

Press Clippings - 11/16/2023

- Chicago Tribune -

As point guard and co-captain, South Elgin's Lexi Lopez looks at leadership as 'a great opportunity.' And it shows.

By: Paul Johnson

Nov 16, 2023



South Elgin's Lexi Lopez (11) moves around Dundee-Crown's Charlotte Stewart (12) during a game in the Dundee-Crown Thanksgiving Tournament in Carpentersville on Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman/The Beacon-News)

When she was a younger player on the varsity, **South Elgin's** Lexi Lopez left the leadership and assertiveness to her older teammates. But now this season, she's a senior.

She knows it's time for her to step up.

"As a point guard on a varsity team, with the fast speed, I try to usually involve my teammates a lot," Lopez said. "I'm not a player that takes the ball all the way in or shoots.

"But that's what I have to be doing this year to help my teammates out."

Lopez took control Wednesday night against the host Chargers, scoring a team-high 19 points to lead the Storm to a 50-44 win in the Dundee-Crown Thanksgiving Tournament.

Along with six rebounds, two assists, a steal and a blocked shot, Lopez shot 7 of 12 from the floor for **South Elgin** (1-1). Molly Stahl added nine points and Madison Hunt had eight.

Monica Sierzputowski led all scorers with 23 points for Dundee-Crown (0-1). She also

grabbed eight rebounds.

After the Chargers forced a 40-40 tie with 2:45 left in the fourth quarter, Stahl hit a jumper from the wing and Lopez followed with a driving layup after streaking down court with a rebound. The Storm never trailed again.



South Elgin's Lexi Lopez (11) slips past Dundee-Crown's Sara Farrell (13) for a basket during a game in the Dundee-Crown Thanksgiving Tournament in Carpentersville on Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman/The Beacon-News)

"We had just talked to her about pushing the ball because that's what she brings to us, speed," **South Elgin** coach Emily Driessen said. "She brings a little bit more of our leadership. She's a captain for our team.

"Giving her those roles in those situations are key for us and our success. It is so important. That's the kind of player she is. She'll grind and she wants it. She wants that pressure."

Performances like this are what Lopez is hoping to see with her increased role this season.

"On varsity in past years, I wasn't really a captain," Lopez said. "Stepping up as a captain this year is a great opportunity, and it's fun."



South Elgin's Lexi Lopez (11) looks to pass against Dundee-Crown's Sara Farrell (13) during a game in the Dundee-Crown Thanksgiving Tournament in Carpentersville on Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023. (H. Rick

Sierzputowski, however, scored 14 straight points to help the Chargers take a 28-26 lead early in the third quarter. She only scored four more points the rest of the way, though.

“We kind of went away from her a little bit,” Dundee-Crown coach John Gonnella said. “When she was working, we should have gotten her the ball a little bit more.”

Gonnella feels Sierzputowski’s performance is something he and the Chargers will see more of this winter.

“We just want her to have more games like that,” Gonnella said. “She’s certainly capable of it. I think the way the conference is stacked up now, she’s going to have a lot more of these games. She’s focused on that.”

Hunt and Lopez, meanwhile, are senior leaders for an otherwise young team for **South Elgin**. Driessen has moved up from JV to varsity, taking over from longtime coach Dan Mandernack.



South Elgin's Lexi Lopez (11) gets set to shoot against Dundee-Crown during a game in the Dundee-Crown Thanksgiving Tournament in Carpentersville on Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman/The Beacon-News)

Driessen credited Hunt and Lopez for helping ease the transition. Wednesday marked her first varsity win.

“It’s been nice, and I think it’s because I have really good leadership,” she said. “They’ve bought into who I am and what I bring. I think that’s carried on to our younger kids in the program, so they’re buying in as well.”

Lopez said Driessen’s style helps bring out the best in her play, too.

“She’s a great coach,” Lopez said. “I love the way she coaches. I love how she’s passionate about the game. Having me and Madison as captains allows her to feel more comfortable with the team.

“We all just play together and we stick together.”

- Chicago Tribune -

Football pairings and local scores for the Southland, Aurora, Elgin, Naperville and Lake County

By: From Staff Reports
Nov 16, 2023



Lincoln-Way East's Cade Serauskis (10) attempts a one-handed catch against Minooka during a Class 8A second-round playoff game in Frankfort on Friday, Nov. 3, 2023. (Troy Stolt/Daily Southtown)

Results and highlights of high schools and local colleges from the Southland and Aurora, Elgin, Naperville and Lake County coverage areas.

WEDNESDAY'S RESULTS

HIGH SCHOOLS

GIRLS BASKETBALL

De La Salle 57, Lake Park 27

De La Salle (1-0): Kam Porter 23 points.

Marian Catholic 71, Latin 26

Marian (1-0): Madison Davis 19 points. Taylor Bolton 11 points.

Oswego 36, Amundsen 29

Wheaton Academy 54, Harvest Christian 23

BURLINGTON CENTRAL TOURNAMENT

St. Charles North 55, DeKalb 15

LaSalle-Peru 49, Burlington Central 43

Moline 50, Kaneland 43

HAMPSHIRE TOURNAMENT

Geneva 71, Lake Zurich 44

Fremd 57, Mother McAuley 44

IMSA TOURNAMENT

Elgin 34, IMSA 28

Elgin (2-0): Izzie Castro 10 points.

JOLIET WEST TOURNAMENT

Lincoln-Way Central 37, Joliet West 32

Lincoln-Way Central (2-0): Lina Panos 14 points, 10 rebounds. Gracen Gehrke 13 points.

Providence 39, Lincoln-Way West 29

Minooka 66, Joliet Catholic 37

MUNDELEIN TOURNAMENT

Grant 35, Niles West 30

OREGON TOURNAMENT

St. Edward 59, Genoa-Kingston 48

RICHARDS TOURNAMENT

Shepard 53, Evergreen Park 33

Shepard (1-2): Jessica Manley 11 points. Mia Stokes 11 points. Brianna Spain 10 points.

Payton 37, Eisenhower 31

Eisenhower (0-2): Gabrielle Williams 10 points.

SOMONAUK TOURNAMENT

Aurora Central Catholic 73, Plano 41

Plano (1-2): Jaydn Long 15 points.

VERNON HILLS TOURNAMENT

Antioch 58, Vernon Hills 50

Antioch (1-1): Heidi Rathmann 21 points.

Lake Forest Academy 58, Rockford Guilford 39

LOCAL COLLEGES

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Aurora 69, North Central College 57

Aurora (2-1): Noah Butler 17 points. Josh Holmes 15 points.

North Central College (1-2): Ken Thomas 15 points, 5 rebounds.

Marian (Ind.) 95, Governors State 76

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Carthage (Wis.) 79, Lake Forest College 42

Concordia (Wis.) 59, North Central College 52

North Central College (1-2): Megan Duffy 16 points, 6 rebounds. Megan McClure 16 points.

Viterbo (Wis.) 65, St. Francis 43

TUESDAY'S RESULTS

HIGH SCHOOLS

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Lincoln-Way East 52, Romeoville 32

Lincoln-Way East (1-0): Lana Kerley 18 points. Hayven Smith 16 points.

Neuqua Valley 74, Trinity 69 (OT)

Wheaton North 37, Lockport 29

BEECHER FALL CLASSIC

Andrew 51, Oak Forest 27

Andrew (1-0): Phia Ryan 9 points.
Oak Forest (0-1): Maddie Martinez 18 points.
Rich Township 48, Peotone 28
St. Laurence 43, Crete-Monee 29
Bradley-Bourbonnais 65, T.F. North 45
BURLINGTON CENTRAL TOURNAMENT
Larkin 40, DeKalb 38 (OT)
CHICAGO CHRISTIAN TOURNAMENT
Chicago Christian 55, Intrinsic 25
DUNDEE-CROWN TOURNAMENT
Hononegah 55, **South Elgin** 19
HINSDALE CENTRAL/HINSDALE SOUTH TOURNAMENT
St. Ignatius 54, Yorkville 49
Yorkville (0-1): Brooke Spychalski 20 points. Lainey Gussman 10 points.
Stagg 45, Addison Trail 30
Stagg (1-0): Abbey Hobart 15 points. Ameli Sanchez 14 points.
HOFFMAN ESTATES TOURNAMENT
Hoffman Estates 56, Zion-Benton 51 (OT)
Resurrection 71, Jacobs 32
IMSA TOURNAMENT
IMSA 39, Earlville 29
LOYOLA/NEW TRIER TOURNAMENT
Stevenson 55, Fenwick 26
New Trier 54, Warren 27
MAINE EAST TOURNAMENT
Lakes 56, Argo 26
Lakes (1-0) Emily Ovaska 10 points, 4 rebounds.
Maine East 47, Round Lake 26
MUNDELEIN TOURNAMENT
Grant 46, Grayslake North 30
Mundelein 45, Regina 35
Mundelein (2-0): Rylan Foster 18 points, 9 rebounds. Casey Vyverman 12 points.
Niles West 42, Highland Park 34
RICHARDS TOURNAMENT
Evergreen Park 64, Eisenhower 27
Evergreen (2-0): Kyziah Lewis 13 points. Grace Kole 11 points. Tatum Harris 10 points.
Eisenhower (0-1): Gabrielle Williams 10 points.
Shepard 58, Richards 40
Shepard (1-1): Jessica Manley 27 points. Emma Greene 10 points.
Richards (0-2): Iyanah Crosby 20 points.
SOMONAUK TOURNAMENT
Aurora Central Catholic 50, Geneva 38
Plano 45, Somonauk 21
Plano (1-1): Chloe Rowe 10 points, 8 rebounds, 6 steals.
LaSalle-Peru 66, Sandwich 35

YORK TOURNAMENT

St. Charles East 49, York 31

Waubonsie Valley 66, Marist 42

Waubonsie (2-0): Danyella Mporokoso 29 points. Arie Garcia-Evans 13 points, 8 rebounds, 5 assists.

Marist (0-2): Caroline Flynn 14 points. Grace Harmon 10 points.

Glenbrook South 63, Oswego East 38

Oswego East (0-2): Desiree Merritt 14 points.

LOCAL COLLEGES

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Grace (Ind.) 89, St. Xavier 70

St. Xavier (1-3): Cedric Johnson 19 points, 6 rebounds, 4 assists. Sando Hill 18 points.

Madison (Wis.) 68, Lake County 58

South Suburban 109, McHenry 78

South Suburban (3-0): Jemel Jones 41 points, 10 rebounds. Quentin Heady 22 points, 16 rebounds.

Waubonsee 88, Joliet 78

Waubonsee (4-0): Alex Vassilakis 20 points, 6 rebounds.

Wheaton College 86, Lake Forest College 65

Lake Forest College (1-2): Alex Knight 17 points, 5 rebounds.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Aurora 82, Judson 61

Aurora (3-0): Eliot Dojutrek 17 points, 5 rebounds. Macy Kocen 15 points.

Judson (0-1): Gaby Quintana 18 points, 6 rebounds.

Grace (Ind.) 72, St. Xavier 65

St. Xavier (1-4): Jaidn Green 17 points. Aaliyahna Derrell 14 points.

Lake County 82, Madison (Wis.) 62

Prairie State 87, Olive-Harvey 57

South Suburban 80, McHenry 54

Waubonsee 59, Joliet 55

To read the full article please click [here](#).

- Chicago Tribune -
Introducing the 2023 Beacon-News/Courier-News
Girls Volleyball All-Area Team

Nov 16, 2023



Oswego's Sidney Hamaker (13) hits the ball between the block against Yorkville during a Class 4A Plainfield North Regional semifinals on Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2023. (Troy Stolt/The Beacon-News)

Four players from Metea Valley and three from St. Charles North headline the first and second teams, while West Aurora, Geneva and Kaneland also represented.

First Team

Haley Burgdorf, St. Charles North, sophomore, outside hitter:

Beacon-News/Courier-News Player of the year had 344 kills, 190 digs, 346 serve receives, 30 blocks and 26 aces. All-conference.

Brianna Gritzman, Burlington Central, junior, libero: Had 426 digs, 82 assists and 44 aces. All-conference.

Sidney Hamaker, Oswego, junior, outside hitter: Established single-season program record with 392 kills. Also had 209 digs, 46 aces and 24 blocks. All-conference. Committed to Long Beach State.

Rosie Karl, Kaneland, senior, outside hitter: Had 290 kills, 183 digs, 32 aces and 23 blocks. All-conference. Committed to Aurora University.

Elizabeth King, Hampshire, sophomore, outside hitter/middle hitter: Had 302 kills, 190 digs, 68 aces and 16 blocks. All-conference.

Mia McCall, St. Charles North, sophomore, setter: Had 408 assists, 147 digs, 86 kills and 36 aces. All-conference.

Camille Morrison, Metea Valley, senior, outside hitter: Had 294 kills, 147 digs, 30 blocks and 26 aces. All-conference. Committed to Western Michigan.

Maureen Pokryfke, West Aurora, junior, outside hitter: Had 303 kills, 180 digs and 2.0 serve-receive rating. All-conference.

Charlotte Potvin, Geneva, senior, middle hitter: Had 200 kills, 30 blocks and 25 aces. All-conference. Committed to Indiana Pennsylvania.

Katie Schuele, Metea Valley, junior, setter: Had 492 assists with just nine errors in 1,245 attempts. Also added 161 digs, 86 kills, 49 aces and 22 blocks. DuPage Valley Conference's player of the year. Honorable mention all-state. Academic all-state.

Addison Torain, Metea Valley, junior, libero: Had 407 serve receives, 349 digs, 66 assists, 45 aces and 2.4 serve-receive rating. All-conference. Honorable mention all-state. Academic all-state.

Lauren Ulrich, Newark, senior, setter: Had 700 assists, 155 digs, 98 kills and 34 aces. All-conference. First team all-state. Academic all-state. Committed to Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.



Metea Valley's Katie Schuele sets the ball for teammate Anna Murphy (10) against St. Charles North during the Class 4A Metea Valley Regional championship match in Aurora on Thursday, Oct. 26, 2023. (Jon Cunningham/The Beacon-News)

Second Team

Alex Bardouniotis, St. Charles North, senior, outside hitter: Had 205 kills, 134 digs, a team-high 55 aces, 19 blocks and 344 serve receives. All-conference. Committed to Illinois Wesleyan.

Jazmine Binion, **South Elgin**, senior, outside hitter: Had 227 kills, 123 digs, 42 aces and 24 blocks. All-conference. Academic all-state.

McKenna Bremner, Batavia, junior, setter/right-side hitter: Had 211 assists, 210 kills, 171 digs and 23 aces. Special mention all-conference. Honorable mention all-state. Academic all-state.

Mia Jurkovic, Oswego, junior, outside hitter: Had 242 kills, 222 digs, 35 blocks and 35 aces. All-conference.

Clare McEniry, Rosary, junior, outside hitter/right side: Had 260 kills and 171 digs. All-conference.

Alicia Pierre, Jacobs, senior, middle hitter: Had 158 kills, 68 blocks, 66 digs and 46 aces. All-conference.

Marie Reichman, Yorkville, senior, libero: Had 383 digs, 45 assists, 25 aces and 2.0 serve-receive rating. All-conference. Committed to Aurora University.

Martyna Sowiak, **Bartlett**, junior, middle hitter: Had 145 kills and 80 blocks. All-conference.

Olivia Stewart, Metea Valley, sophomore, middle hitter: Had 102 kills and 55 blocks. Honorable mention all-state.

Sam Vanda, Geneva, junior, right-side hitter: Had 212 kills, 185 digs, 36 assists and 18 blocks. All-conference.

Mia Vassallo, Kaneland, senior, libero: Had 301 digs, 84 assists and 46 aces. All-conference. Committed to Wisconsin-Whitewater.

Kiara Wesseh, Newark, senior, outside hitter: Had 300 kills, 231 digs, 33 aces and 28 blocks. All-conference. Second team all-state. Academic all-state.



Geneva's Sam Vanda hits the ball past two blockers against Waubonsie Valley during a nonconference match in Geneva on Thursday, Aug. 31, 2023. (Jon Langham/The Beacon-News)

Honorable Mention

Emilee Anderson, Aurora Central Catholic, senior, outside hitter.

Riley Borrowman, Oswego, senior, middle hitter.

Brynn Gawel, Hinckley-Big Rock, senior, outside hitter.

Breanna Hard, Aurora Christian, sophomore, setter.

Caitlyn Madsen, St. Edward, senior, outside hitter.

Samantha Miserendino, Waubonsie Valley, senior, libero.

Sarah Musial, St. Charles East, senior, setter.

Joelle Pye-Blacknard, Yorkville, freshman, outside hitter.

Teagan Rokos, Batavia, junior, libero.

Londyn Scott, Sandwich, junior, middle blocker.

Fiona Turnbull, Geneva, junior, middle hitter.

Hope Wagner, Aurora Christian, sophomore, outside hitter.

- Daily Herald -

Girls basketball: Scouting Fox

By: John Radtke

11/ 15/ 2023



Batavia's Brooke Carlson, a Colorado State recruit, averaged 20 points a game last season. (Gary E Duncan Sr./Shaw Local News Network)



Burlington Central's Kenzie Andersen drives to the basket against Belvidere North on Monday, Nov. 13, 2023, during pool play girls basketball game in the Burlington Central Thanksgiving Tournament. (Gregory Shaver/Shaw Local News Network)

Aurora Central Catholic

Coach: LeVada Smith (sixth season)

Last season: 26-7, 6-2 (first)

Top returning players: Riley Cwinski, jr., F; Sofia Corral, jr. G; Anna-Marie Godina, sr., G

Key newcomers: Brooklyn Murphy, jr. G; Gina Dutkanych, soph., G; Nora Schwartz, fresh., G

Worth noting: The Chargers, winners of a regional title last year, return all-state special-mention selection Cwinski (16.4 points, 7 rebounds, 2 steals), along with Corral (11.8 points, 6 rebounds, 4 assists) and Godina (10.8 points, 80 threes) -- giving them nearly 40 points of scoring experience from a year ago. All three were all-conference picks. ACC is in its first year in the Girls Catholic Athletic Conference (along with locals Rosary, St. Francis and IC Catholic Prep). "We have experience and leadership," Smith said. "We have a good number of players where it will be their third or fourth year of varsity play. What gets me pumped about this group is how they support one another. I am anxious to see if this group can take the next step in overall success on the floor."

Bartlett

Coach: Tanner Gardon (third season)

Last season's record: 8-24, 6-12 UEC (seventh)

Top returning players: Amadea Montijo, sr., G; Trinity Thompson, sr., F; Cecilia Desarden, jr., G; Emily Linkevich, jr., G; Christina Stankus, jr., F

Key newcomers: Megan Kron, jr., G; Elsie Nwabuego, jr., F; Courtney Bridgeforth, soph., G-F

Worth noting: Montijo is a returning all-UEC pick and a Daily Herald All-Area selection. "We will be able to play at a higher pace and do some different things defensively because of that," Gardon said. "We also have a little more depth, which allows us to be more aggressive." Gardon pegs Glenbard South as the team to beat in the Upstate Eight. "Glenbard South has to be the frontrunners, returning a group of freshmen that started on a team that went undefeated in the Upstate Eight."

Batavia

Coach: Kevin Jensen (ninth season)

Last year: 21-12

Top returners: Brooke Carlson, sr., G, 5-7; Kylee Gehrt, sr., G, 5-9; Addi Lowe, sr., G, 5-7

Key newcomers: Julia Arulandu, jr., G, 5-5; Hallie Crane, jr., F, 5-9; Kaidyn King, jr. G, 5-6

Worth noting: Batavia is firmly in the conversation for among the top three teams in the DuKane Conference. After consecutive regional championships, Batavia is loaded again. Brooke Carlson, a Colorado State commit, is back for her fourth season. Carlson averaged nearly 20 points per game and was the DuKane Conference Player of the Year as well. The lineup has a lot of shooting and athleticism with Carlson, Kylee Gehrt and Addi Lowe. Addie Prewitt is a great defender and the Bulldogs will have a nice rotation.

Burlington Central

Coach: Mike Carani (first season)

Last season's record: 22-11, 12-6 FVC (third)

Top returning players: Emma Payton, sr., C; Kenzie Anderson, sr., G; Jordyn Charles, soph., G; Emersyn Fry, sr. G; Savannah Scheuer, sr., G-F; Mia Hansen, sr. C

Key newcomers: Audrey LaFleur, fresh., G; Ashley Waslo, soph., G

Worth noting: Carani takes over a Rockets team that won 22 games, finished third in the Fox Valley and won a regional title. "We have an athletic, hard-working group that loves to compete. I am excited to see this group get an opportunity to play together and compete." Carani said based on returning/new upcoming talent and strong, consistent coaching within their respective programs, Huntley, Hampshire, Crystal Lake Central and Prairie Ridge are teams that could contend in the FVC. "We have a number of seniors who are eager and ready to prove," he said. LaFleur, a freshman, is the daughter of former **Elgin High** standout Karisa Turek LaFleur and the granddaughter of legendary former **Elgin** coach Lee Turek, who won 359 games in 21 years at Maroons coach, leading **Elgin** to a Class AA runner-up state finish in 1996.

Cary-Grove

Coach: Tony Moretti (fifth season)

Last season's record: 12-18, 7-11 FVC (sixth)

Top returners: Ellie Mjaanes, jr., F; Emily Larry, sr., F; Sam Skerl, jr., G; Malaina Kurth,

so., G; Kennedy Manning, so., G

Key newcomers: Kayli McMorris, sr., G.; Alivia Nielsen, jr., F

Worth noting: Larry (7.7 ppg) and Mjaanes (7.1 ppg) led the Trojans in scoring last season. Mjaanes was C-G's lone All-FVC selection. ... Moretti is excited about the Trojans' returning experience after a down year. ... "Our team was incredibly young last year and went through some growing pains, but I expect them to rebound nicely," Moretti said. "They are hungry and excited to prove themselves. We have some good young post players and tough guards."

Crystal Lake South

Coach: Mark Mucha (10th season)

Last season's record: 8-21, 4-14 FVC (tied for eighth)

Top returners: Brynn LeFevre, sr., G; Carly Gorman, sr., G; Laken LePage, so., G

Key newcomers: Mady Law, sr., F; Kirra Hansen, sr., F; Adi Schwab, jr., G; Mallory Glover, fr., G; Makena Cleary, fr., G; Tessa Melhuish, fr., F

Worth noting: The Gators will have a very inexperienced team with many first-time varsity players. ... LePage will miss her sophomore season after suffering a torn ACL in August. LePage averaged 11.1 points a game as a freshman and nailed 22 3s. ... South graduated its top post player in Nicole Molgado (9.8 ppg, 11.1 rpg) and one of their most physical players in Hanna Massie (9.1 rpg). ... "We are going to have lots of kids getting their first varsity minutes," Mucha said. "I can't wait to see how they perform and watch their growth throughout the season."

Dundee-Crown

Coach: John Gonnella (second season)

Last season's record: 9-22, 4-14 (tied for eighth)

Top returners: Monica Sierzputowski, sr., F; Theriz Mercado, sr., G; Charlotte Stewart, jr., G

Worth noting: The Chargers showed improvement in the FVC after winning only one conference game in 2022. ... D-C graduated its lone All-FVC selection in Kendall Brents. ... Sierzputowski, a 6-foot-1 forward, missed time at the start of season while recovering from injury. She will play next year at Oakton College. ... D-C defeated McHenry 41-35 in a Class 4A Jacobs Regional semifinal ... "We are consistently striving to improve and develop our talent to remain competitive in all of our games," Gonnella said.

Elgin

Coach: Dr. Nick Bumbales (15th season; 36th year at **EHS**)

Last year's record: 8-24, 1-17 UEC

Top returning players: Izzie Castro, jr., 5-7, SG; Jocelyn Bardesi, sr., 5-4, PG

Key newcomers: Bella Coleman, sr., 5-7, G; Madison King, sr., 5-6, F; Mahita

Ratakonda, jr., 5-10, C; Kelly Taruc, jr., 5-1 G; Stephanie Asare, sr., 5-7, F; Chloe Horn, sr., 5-7, F; Maile Fuller, sr., 5-6, F; Shaniya Coleman, sr., 5-6, F

Worth noting: Castro, a captain along with Bardesi, averaged 10 points last year and broke Elgin Sports Hall of Famer Melissa Parker's long-standing record for most 3-pointers made in a season with 63. She was an all-Upstate Eight pick last year, Bardesi, a two-time UEC honorable mention pick, is back after averaging 4 points and 3 assists. Ratakonda was the **Elgin** JV team's leading scorer. "Even though we only have 2 returning starters, we do have a fair amount of experience returning," Bumbales noted.

"It is a good, balanced mix of players who might be our best offensive group in some time. Bumbales, a fixture at **Elgin High** over the years in both basketball programs, is retiring from coaching at season's end. "Obviously, being my last year of a long career has myself and the girls pumped up," he said. Bumbales noted both Glenbards are teams to watch in the UEC. "Glenbard East has a tough, deep, physical group that will be tough for most teams in the conference to match up with," he said. "Glenbard South is very talented. If they can stay healthy, they are the team to beat." **Elgin** has been named to the IBCA academic all-state team for the past three years, the only UEC team, boys or girls, to do so. Bardesi is the first four-time varsity captain of any sport in the 125-year history of **Elgin High** athletic, Bumbales stated. Bumbales has been a head coach in the girls basketball, softball and girls volleyball programs. He also served 21 years as team physician and volunteer assistant in the boys basketball program.

Elgin Academy

Coach: Eddie Mercado (second season)

Last season's record: 2 wins

Top returning players: Lily Perez, sr., G; Mia Velsaquez, jr., G; Tori Hill, sr., F

Key newcomers: Frieda Euscher-Klingenhsgen, sr., 6-2, C

Worth noting: The Hilltoppers graduated three seniors from last year's team. "I'm very excited for this year, although we will be very young because we lost the three seniors," Mercado explained. The Hilltoppers will be without senior forward Kate Kihnke for the season due to injury. Mercado also said freshmen Amanda Alvarado (guard), Abrielle Novelli (guard) and Selina Chen (forward) have potential. "We only won two games last year in my first year, but we had many close games," Mercado pointed out. "I am hoping we can make a leap and win more of those close ones this year. We plan to be live underdogs every game." Mercado said the 6-2 Euscher-Klingenhsgen, a newcomer to the team, has potential.

Geneva

Coach: Sarah Meadows (13th season)

Last season's record: 31-4

Top returners: Leah Palmer, sr., F, 5-11; Caroline Madden, sr., G, 5-7; Kinsey Gracey, G, 5-6

Key newcomers: Bridget Hecker, jr., F, 5-9; Perri Sweeney, G, jr., 5-7;

Worth noting: Last year's team finished third in Class 4A. While Cassidy Arni and Lauren Slagle graduated from that phenomenal front court, Leah Palmer is still back as the top scoring option and leader of this team. Rilee Hasegawa is another key loss from last year's lineup, but Caroline Madden and Kinsey Gracey will stabilize the guard position. Madden, in particular, is an exceptional on-ball defender and provides toughness. Geneva ran through the DuKane Conference undefeated last year, and while it remains to be seen how the rotation will fully settle, the Vikings will be jockeying for top position again this year.

Hampshire

Coach: Eric Samuelson (fifth season)

Last season's record: 22-10, 16-2 (second)

Top returners: Avery Cartee, sr., G-F; Ashley Herzing, sr., G; Sophie Oleferchik, sr., F; Whitney Thompson, sr., G; Chloe VanHorn, jr., G-F; Mikala Amegasse, so., G

Key newcomers: Katheryn Cardona, sr., F; Belle Eckert, sr., G-F; Audree Khotisene, sr., G-F; Kate Pearsall, sr., G; Autumn Kriegel, jr., G-F; Kiley Podzimek, jr., G; Morgan Trent, jr., G-F; Ginger Younger, so., G

Worth noting: The Whip-Purs' only two conference losses last year came to Huntley, going from six wins in FVC play in 2022 to 16 in 2023. ... Whitney Thompson and Herzing return as All-FVC selections. Herzing led the team in scoring at 9.2 points a game and was second in the area with 60 3-pointers. Thompson averaged 8.1 points a game and had 44 3s. ... Cartee, who is committed to Wisconsin-Whitewater (D-III), averaged 6.6 points a game and returns as a captain, along with Thompson and Herzing. ... Amegasse stood out over the summer, Samuelson said. ... "The eight seniors on our team have brought incredible leadership to our program, and we're honored to be part of their final high school journey," Samuelson said. "We have a chance to be fairly balanced on the offensive end. As always, defense will be the key. We will need to play great team defense this season."

Harvest Christian Academy

Coach: Jeremy Burke (fifth season)

Last season's record: 12-14, 5-1 (won NAC tournament)

Top returning players: Daphne Brown, jr., G; Alyssa Burke, jr., G-F; Ellie Semerau, jr., G; McKenna Nestrick, sr., F-

Key newcomers: Izzy Abraham G-F; Paige Nestrick, soph., G-F

Worth noting: Brown, the NAC MVP, was the team's leader in scoring, assists and steals last year, while Burke, an all-NAC selection, was the team's top rebounder and was second in scoring, assists and steals. McKenna Nestrick was a second-team all-NAC pick, while Semerau earned honorable-mention all-conference accolades. "We only lost one senior from last year's team, so our core returners are great," Burke noted. "This is a great group of girls that will work hard all season and will be playing their best basketball at the end of it." Burke said Harvest and Rockford Christian Life should be the top contenders in the Northeastern Athletic. Harvest split a pair of games with Life with Harvest winning in the title game of the conference tournament. Burke added Harvest has several girls who are multisport athletes and had great fall seasons. "We had girls that made it to the supersectional in volleyball and our cross country team went Downstate," he said. "We are looking to carry that success into the basketball season. It might take us a bit to get started, but I can't wait to see the outcome at the end."

Huntley

Coach: Steve Raethz (25th season)

Last season's record: 28-5, 18-0 FVC (first)

Top returners: Anna Campanelli, jr., G; Cassidy Serpe, sr., G; Yasmine Morsy, sr., F; Ava McFadden, jr., G; Isabella Boskey, jr., F

Key newcomers: Paula Strzelecki, jr., F; Madison Diaz, jr., G; Luca Garlin, so., G; Gwen Campbell, so., F; Aubrina Adamik, so., G; Cece Romano, so., G; Kylie Lucas, sr., G; Mia Garlin, sr., G; Elizabeth Johnson, sr., G; Alyssa Borzych, fr., G

Worth noting: The Red Raiders carry a 28-FVC game-winning streak into the season and have won the past two FVC titles. Huntley's 23 wins were its most since finishing 30-4 in 2016. The Raiders fell to Guilford 43-30 in a Class 4A Huntley Regional final. ... Huntley graduated eight seniors, including Jessie Ozzauto (16.2 ppg, 6.8 rpg) and

Sammi Campanelli (11.9 ppg, 4.4 rpg). ... Anna Campanelli averaged 8.1 points, 4.4 rebounds, 2.2 assists and 2.2 steals as a sophomore. ... McFadden made 29 3s and Serpe had 16. ... "Although we return only five players from our varsity team from last season, we have a group of players who work extremely hard and are very coachable, and we feel like we have the opportunity to improve and grow as the season progresses," Raethz said.

Kaneland

Coach: Brian Claesson (second season)

Last season: 15-17, 8-6 Interstate 8 Conference (third), lost in regional final to Sycamore

Top returners: Kendra Brown, jr., G; Lexi Schueler, sr., G; Sam Kerry, jr., G/F; Berlyn Ruh, sr., F; Emily Kunzer, sr., F.

Top newcomers: Kyra Lilly, so., G; Amani Meeks, fr., G.

Worth noting: Kaneland had an up-and-down season last year, losing many close games. Six of Kaneland's 17 losses from last year were by three points or fewer. Claesson hopes that some of those bounces will go the Knights' way after his team gets more acquainted with his philosophies. "Last year was the first year in the new system, and now we have that foundation set, which allows us to add new wrinkles into what we did last year," Claesson said. "We had a great offseason. It was great to see the team bond through the summer and into the fall. It is a fun group to be around. We have seen a lot of individual growth over the offseason, and now it's our job to mix individual growths into our team structure." Claesson also thinks that his team is more athletic and deeper this season. "We are not the biggest team, but we are going to use our speed to our advantage," Claesson said. "It is a great group of girls that are extremely smart. We know teams are going to focus on [Brown] and [Schueler], but we feel like we have a lot of depth that will surprise some teams.

Jacobs

Coach: Jonathon Reibel (sixth season)

Last season's record: 3-28, 1-17 FVC (10th)

Top returners: Cam Cook, sr., F; Baylle Fee, sr., F; Hailey Franczkowski, sr., F; Ashley Jedlowski, sr., G; Emma Lutz, sr., G; Mikayla Weel, jr., G; Zara Lewis, so., G

Key newcomers: Alondra Correa, sr., G; Sophia Acot, jr., G; Olivia Schuldt, jr., F; Amber Rasool, jr., F; Zoe VerBurg, jr., G; Mallory Fessler, so., G; Olivia Schuster, fr., F

Worth noting: The Golden Eagles had a down year with only one conference win after going 8-10 in FVC play in 2022. Reibel likes his team's depth and their ability to play different styles. He said Schuster, a 6-foot-4 freshman, will be a player to watch this season, Reibel said. Weel is returning from a torn ACL she suffered in the opener last season... "We have an extremely committed and hard-working group that is determined to turn things around this season," Reibel said. "All 14 players will be counted on to contribute every night. This group will make each game very exciting to watch."

Larkin

Coach: Steve Knapp (ninth season)

Last season's record: 18-14, 10-8 UEC (fifth)

Top returning players: Sanaii McPherson, soph., SF; Mia Carter, soph., SG; Gabby Ploche, sr., PG

Key newcomers: Mackenzie Leaver, fresh., G

Worth noting: McPherson averaged 9.2 points, 7.9 rebounds, 2.4 assists and 2.4 steals per game as a ninth-grader last year, while classmate Carter was at 7.1 points, 4 rebounds, 2 assists and 2 steals. Both were honorable mention all-UEC. Ploche averaged 4 points, 4 rebounds and 3 assists. "We will be quick up and down the floor because we are guard-heavy," Knapp said. "Many of the girls had a great summer so it is nice to see the growth in this group." Knapp concurred with the thought that both Glenbards are the teams to beat in the UEC this season along with **Bartlett. Larkin** has 4 seniors, 1 junior, 4 sophomores and a freshman on the roster. "We will be fun to watch the next couple years," Knapp said.

Rosary

Coach: Ken Ubertino (first season)

Last year's record: 6-25, 0-5 GCAC (sixth)

Top returning players: Megan Molenhouse, sr., G; Erin Murray, sr., Wing; Tes Ketterman, sr., Wing

Key newcomers: Ellie Figueras, sr., G; Maddie Stumm, jr., Wing; Karyna Brohl, jr., G; Peyton Saltijeral, soph., G

Worth noting: New coach Ubertino said strengths of the team include athleticism and defense. "I'm excited about our pace of play and playing positionless basketball," he said. Ubertino said Montini, Chicago Resurrection and Aurora Central are teams to beat in the GCAC. Murray, Figueras, Ketterman and Molenhouse are National Honors Society members at Rosary.

South Elgin

Coach: Emily Driessen (first season)

Last season's record: 16-17, 11-7 UEC (fourth)

Top returning players: Madison Hunt, sr., G; Lexi Lopez, sr., G

Key newcomers: Olivia Miller, fresh., F; Mia Speidel, sr., G; Taleah Banner, soph., F; Molly Stahl, soph., G

Outlook: "We are a young team with not a lot of varsity experience, so we are going to rely on our energy and our ability to grow together," first-year Storm coach Driessen said. "We plan to take big strides week in and week out to be better in February."

Driessen noted Glenbard South won the UEC last year and has the majority of its team back, and feels Glenbard East and **Larkin** both will have strong programs this season. Driessen noted the team will play the season with heavy hearts and honor Kamorra Campbell, who would have been a senior on the team this season. She passed on after a car accident on the way to school this past fall. "As a program and team, we have a lot more to play for this season," said Driessen, who had coached Campbell the past two years.

St. Charles East

Coach: Katie Claussner (first season)

Last season's record: 10-19

Top returners: Lexi DiOrio, sr., G, 5-6; Alexis Maridis, sr., G, 5-2; Corrine Reed, jr., G,

Key newcomers: Addie Schilb, jr., G 5-7

Worth noting: Claussner is in her first season as varsity head coach. The 2015 St.

Charles East graduate, Claussner takes over the bench from Josh Foster. The Saints are really solid at guard. DiOrio, the IU-Kokomo commit, is back for her fourth season and

plays an all-around strong game. Maridis missed a lot of time last season, but should bring a lot of balance at point guard. Reed also will build on a strong season and brings great shooting ability to the floor.

St. Charles North

Coach: Mike Tomczak (eighth season)

Last season's record: 26-7

Top returners: Katrina Stack, sr., F, 6-3; Reagan Sipla, sr., G/F, 6-1; Laney Stark, sr., G, 5-7

Key newcomers: Elle Fuhr, so. F, 6-0; Hannah Ganser, jr. G, 5-8; Mia Hoppes, sr., G, 5-7;

Worth noting: Alyssa Hughes and Julia Larson's graduations from last year's backcourt are huge considering their respective shooting and defense. However, Stark, Stack and Sipla are back in their spots from last season and will carry over their team growth from last year. Stark's defense will be key with Stack and Sipla ideally getting inside offensive looks to take advantage of their shooting and size. Fuhr brought energy and defense last year, while Hoppes should bring some shooting help.

St. Edward

Coach: Michelle Dawson (20th season)

Last season's record: 7-25, 4-8

Top returning players: Mogan Lutzow, sr., G; Amelia Davis, jr., F; Maggie Jarzemsky, jr., F; Elizabeth Leadley, jr., G; Madeline Sasis, jr., G; Alaina Nolan, soph., G; Jordin Sauls, soph., F

Key newcomers: Layne Dawson, fresh., G; Taylor Dawson, fresh., F; Sarah Gurley, fresh., G; Savannah Lynch, fresh., G

Outlook: Dawson, assisted by Roxanne Leadley, is 11 wins away from hitting the 300 mark for her career. Youthful experience will be on display in the early going for the Green Wave. "While we are still quite young, we now have some experienced varsity players," Dawson said. "Our returning players Maggie and Madeline will be leading the team along with freshman Savannah Lynch. We are looking forward to the Oregon Tipoff tournament to see how our athleticism and understanding of the game begin to gel on the court. I am impressed with the work ethic of our team throughout the first week of practice." This is St. Edward's first year in the new Chicagoland Christian Conference, which has 8 teams for girls basketball. "The new conference brings about a few changes, playing each team only once and then having an end-of-season conference tournament," Dawson explained.

Streamwood

Coach: Elizabeth Endriukaitis (second season)

Last season's record: 3-28, 1-17 UEC

Top returning players: Jami Gatlin, sr., F; Kailey Pawlikowski, jr., F; Casie Cruz, jr., F; Angelina Sagadraca, jr., PG; Briana Coffey, soph., F

Key newcomer: Ayumi Ishikawa, fresh., G

Worth noting: "Our strengths this season will be our speed and having more experience," Endriukaitis said. "We are returning four players who have played together for two-plus years. As a newer head coach, not to the program, my goal is to change the culture at **Streamwood** and bring back a culture of working hard and striving for

positive change, learning that sometimes we have to make sacrifices for the greater good and the betterment of the team and program," Endriukaitis said.

West Aurora

Coach: Teresa Waldinger

Last season's record: 15-16, 9-7 SWP West (third)

Top returning players: Niallie Evans, sr., PG

Worth noting: Evans is back after averaging 6.7 points, 4.4 rebounds, 2.3 assists and 1.5 steals last year. "Most of our players were on JV last year and had limited varsity minutes," Waldinger said. "However, several of them are aggressive and have a hunger for the game. We will be the hardest-working team on the floor. We have a great group of girls. I think people are underestimating us with Aspen Weeks graduating. We have a lot of heart and this crew is like a family." Freshman Syncere Williams will be a strong addition for the Blackhawks. "Syncere has a great basketball IQ and will prove valuable this season with her moves, shooting and speed," Waldinger said. West Aurora also has two transfer students in Kanylah Young and Anyae Newson, both seniors. "The girls have seemed to gel really well out of the gate," Waldinger said. "We're hoping that continues with their additions." Waldinger noted Plainfield North, Yorkville and Minooka are teams to keep an eye on in the Southwest Prairie West. "We're looking to finish at the top of the conference with our work ethic leading the way," she said.