at the title game with yet another miracle finish the previous night in the semi-final game against third-seeded McCluer. Webster Groves was down by 9 points with three minutes remaining and momentum in McCluer’s favor. However, the wily veteran coach, Jay Blossom, pulled out his bag of tricks over the comparative rookie coach, Erwin Claggett of McCluer.

With two seconds left and Webster down three points, senior guard Cortez Conners drilled a jump shot, line drive three point shot to shock everyone and send the game into overtime. The Statesmen dominated a
low-scoring OT period 5-3 to survive. Senior guard **Derrick Dilworth** was also instrumental in the Statesmen’s success.

In the third place game, McCluer defeated CBC. Troy downed DeSmet for fourth place. The consolation bracket championship was won by Marquette over Lafayette.

The following players were selected by the coaches to the All-Tournament team: **Chris Babbitt** (Hazelwood Central), **Shaq Boga** (McCluer), **Cortez Conners** (Webster Groves), **Cullen Devins** (Troy), **Derrick Dilworth** (Webster Groves), **Mike Messer** (Lafayette), **Ryan Pierson** (CBC), **Ryan Rosburg** (Marquette), **Deaires Tate** (McCluer), **Jordan Wilson** (Hazelwood Central).

The Ken Braden Sportsmanship Award went to **Parkway West High School** and retiring head coach **Bill Sodemann**. The award is in memory of the late, three sport official who treasured the spirit of good sportsmanship over all other aspects of the game. Sodemann has been a part of the tourney all 32 years.

It was a star-studded crowd with faces in the stands like Basketball Hall of Fame member **Ed MacCauley**, former Miami Heat (and DeSmet/MO State) player **Blake Ahearn**, St. Louis Cardinals third baseman **David Freese**, former St. Louis Cardinal and Browns player **Ed Mickelson**, and SIU-Carbondale head coach **Chris Lowery**.