– Daily Herald –

St. Charles East eyes turnaround season behind senior leaders

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By Craig Brueske

Displaying balanced scoring, solid defense and its customary 3-point shooting attack, St. Charles East's basketball team split 4 games at the Saints' 63rd annual Ron Johnson Thanksgiving Tournament this past weekend.

Led by Eddie Herrera, Steven Call, Brad Monkemeyer and Drew Clarke, the Saints closed out the tourney with perhaps their best game of the week, a thorough 72-48 triumph over Willowbrook in the 5th-place contest.

"I thought we took care of business against Willowbrook," said Saints coach Patrick Woods.

Herrera, a 6-foot-2 senior forward, tallied a game-high 20 points with 8 rebounds and 3 steals, while Call added 15 points, 8 rebounds and 4 assists, as the Saints grabbed a 37-20 halftime advantage and never looked back.

"To me, Eddie (Herrera) outplayed all of the big kids that he went up against, which is awesome to see," said Woods. "He also proved he could step outside, shooting 66 percent (6 for 9) from 3-point range."

Monkemeyer and Clarke chipped in with 11 and 10 points, respectively.

"We have almost four guys in double figures right now," said Woods. "Jack (Borri), Steven and Eddie are all averaging in double figures, and Jacob Vrankovich is at 9 points per game."

The Saints, who begin DuKane Conference play Friday night at home against Lake Park, are

eager to improve upon last year's 4-25 finish.

"We've got great senior leadership," said Woods. "We've got guys who really worked hard in the offseason, and they're unselfish. That's the best part about this group. They share the ball -- that's why we have so many guys scoring."

South Elgin takes 7th:

South Elgin (1-3) provided first-year head coach Philip Church with his first victory, an 85-80 win over Upstate Eight rival East Aurora in Saturday's 7th-place game at St. Charles East.

Senior Victor Sison came off the bench to pour in a team-high 28 points on 8 of 12 shooting from the field, including 5 for 6 from 3-point range. Sean Harvey and Eli Cole Williams added 16 and 11 points, respectively, for the Storm, who led by as many as 23 late in the third quarter.

Marmion starts strong:

Marmion finished with a 3-1 record in last weekend's Ken Peddy Windmill City Classic in Batavia.

The Cadets downed Longwood (67-47), Raby (60-37) and host Bulldogs (68-45) before dropping a 61-56 title decision to Waubonsie Valley.

"We had a very solid tournament," said Cadets coach Joe Piekarz. "We had three players -- Jabe Haith (14 points, 10 assists, 8 rebounds vs. Batavia), Collin Wainscott (18-point average, made seven 3s vs. Waubonsie), and Trevon Roots (17 ppg) make the all-tournament team.

"We have a senior-laden team that is ready to turn Marmion basketball around."

Playing without several football players participating in Saturday's Class 7A state championship against Mt. Carmel, Batavia went 2-2 thanks in part to the play of all-tournament performer Jack Ambrose.

Aurora Christian takes title:

Aurora Christian captured the Westminster Christian Tournament title with a 57-35 victory over St. Edward (3-1) Saturday night.

The Eagles (4-0), who also defeated Indian Creek, Genoa-Kingston and Elgin (2-2), were led by all-tourney selection Brayden Hatch, who averaged 12 points, 3 rebounds and 2.5 assists per game.

Marshawn Cocroft (13 ppg, 4.2 rpg, 5.8 apg), Cam Morel (10.5 ppg, 3.2 rpg), and Jalen Carter (9.2 ppg, 4.2 rpg) supported the cause for Aurora Christian.

Led by all-tournament sophomore guard Chris Tacher, Elgin Academy (2-2) placed fourth with wins over Westminster Christian (52-34) and Horizon-Southwest (63-27).

"Chris definitely turned some heads, averaging 20 points per game," said Elgin Academy coach Cory Wilks. "Liam Shackleton also averaged a double-double through three games.

"I'm incredibly proud of our showing and really believe it will jump-start us forward into the month of December."

St. Edward's Ben Zielinski, Elgin's Maddox Hollian, and Westminster Christian's Nathanael Ephrem rounded out the all-tournament team.