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A basketball player's hands are shown holding a basketball in front of a basketball hoop. The background is a dark, textured blue. The text "The MADNESS is BACK!" is written in a white, jagged, hand-drawn font across the basketball.

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is BACK!**

**2025-2026 Basketball Season Preview for
McMinn, Monroe, and Meigs counties!**

**A special publication of The Daily Post-Athenian
and The Advocate & Democrat**

McMinn County Cherokees



New leaders will have to step up for a McMinn County boys' basketball team beginning a new era of sorts.

Graduated from last year are three seniors – Reese Frazier, Brady Mullins and Joc Williams – who were all members of the 2023 TSSAA state tournament team and three other region semifinal squads, and who provided the vast majority of the Cherokees' scoring the past two seasons.

Moreover, following the latest TSSAA reclassification,

the Tribe was moved out of its familiar district and region with its long-time rivals to the south such as Bradley Central, Cleveland, Walker Valley and Ooltewah, and shifted over to a new District 4-4A with predominantly Knoxville-area opponents.

But head coach Jay Johnson, entering his third season at the helm, believes McMinn is ready to meet both new challenges ahead in 2025-2026. Many younger players were pressed into service last season, which

ended with a 19-12 record and in the region semifinals for the fourth straight year, and one in which the Tribe was missing key players at moments due to injury.

"Obviously we lost the meat of the program from last year with Joc and Brady and Reese, so we lost a lot of scoring," Johnson said. "But we bring back some underclassmen that got some experience from last year. And we get some guys back from injury.

"I think last year was big on getting some young

guys some experience for this season, and I think that will show with some of the young guys playing. And this is a young season for us."

The Cherokees are not unfamiliar with the brand of ball that awaits them heading north, as they have played some of their new district foes and other Knoxville-area teams in holiday tournaments the past few years.

But the challenge of facing in district play the likes of defending Class 4A

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Sequoyah Lady Chiefs



A year ago, Sequoyah was forced to flex its depth. Flash-forward to now and that depth looks even better.

Eight athletes averaged 16 minutes or more last winter. Five of them return to the 2025-26 team. Add in two more players who

picked up double digit appearances and a transfer who is more than familiar with her teammates, and Sequoyah fields a team that knows each other extremely well.

"I think it creates a lot of depth and a lot of competition," Sequoyah coach

Allyson Bowers said.

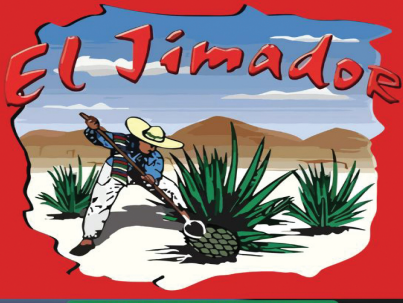
Flashes of that were shown in a summer camp series that saw Sequoyah compete well in multiple camps across Tennessee.

"The kids work together extremely well and everybody gets along with each other. It feels like I am two-

deep in every position," Bowers added. "Having the numbers with experience is certainly a blessing."

Several injuries throughout last season forced Sequoyah to get creative, but the constant flux on

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McMinn Central Chargers



One thing has stood out to head coach Daniel Curtis as McMinn Central prepares to get going on the basketball court.

These Chargers play hard.

And that is something Curtis believes they can build on as they seek to make up for the graduation of six seniors, several of whom were key players, from last year's squad that finished third in District 3-2A in both the regular season and the tournament.

"They told me, 'Coach, we've got nine Dennis Rodmans on the team,'" Curtis said. "I said, 'Good, we're going to need it.' So that's the kind of mentality they've got. They're going to do whatever they can, they're going to play their role. They know not everybody's the scorer. And they know they've got to bring the hard-nose mentality,

the fight mentality to the court. And if that's what they need to bring, that's what they bring."

The now-graduated Carter Anderson, Ray McCarty, Daylen Spradling and Will Benton shouldered the majority of the scoring burden for Central last year, with Ayden Plemons also having been a capable shooter and Bryson Riden a key role-player.

But the returning Chargers, bolstered by some transfers, make for what Curtis expects will be a team with more depth for 2025-2026 – and one that plays defense with some intensity.

"They're going to guard you," Curtis said. "We're going to play fast. I think we'll be a deep team. I think I can roll 12 of them out there right now and

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Sweetwater Lady Wildcats



Heading into the new season, Sweetwater has established the platform for the program to grow on.

After fielding a young team with new coaches in 2024-25, the team is taking the court this winter with eight returners who played vital roles. Also, for the first time since the end of the 2021-22 season, the Lady Wildcats have returning coaches in head coach Robin Bowden and assistant coach Joe Allen.

The consistency is now on both aspects for Sweetwater — on the court and in practice.

"We really feel like we are hoping to continue with the building blocks," Allen said. "Last year, we felt like we got better with each game and

the girls' expectations started to meet our expectations.

"They thought they had a chance to win and we want to build on that with a good defensive group and a good offensive group and defensive group."

Senior Kylie Baylog and junior Lilly Woodruff return after All-County seasons last year, along with seniors Maecie Davis, Brooklyn Gibby and Kendall Tyler.

The team rosters 10 varsity players to start the season, but the entire pool of upperclassmen have seen the court for a fair share of minutes.

Even sophomores Anastasia Bishop and Baylee Bohrer have got-

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County Teams and*
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Meigs County Tigers



It is no secret that Meigs County has had back-to-back down years in the win column.

It is also no secret that the 2025-26 Tigers have aspirations and expectations to flip that script.

Veteran head coach Sammy Perkinson described this year's Meigs roster as the deepest team he's coached in his 35 years of being around the program.

"I don't care to say this. I've never had this much depth in my coaching

career. We have players that will push each other in practice, which will only make the team better," Perkinson said.

Meigs lost only one player off of last year's team in sharpshooter Nate Powell, but it returns -- and gains -- many.

Perkinson hopes the abundance of talent on the Tiger roster can help them be competitive in the shrunk District 3-2A, which looks the same save Polk County moving back down to the

Chattanooga district.

"I think it will be a competitive league," Perkinson said of the district. "I've talked to (McMinn Central head coach) Daniel (Curtis) and he thinks they're where they need to be. He likes his team. Kingston lost the Brown twins, that brings them back to the pack. I think it will be a race for second place to get that bye."

Perkinson said Tellico Plains is likely the district favorite, but that his Tigers will assuredly be competi-

tive there behind the Bears.

The veteran coach noted Meigs' success on the football field may hinder its immediate success on the hardwood, with seven players missing the start of basketball as long as the football team stays alive in the playoffs, but said that could help lengthen the bench as players will see the floor in their place.

Meigs finished last season with an 8-23 record,

SEE MEIGS BOYS, 22



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Tellico Plains Lady Bears



There may be some newness around Lady Bears basketball this winter, but Tellico Plains will still be the contender that the program is known for being.

After graduating four seniors from last year's team, the roster will be younger. But they still house talent that can compete in East Tennessee, like senior Jonna Moses and returning All-County Player of the Year Delilah Reed.

The other shift comes courtside. Lacey Atkins steps in as the head coach after serving as an assistant for the past four seasons.

Under Atkins, a Lady Bear alumna, Tellico will look to continue on the foundation the program has built over decades and carried into Class 2A ball since 2021.

"Obviously, we would love to be first in the district. We have been hanging around fourth place for a while and we would love to go up from

there," Atkins said. "We want to be a contender at the top of the district this year. I feel like everybody in our district has a good shot at that and we want to be right in there."

That district will feature plenty of familiar names, with all members but one returning from last season.

To compete in it, though, Tellico will have to focus on its speed and its spark defensively.

"I think, defensively, they love to get after it. They are gritty and they are aggressive," Atkins added.

Rostering mostly underclassmen, the program will take the court with smaller players, but the group has fallen into a rhythm over the summer.

"They are fast and they know that. They play that way," Atkins said. "I feel like that is something that has

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McMinn County Lady Cherokees



On top of a move to a very competitive Knoxville region, the McMinn County girls will be very young once again.

There's some continuity from last year, though, with the Lady Tribe returning all but two players from the 2024-25 team.

Head coach Derika Jenkins said the 2025-26 Lady Cherokees will aim to continue to build off of the foundation set in year one.

"I couldn't be more excited about the group taking the floor this year. We are young, hungry and talented, and this group brings energy, potential and a willingness to learn every day."

After losing Lilly Sliger and Hanah Clark to graduation, McMinn returns everybody else, and adds a group of freshmen with high potential.

Those freshmen paired with senior leader Mia Sewell and a slew of sophomores will make the move to District 4-4A, competing with Bearden, Farragut, Hardin Valley, Lenoir City, Oak Ridge and Rhea County.

The Lady Cherokees are coming off of a 6-24 season, with a Christmas tournament championship the highlight of the season at Eagleton Academy's Battle

in the Village tournament.

McMinn returns four rotation pieces from last season, all of whom are pivotal to the Lady Tribe's potential success. Senior Mia Sewell will be the lone upperclassman on the entire team, bringing a wide range of abilities on the court as well as leadership on and off of it.

Joining the veteran as returning starters is the sophomore backcourt duo of Molly Trentham and Aven Hennessee, the former Trentham a crafty point guard showcasing scoring and playmaking abilities, and the latter Hennessee a sharpshooting scorer.

The fourth piece of the returning talent is Lilly Skidmore, a sophomore who started several games and was first off the bench in the other contests. Skidmore flashed ability to be a swiss army knife for the Lady Tribe.

"We return three of five consistent starters plus (Skidmore), who I've seen step up this summer in spurts. I still would like to see all five on the floor play with consistency," Jenkins said.

As for what Jenkins and assistant coach Renee Stinson have witnessed over the summer, the sec-

ond-year Lady Tribe coach says her players have shown glimpses of what she is trying to build at McMinn.

"What I saw this summer is that they play with heart," Jenkins said. "I watched them grow together as a team camp by camp. Despite their youth, this team has already shown

flashes of maturity and teamwork. They showed competitiveness and growth in areas we asked of them after last year."

The rookie quartet on the roster that could see playing time right away is Braelyn Fields, CC Coffie, Taryn McConkey and Kovi

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Sequoyah Chiefs



Sequoyah brings several returning players back to the court this winter and the Chiefs are ready to take the next step.

And that step is clear.

"The next step for us is to win," Sequoyah coach Joel Bailey said. "These guys have really been through the wringer. Not just here, but in junior high as well."

In 2024-25, Sequoyah won two games with a roster that turned to multiple first-time starters and spread minutes down the bench.

The program went 1-7 in district play after picking up a two-point win over South-Doyle in late January.

"We have grown up and been baptised by fire. Now it is our turn," Bailey added. "I fully believe in that and have all the faith in the world in the group that we have."

Sequoyah returns double-digits worth of players from last season's team.

"I think they have learned that, in order to take that next step, you have to be consistent. Be intentional, be focused and be locked in at all times," Bailey said. "And these guys want to win, man. And it is their

time; they deserve it. They have put in the work. We have watched other teams celebrate on our own floor for far too long and now it is our time."

Sequoyah has had a competitive summer and preseason. For Bailey, that success is a glimpse at how the team is ready to battle this season.

It has also shown how committed the group is to being successful and to one another.

"These guys have played with one another for a while and they have played here, at Sequoyah, for a while. I think that will be a really big key," Bailey said. "Also, with these guys playing together for so long, they know each other. They know what each person is going to give."

Sequoyah also altered the way it was conditioned in the preseason.

"They have challenged each other to get out of their comfort zone and be better," Bailey added. "I respect our willingness to change and our willingness to be uncomfortable. Whatever it takes for us to win, that is what we are going to do."

Last season's team was

showing strides late in the year. Bailey hopes that progress will carry over and continue through the new season.

"For me, it is growth. Having those guys continue

to grow on and off the floor and showing that growth a little more on the floor," Bailey added.

Part of that success may be contingent on how quick-

SEE SEQUOYAH BOYS, 26

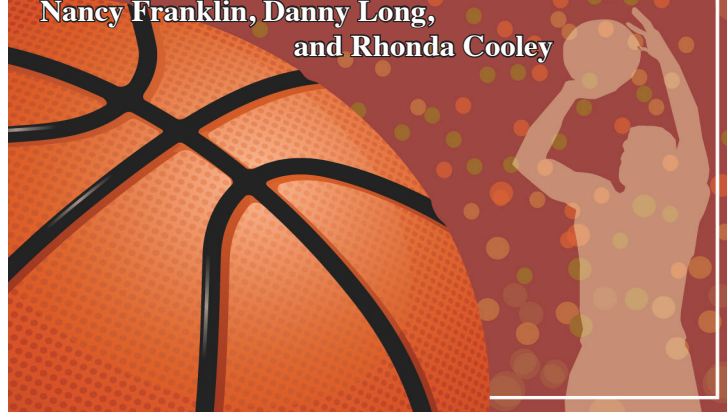
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McMinn Central Chargerettes



McMinn Central head coach Dakota Stone was crystal clear when asked about the expectation for his debut season at the helm of the Chargerettes -- they're going to win.

Even after losing six pivotal seniors to graduation, the 30-year old made it clear the standard has always

been to get to win area championships and get to Murfreesboro.

"I expect to win every game I play. Our expectations are to go to Murfreesboro. It's a process, and it won't happen overnight, but I expect in March that we are in Murfreesboro. That's not to say it's going

to be a cake walk, because it's going to be a dog fight. But that's what I expect out of this team and this locker room."

Central not only lost 47-year head coaching veteran Johnny Morgan, who retired from coaching with 1,107 career wins which slots him third all time in

TSSAA history, but they lost 2025 Class AA Miss Basketball Karina Bystry in that group of six seniors, all of which were pivotal players in one way or another to Central's three consecutive state tournament appearances.

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Sweetwater Wildcats



When Sweetwater takes the court this season, Joe Allen wants to see five things.

He wants his team to play hard, play physical, play together and play smart. Those will lead to the fifth and maybe most important thing: growth.

“Success with this group

is growing every day and trying to get better,” Allen said. “We are trying to do the four Ps — play hard, play physical, play together and play smart. We are trying to grow and learn the game.”

Sweetwater will field a young team this fall, highlighted by one senior, three juniors and three sopho-

mores.

“We have more underclassmen than upperclassmen. We are just trying to grow each day and grow for the future,” Allen said.

Most of the roster will be adjusting from middle school minutes to a high school varsity; it is a change that can be sud-

den for the program.

“We have been trying to talk to them about the controllables versus the uncontrollables,” Allen added. “We are just trying to grow each day.”

However, Sweetwater’s roster of 12 players has not

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Meigs County Lady Tigers



Meigs County may have one of its younger squads of Lady Tigers entering the 2025-2026 basketball season.

But Bryson Baker, entering his second season as the head coach, does not see that as a negative, even as the Lady Tigers seek to make up for the graduation of four seniors off last year's team that finished with a 21-12 record and was the Region 2-2A runner-up and a Class 2A sectional squad for the second straight season.

Those seniors lost include valuable post Lila Brown, reliable scorer Alexis Kranz, starting point guard Kaydence Schaumburg and role player Kylie Cornelius.

"We're going to be a lot

younger than we've been in a couple of years," Baker said. "But I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. I think there's going to be a lot of learning experiences and probably some bumps in the road that we're going to have to get through. But I really like this team. We've got a really good core group coming back, some players that scored for us last year and got some really good experience playing in the substate. And hopefully we'll be able to blend their experience with our youth and make it work."

Meigs has only one senior this year, and that is Ainsley King, who will be counted on for leadership and well as her versatility, being able

to score inside and outside, rebound and even bring the ball up the court at times.

"She's the outspoken leader of our program and we're really, really proud of how she's developed over the last couple of years," Baker said of King.

And behind King are only three juniors: Taylor McHone, Kennedy Smith and Mackenzie Wingate. McHone, who was one of the Lady Tigers' deadliest shooters last year, assumes the starting point guard role while still being counted on to make shots. The athletic Smith is expected to step up in the post as a rebounder and can defend multiple positions on the court, and she has also improved the

offensive side of her game both in the low post and the high post.

Among the sophomores, Kylie Jones could be headed for a breakout season after showing flashes of her potential as a freshman, most notably an 11-point outing against Kingston in which she made three 3-pointers. The athletic Carly Sneed played limited minutes as a freshman last year, but she looks to emerge in the post, having shown an ability to score there.

Rounding out the sophomores are Lilly Hughes, Kinslee Coffelt and Elora Crowder.

SEE MEIGS GIRLS, 29

Tellico Plains Bears



Don Swanson is eager to watch his team play basketball this winter. And he should be.

The Bears return the core of a team that won a school record 25 points last season while reaching the region semifinals and coming one possession away from the state's final 16 games.

This year, Tellico hopes to take that next step and play basketball into the third week of March.

"Our goal is to go where we want to go — go to state," Swanson said. "I feel like we have a great chance and a good possibility. I loaded our first half of the schedule with every big school I could get, so we would be ready for that at the end.

"The boys are excited. The weight room has been good and we are stronger. A little bigger in some spots and are going to be long."

Tellico graduated only

two players from last season and, while KT Hamilton and Braden Reed were certainly impactful, the Bears have multiple rising players ready to step in.

"I think it is going to be a really good year," Swanson added. "I told them not to be discouraged at first if they happen to have a loss. You are going to learn from playing better competition every time and I think it is really going to help us.

"I really look forward to just having a really solid year."

The Bears will start the season at Maryville and Northview Academy before traveling to Jefferson County. In December, they will face the Baylor School and Walker Valley.

"In tough situations, just get better," Swanson said. "Just like the Bible says, 'iron sharpens iron.' That is exact-

SEE TELlico BOYS, 30



**THE BEST PLACE
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NIGHT'S GAME**

McMinn Boys

Continued from Page 2

state runner-up Oak Ridge, perennial powerhouse Bearden and other formidable competition from Farragut and Hardin Valley will be an adjustment. The only mostly familiar face joining McMinn in the district is Rhea County, who was in McMinn's district the past two years, with Lenoir City also a district opponent now.

"I sat and looked at the last couple of years and honestly, other than it being district games and every one of them mattering, we have been the last few years seasoned to play up north," Johnson said. "So we go to the Thanksgiving tournaments, we go to the Christmas tournaments, so we're kind of used to the competition. So it's not going to be as much of a shock to us playing the

competition. I think it may put a strain on us with the travel and the competition night in and night out, but I think, like I said, our guys are used to it. We've got guys who play high level and play with a lot of those guys, we've got guys who are friends with a lot of guys on those teams. So I think we do well at adapting to our environment, and I think we're going to compete. That's one thing, we're going to compete and I think we'll be just fine."

Traditional rivals Bradley Central, Cleveland and Ooltewah remain on the schedule as non-district opponents, with Class 2A state semifinalist Tyner Academy also on the non-district slate. McMinn also hosts the Luxedo Holiday Classic over Thanksgiving weekend, in

Beau Harbin .. Sr.
Abe Reinbold .. Sr.
Andrew Brown .. Sr.
Bryson Womac .. Sr.
Jaxson Gonzalez .. Jr.
Madden Cobb .. Jr.
Korey Leonard .. Jr.
Maddox Frazier .. So.
Dax Pennington .. So.
Seth Dake .. So.
Brayden Fowler .. So.
Nate White .. Fr.
Lincoln Pettitt .. Fr.
Gavin Selvage .. Fr.
Bryson Case .. Fr.
Eli Dalton .. Fr.
Reese Coker .. Fr.
AJ Montes .. Fr.
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Editor's note: McMinn County's jersey numbers were not finalized as of deadline.

which it will see the likes of Hamilton Heights, Science Hill, Knoxville West and Austin-East.

"We've got another one of those schedules where you look at it and say this could

go one way or the other," Johnson said. "It could get really ugly quick, but we've had that every year and we tend to come out on top."

McMinn's four-member senior class includes one transfer from Cleveland, Abe Reinbold, who impressed with his versatility and leadership during summer league play.

"I was really impressed with how Abe stepped into a whole new role, a whole new world, and adapted," Johnson said. "And the guys love him, and he's going to be able to contribute to what we do and the Cherokee brand."

Bryson Womac, a post who has sharpened his guard skills over the off-season, is back and expected to be a key player as a senior.

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McMinn Boys

Continued from Page 14

Andrew Brown is also back on the roster as a senior, and Beau Harbin is likely to have a larger role after limited minutes last year.

“Those are guys we’re going to be leaning toward for our leadership, and they understand the standard that we set forth,” Johnson said of his seniors.

McMinn has three juniors: Jaxson Gonzalez, Madden Cobb and Korey Leonard. Gonzalez, still playing football as of deadline, is the returning starting point guard. Cobb, who had flashes of brilliance as a sophomore last year, is coming back from offseason injury with what Johnson said is an improved shooting touch and off hand ability.

Of the Cherokees’ four sophomores, Maddox Frazier’s emergence late last season as a freshman was key in the Tribe’s run to the region semifinals. The quick and athletic Dax Pennington returns from injury and looks to bolster McMinn’s desire to play with tempo. Seth Dake will be a key shooter in the rotation, and Brayden Fowler is a tenacious defender.

Several of McMinn’s eight freshmen could possibly factor into the varsity rotation before the season is over. Nate White is a dynamic player and streaky shooter. Lincoln Pettitt is lengthy on defense and athletic along with his shotmaking ability. Gavin Selvage has a motor and has developed his jump shot over the offseason. And Bryson Case comes in with good size and sound fundamentals in the post.

Rounding out the freshman class is Eli Dalton, Reese Coker, AJ Montes and Kingston Stuart.

“And we’ve got some

young pieces that we also added this summer from eighth grade, we’ve got a couple of guys that it’s going to be up to them whether they get to play a lot of extended minutes,” Johnson said. “I expect all of them to get to play at some point, but throughout the progression of the season we start getting into the meat of the district games and stuff. Early on in the season is going to determine the readiness to be able to compete on the varsity level.”

Johnson believes he has the roster this season to push tempo more often than not but also be adept at scoring in the half court in case opponents successfully take away McMinn’s transition game.

“I think this year we can structure it a little bit more at times when we play teams that take that away from us,” Johnson said. “We should be able to score a little bit more in the half court, but by all means we’re going to try to make you play as fast as we can. That’s just the style of play I like to play, and I think it fits us this year. Every year I want to try to play fast. Some years, I don’t think it fits us as much, but I think it really fits us to be really scrappy because of our size. I think adding Abe to our size, getting Andrew Brown back and Bryson developing his guard skills and stuff will make us a little bit more versatile.”

McMinn gets its season started Nov. 18 at home against Soddy-Daisy, before hitting the road Nov. 20 to Loudon. And regardless of how tough its new district may look, the Cherokees have the goal of standing atop it this season.

“We want to give our-

selves a chance,” Johnson said. “And we want to be able to look at the end and say, ‘Hey, this is where we’re at, we’re either the champions or we gave ourselves the best chance to be the champion.’ It’d be ideal we get to host the district tournament and win the district at home. So we’re striving for a cham-

pionship and to be able to hold the trophy up on our home floor first year in the district and set the tone for however long it’s going to have to be. So we’re committed to it. We don’t look at it as a burden. We look at it as an opportunity, and we’re going to seize that opportunity.”

Have a great season!





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Sequoyah Girls

Continued from Page 3

the roster is why this year's team starts the season poised for a hopeful run.

"We have a strong senior class with five seniors," Bowers said. "They have played major, major minutes their junior year, played a ton of minutes as sophomores and Emily (Hunt) played a ton as a freshman."

Hunt will be the most experienced Lady Chief and will factor with a talented Savannah Kirkland — both are returning All-County selections.

The senior class adds in more talent with Bella Bledsoe, Kali Compton and Camryn Elgin.

The junior class also rosters an experienced Elizabeth Lewis, who played an average of 17 minutes as a junior. She is joined

by Emery Lewis, Kennedy Corcoran and transfer Emmy Lindsey.

Lindsey transferred back to Sequoyah from Portland in Sumner County and has experience playing in this group.

"This is going to be a lot of fun. We have had a great preseason of conditioning and workouts. Their work ethic is unmatched and I cannot brag on this group of girls more," Bowers added. "They just show up every day ready to work. They are a group of kids that are not going to let anyone outwork them at all and it shows."

"It shows on the court and it shows in the classroom."

Sequoyah's schedule keeps the program out of district play until after

0 .. Camryn Elgin .. Sr.
5 .. Kali Compton .. Sr.
11 .. Emily Hunt .. Sr.
14 .. Kennedy Corcoran .. Jr.
20 .. Elizabeth Lewis .. Jr.
21 .. Emery Lewis .. Jr.
22 .. Emmy Lindsey .. Jr.
23 .. Brooklyn McDonald .. So.
30 .. Savannah Kirkland .. Sr.
32 .. Bella Bledsoe .. Sr.

Christmas, giving the team time to experiment in different player roles and shifts.

The Lady Chiefs will start with Seymour and Rhea County and will meet with Sweetwater and Tellico Plains before the first week of December ends.

"You give them an opportunity when opportunity presents itself. Those games early on in the season that do not really play a factor in your district

seeding, you can use those as a way to get the (younger) kids involved," Bowers said. "As the season goes along, competition breeds success. They get that taste of playing time and what it is like to be on the floor when games are on the line ... They crave that and they want it more and more."

Sequoyah finished last season on a strong note as players started to come back into the team. Of the final eight games, one was a win and four were losses by eight points or more.

"I think a lot of that came from us getting our athletes back. We were getting back in those games," Bowers said. "I think, using that experience, they are going to feed off of that and use

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Sequoyah Girls

Continued from Page 17

those close calls and opportunities (to get better).

"I think there was a lot of growing up in that last part of the season when those kids started trickling back in and we started making those strides at the end."

Kirkland will run the point for Sequoyah. Last winter, she averaged 1.5 assists and 5.2 points per game.

"She is a lockdown defender, but having that floor general is a direct extension from the sideline for me," Bowers said. "She just directs traffic so well. The girls on the team respect her and she leads by example from every facet."

Compton and Hunt will line up as senior guards.

Hunt led Sequoyah with 7.5 points per game last season and added 57

rebounds and 58 assists.

"Either Kali or Emily can take over that point position and run our offense. I can have those three coming up the floor at any time during that fast break," Bowers added. "And having Elizabeth Lewis and Camryn Elgin battling in the post and on the boards, both of those girls are tremendous athletes and they have a gift of strength that is rare."

Elizabeth Lewis led returners with a 37.2% shooting her junior year, while Elgin shot 34.4% from the floor.

"They are both competitors and they don't like to get pushed around. If they get pushed, they will push back, and we will use that to our advantage," Bowers said.

The defense averaged 8.3 deflections and 9.5 steals last year while allowing an average 49.6 points.

"In theory, we have five guards on the floor," Bowers said with Elgin and Elizabeth Lewis running in a pseudo-post type. "I don't want to put Savannah and Emily in the post if we don't have to, but we can pick up and play transition defense with anyone."

"We can stop the ball immediately and not have to wait for someone to switch off to run a different defense. They all can run that fluidly."

District 5-3A makes a pair of changes. Lenoir City leaves for Class 4A while Alcoa joins the district after winning 25 games and reaching the Class 2A Sectional last season.

Heritage returns as the district favorite and defending Class 2A state champion after a 35-2 record.

Rival Loudon stays in the league after sweeping Sequoyah with wins by three points, five points and four points last year.

South-Doyle also returns. The Lady Chiefs gave the Lady Cherokees a battle in late February in Knoxville.

"I feel like it is one of the tougher districts in East Tennessee for our division," Bowers said. "We are looking forward to the season and cannot wait to see what this group of seniors can do with it."

"Several of them have played together since the intermediate school. To see a group of ladies continue to stick with it and stick to each other is fun to watch."



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Central Boys

Continued from Page 4

not miss a beat. So I'm excited."

The six-member senior class consists of Jake Goodin, who might finally start a basketball season healthy for the first time since his sophomore year, Landin McInturff, Landyn Defreese, Landyn Giles, Josiah Haire and John Mazzei. McInturff and Defreese, in particular, logged valuable minutes for the Chargers last season as juniors.

"I think we're ready for it," Curtis said. "I think our seniors, they're ready to lead. They've been waiting for this and they're ready to go."

The seven-member junior class includes two new transfers from McMinn County, with Bryce Mullins poised to step up as one of the Chargers' primary scorers and shooters. Keyshawn Moore, also a McMinn transfer, is a defensive spark plug who also showed some shooting ability during summer league play.

Two more juniors are Jesse Holden, a transfer from Polk County, and Hunter Daffron, who was Sweetwater's starting point guard his first two years.

Daffron's eligibility was still being appealed as of deadline; if Central's appeal is successful he can play immediately, but if unsuccessful he would not be eligible for varsity play until late January.

The shifty Corey Brackett, who impressed in summer league, is eyeing the starting point guard role as a junior. Elijah Hacker and William Mayfield will be counted on for their toughness and energy on defense and on the boards.

And the lone sophomore on the varsity team for Central is Jett Quarles, whom Curtis described as a "gym rat," is another potential key shooter and scorer and could also be in the point guard rotation.

"With this group, they play so hard, and they play for Central," Curtis said. "It's a fun group to be around, they play their butt off every night, they do what you ask them to do and they get after it. They leave skin on the floor, I like to say. So I'm really looking forward to it."

"I know we lost a lot, but we also gained a lot, too. So I'm looking forward to it."

Curtis believes this is

2 .. Landin McInturff .. Sr.
3 .. Hunter Daffron .. Jr.
4 .. Corey Brackett .. Jr.
5 .. Bryce Mullins .. Jr.
10 .. Jake Goodin .. Sr.
11 .. Elijah Hacker .. Jr.
12 .. Landyn Giles .. Sr.
14 .. Keshawn Moore .. Jr.
15 .. Jett Quarles .. So.
20 .. Josiah Haire .. Sr.
21 .. John Mazzei .. Sr.
23 .. William Mayfield .. Jr.
24 .. Jesse Holden .. Jr.
33 .. Landyn Defreese .. Sr.

a Central team that can compete for the championship in a District 3-2A that remains as it did last year except for losing Polk County to Region 2-2A's opposing District 4-2A. But with a Tellico Plains team that returns many of its marquee players from last year's district runner-up and region semifinal finishes, a Meigs County group that might be the one to watch with last year's youthful but talented bunch a year older, and a Kingston squad that could still be formidable even with some graduations and transfers, the Chargers have a challenge ahead of them.

"A district championship first, then second, try to get to the region championship," Curtis said. "But

if we can get to that district championship game, I feel good about our position, but it's going to be tough. Tellico (Plains) is really good. Meigs County is good. Kingston is good; they fell off a little bit because they had a few transfer out, but they're still going to be pretty good. So it's going to be tough, either way."

Central begins its season Nov. 18 at Rhea County, then follows that up Nov. 20 with a trip to Chattanooga School for the Arts & Sciences (CSAS) in a rematch of last year's Region 2-2A opener, then takes on York Institute Nov. 22 at Roane State Community College.

The Chargers' non-district schedule also includes Cumberland County, CAK, Sequoyah and a Heritage team that reached the Class 3A sectional last year.

"Between our league and our non-district schedule, since I've been at Central every year we've had top-10 strength of schedule," Curtis said. "And I'm sure we'll have it again. But it makes us better in the long run and it helps us out at the end of the year."



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Sweetwater Girls

Continued from Page 5

ten varsity minutes under them.

The team also adds three freshmen — Britton Isbill, McKenly Moore and Emory Woodruff — who can factor into the plans.

“We have a good freshman class coming in and I think some of those freshmen are going to contribute and fill in some of the gaps to help us,” Allen added.

Translating that to the floor has started with a change of attitude around the program and adding more confidence to the players around leading scorer Lilly Woodruff.

“Lilly could always score and we put a lot of pressure on Lilly to score but, as we grew down the stretch, Kylie Baylog, Brooklyn Gibby, Baylee Bohrer and Kendall Tyler all proved that they can step up and score a little bit as well,” Allen said. “We are hoping we can have a little more consistent team effort of everybody chipping in and doing their part.”

Sweetwater ended last season with stronger performances down the

stretch against Kingston, Midway, Polk County and Tellico Plains.

“A little more confidence and ‘Hey, I can fulfill my role on this team,’” Bowden added.

Davis added to that mentality as the final quarter of the season rolled around in late January.

“She was a real tough-nosed defender and kind of like a ball magnet at times,” Allen said. “She made the right plays at the right times,” Bowden added.

With full practices starting Nov. 3, the summer session was a key to helping the team better gel together.

“For the most part, they have all gotten better and they have all grown in their own separate ways,” Allen said. “They have all worked hard on their shot, ball handling and getting stronger.”

Since the summer, the program has also started a new weight program.

“We are just trying to overall adjust their strength, their shot and their IQ of basketball,”

**1 .. Britton Isbill .. Fr.
4 .. Lilly Woodruff .. Jr.
5 .. Kylie Baylog .. Sr.
10 .. Maecie Davis .. Sr.
11 .. Emory Woodruff .. Fr.
20 .. McKenly Moore .. Fr.
22 .. Kendall Tyler .. Sr.
24 .. Baylee Bohrer .. So.
25 .. Anastasia Bishop .. So.
33 .. Brooklyn Gibby .. Sr.**

Allen said. “We are stronger, that is for sure.”

On the court, the roster has responded strongly to the more fine-tuned approach.

“It has created us to be a better-balanced team. It is hard to play sports without being balanced,” Bowden said.

“Just (to) get more confident and working towards trying to be the best version of ourselves we can be,” Allen

added.

The player roles are not so much shifting in the second year, but they are evolving.

“They have a better understanding of what we are expecting,” Allen said. “They are starting halfway there versus starting from scratch.”

A year ago, Sweetwater averaged 45.3 points per game and allowed 51.4 points per game, with two wins in the final seven games and nine on the season.

“We are expecting them all to be overall better scorers,” Allen said.

In those final seven games, three of the five losses were by 12 points

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Sweetwater Girls

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or less.

"They are more confident in their abilities, especially with their shooting. In the beginning, they were afraid to fail, but I think we helped them push past that part," Bowden added. "Now they are willing to step out a little more."

Woodruff averaged 16.7 points per game last season with over 11 rebounds per game. She also neared 40% shooting from the floor.

Sweetwater aims at adding offensive support around her. Baylog averaged 5.6 points last season and shot near 35% on 3-pointers.

Kendall Tyler averaged 5.1 points, with Bohrer throwing in 4.3 points and 3.8 from Gibby.

"We are just wanting to see our kids compete at a high level," Allen said.

The early part of Sweetwater's season starts with rivals Sequoyah, a trip to Loudon and Polk County. The Lady Wildcats will face Harriman twice before competing in the Harriman Christmas Tournament.

"We want them to meet adversity and play through it. The game does not stop because of a layup or a foul shot," Bowden added. "(We want) to see that fighting through adversity, keeping a level head and seeing the big picture."

As a team, the Lady Wildcats averaged 6.7 deflections and 5.8 steals per game last season.

"We just want to have a

defensive identity that we are going to guard the ball," Allen said. "We are going to contest and block out."

Sweetwater's District 3-2A sees one change with Polk County leaving. McMinn Central, Meigs County, Tellico Plains and Kingston all return with new coaches for the Chargerettes and Lady Bears.

"It is going to be pretty competitive," Allen said. "Can your team grow into its own identity and do the things it wants to do? If it does, it gives them a great chance to compete at the top."

District 3-2A play starts in early January with a four-game slate of all opponents in a league that should be

highly competitive.

"It takes the five Ps. It takes playing hard, playing smart, playing physical, play together and play positive," Allen said.

By adding new dynamics to the already experienced player pool, the Lady Wildcats hope to make a surge forward this winter.

"Last year, there was a lot of uncertainty and 'What is this going to be like?' I feel like a lot of that has been answered," Bowden said. "They know us better, they have more confidence and we have provided evidence to them that they have grown."

"They have seen themselves grow and I think they are truly excited about the year getting started."

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Meigs Boys

Continued from Page 6

with its eight wins coming against Sale Creek and Polk County twice apiece, and then Sweetwater, Maryville Christian, Wartburg and Ooltewah.

But because the Tigers were so young and return everyone, natural ascension is expected.

"We definitely have gotten stronger. We have grown, not just weight wise but we got a little taller and we're starting to look more like young men than little babies," Perkinson said. "The positive thing with this group is we're going to be able to score the basketball. Not only just shoot it, but I think we're going to be able to score off the bounce."

In its 19 player roster, Meigs has three seniors leading the way. Four-year Tigers Brody Goines and Jaxon Hope lead that charge, with Goines likely playing the post with his strength and versatility and Hope possessing the basketball at the point. Those two are joined by newcomer Jayven Burger, who transferred in from Polk last season but had to sit due to TSSAA transfer rules, joins that class.

Meigs will deploy five juniors -- two key returners who started most games last season in point guard Eli Hope and two-way wing Mason Davis, who was second in scoring with 10.8 points per game in 2024-25, and then McMinn transfer Eli Dake and two depth pieces in Isaac Hennessee and Noah Hill.

The gist of Meigs' roster comes with its eight sophomores. Superstar Gavin Malone is at the forefront of that group after leading the team in scoring as a fresh-

man last season. Malone can play all five positions on the court and can score in a multitude of ways, while also showing ability to dominate on the glass. In 2024-25, Malone scored 10.9 points per game and hauled in 5.0 rebounds per game.

Fellow freshman starter Bleu Armour is back, too, as a sophomore key piece for the Tigers. Armour was mainly a sharpshooter for Meigs in his rookie campaign but proved to be a capable point guard down the stretch.

Eli Barker, Ethan Shaver and Kaiden Brewster -- upon returning from football -- will also be key sophomore players for Meigs. Barker played JV as a freshman in Decatur but turned heads over the summer with the varsity Tigers as an athletic scoring guard. Shaver played sparingly on the hardwood as a freshman with a foot injury hampering most of his season, while Brewster played junior varsity his rookie season at McMinn County. Zac Brown put in time with the varsity over the summer, too, serving as an athletic glue piece for the Tigers. Classmates Evan and Aiden Ingham round out the sophomore class.

Perkinson said with the slew of depth the Tigers can showcase this season, it can only make the team better. They'll play uptempo and get out and run offensively, and then Perkinson is challenging the Tigers to get physical on the other end.

"We don't have to worry about foul trouble too bad. So we want to be nasty defensively. We just need to be really aggressive and get after people. If we can have

0 .. Gavin Malone .. So.
1 .. Bleu Armour .. So.
2 .. Jaxon Hope .. Sr.
4 .. Levi Harden .. So.
5 .. Eli Barker .. So.
10 .. Evan Ingham .. So.
11 .. Eli Dake .. Jr.
12 .. Jayven Burger .. Sr.
13 .. Zac Brown .. So.
15 .. Brody Goines .. Sr.
20 .. Mason Davis .. Jr.
21 .. Eli Hope .. Jr.
22 .. Aiden Ingham .. So.
24 .. Kaiden Brewster .. So.
25 .. Ethan Shaver .. So.
33 .. Isaac Hennessee .. Jr.
35 .. Noah Hill .. Jr.
40 .. Dalton Bean .. Fr.
43 .. Bryson Godsey .. Fr.

that mindset and get that attitude across the board by the end of the year, we may be hard to deal with."

Meigs will open the season at Loudon Nov. 18 before coming home to play Harriman Nov. 20.

After participating in the Luxedo Holiday Classic for Thanksgiving at McMinn County, Meigs will play McMinn twice in seven days. First in Athens on Dec. 2 and then in Decatur Dec. 9, with a game at Sale Creek sandwiched in between Dec. 5.

Meigs also will have home-and-home games with Midway, Van Buren County and Ooltewah across its season.

Perkinson said the best part of the team is how many point guards are on the roster. He listed players like Jaxon and Eli Hope, Burger, Armour, Malone and Barker as players that can play that point guard position for the Tigers, which only increases the playcalling and versatility of the roster as a whole.



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Tellico Girls

Continued from Page 7

followed us the last four or five years — just being a gritty, hard-nosed team. This group of girls falls right into that.”

In the wake of graduating an influential senior class, Atkins challenged key players to become leaders. Moses and Reed were amongst those who answered.

“I feel like they show up each day and are ready to work hard. They have worked hard in the weight room,” Atkins said.

Reed and Moses have helped to set a high standard.

“I have seen great things out of both of them,” Atkins added. “They both stepped up and made some mature, upperclassmen leadership and you could just feel that presence on the floor.

1 .. Hannah Grace Taylor .. Fr.
3 .. Ryleigh Holman .. So.
4 .. Lilli Wear .. So.
5. Maddie Swilley .. Fr.
10 .. Jaiden Moses .. So.
11 .. Delilah Reed .. Jr.
12 .. Jonna Moses .. Sr.
13 .. Makenna Dalton .. So.
22 .. Kylie Jenkins .. Fr.
23 .. Jaylin Frerichs .. So.
24 .. Michaela Peels .. Sr.
25 .. Sophie Rohr .. So.
30 .. Kiely Smith .. So.
32 .. Ariel Walston .. Sr.

“I am looking forward to seeing that as we open up this season.”

Moses returns after finishing last season with 118 assists and knocking down 26 3-pointers. She also added 54 rebounds.

Reed, who finished last season with 48.6% shooting and Tellico's leading scorer with 425 points, has shown

the growth from her stand-out sophomore campaign.

“You can tell she loves to play basketball,” Atkins said. “There have been many times I see her stay after by herself, getting some shooting in. I have seen her down at the ball courts in town, working to get better at her

game.

“She had a great season last season and I expect her to get right back in that role.”

Most of Tellico's squad comes from the sophomore class. Seven of the 14 players

SEE TELlico GIRLS, 24



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Tellico Girls

Continued from Page 23

rostered are sophomores.

Players like Kiely Smith and Sophie Rohr played a fair amount of minutes as freshmen, especially down the stretch.

"All through the summer, they showed great (growth). You could tell that, their freshmen year, they got their feet under them and they are ready to step in and play," Atkins said. "They are hustlers. They are kind of a lot of that fire and speed — they bring that to everything we do."

Multiple players out of the group — adding in players like Ryleigh Holman, Jaiden Moses, Jaylin Frerichs and Lilli Wear — also got on the court in 2024-25.

"There is a lot they can contribute in scoring and rebounding. Sophie is a flat-out hustler, all the time. She is fun to watch," Atkins said. "They are very athletic, as a whole group. I am looking forward to seeing them continue on that. They

enjoy playing that way."

The summer was key for those players getting more integrated into the system. Senior Michaela Peels also made strides in the summer session.

"It was really good to get them to play that way. We played 10 people all summer and we are looking to keep that rotation and the same way of playing going again," Atkins added. "It was good for them to get to do that and work on some new offenses."

Tellico's offense averaged 55 points per game last season, but four of the six leading average scorers do not return.

"We want to play fast and attack the basket. We are really going to be pushing for them to all look to be scorers," Atkins said. "We have quite a few that can score, want to score, and are willing to score. That is going to be kind of a little shift and be a little faster, I think."

The Lady Bears' defense allowed an average 53.5 points last season, but also dealt out nearly 10 deflections and steals per game.

"We want to look to pressure the ball," Atkins said. "We are going to look to pressure the ball as much as we can and get after it."

"The girls like to play that way; it suits them. There will be a lot of pressure, trapping — kind of run and gun."

District 3-2A returns everyone from last season, minus Polk County. McMinn Central, Meigs County, Kingston and Sweetwater will join Tellico.

"I think it is going to be pretty even for the girls," Atkins added. "I feel like every team has a great shot this year, so we have to come ready every night. All our district games should be tough, good competition."

Tellico has competed well with Kingston and Meigs County over the

past few seasons, while Sweetwater ended last season on a strong note.

Central will enter the year under a new head coach, Dakota Stone, after Johnny Morgan retired.

"You definitely have to have some grit about you and you have to have some fight, which I think these girls have," Atkins said. "You have to come ready every night to play and to play together. That is the biggy. I feel like our district is a strong district — nothing is handed to you and you have to work for everything you are going to get."

Atkins is joined by Don Swanson and Paul Chapman as assistants, per the TSSAA.

"I would say their competitiveness. They want to win and they want to get better every day," Atkins said of what adds to the player pool. "They do not like to lose and I think that is what is going to push them to that next level."

Central Girls

Continued from 10

Stone is confident, though, in the three returning pieces that played substantial minutes and then the new talent melded together for the stretch run.

"It's been an adjustment, as any coaching change would be. First couple weeks in the new system, girls are trying to figure out exactly what the coaches want and how we want to play. But as the summer went on, they showed signs of a lot of improvement. I've been pleased. It's been a great summer and a great six or seven months on the job

here. I have no complaint whatsoever with this group."

And while Central has decimated District 3-AA in recent years, having won 43 straight district games and not having lost since 2021, the league is shaping up to be much more competitive as Central finds its footing with largely new players and a new coach.

"There's nobody you look at the schedule and think 'Oh yeah, we're easily beating them,'" Stone said.

However, Stone made it clear he believes his team will win every time they hit

the hardwood.

The first year coach made note of how much production was really lost over the last couple of years.

"You lose Karina Bystry, you lose Reagan Baker. You are a year off from losing Molly Masingale. I think we lost around 70 percent of the scoring from last season and return 30 percent."

A piece of that talent retained is senior Maddie Kirkpatrick, who served as the Chargerettes' sixth man early in the 2024-25 season before a knee injury ended her junior season,

just as it did the year prior. However, Kirkpatrick is back healthy and will serve as the starting point guard on the Chargerettes this year.

Joining Kirkpatrick as senior leaders will be Mirra Freeman and Maggie Peterson. Freeman hasn't seen the floor much in her career on varsity, but will provide strength and size for Central, while Peterson, a McMinn County transfer, provides versatility at her size with scoring and defensive chops.

SEE CENTRAL GIRLS, 27

McMinn Girls

Continued from Page 8

Cardin.

"Those are talented freshmen that showed great things over the summer," Jenkins said.

In a summer scrimmage at Meigs County, Coffie confidently knocked down shots, Fields displayed a demeanor full of basketball IQ and McConkey and Cardin both provided size and versatility necessary to the Lady Tribe's success.

And rounding out the roster of players Jenkins said can contribute to the team's success is Rachel Alexander, Emiliya Smith, Alyssa Bingham, Aubrey Rogers, McKenna Harrison, Abigail Dexter and Paola Martinez-Medina.

"We may be a young team, but I do believe that we are building off of the foundation that was laid in

- 1.. Emiliya Smith
- 2.. Alyssa Bingham
- 3.. Molly Trentham
- 4.. Mia Sewell
- 10.. Braelyn Fields
- 11.. Aven Hennessee
- 12.. CC Coffie
- 14.. Lilly Skidmore
- 15.. Aubrey Rogers
- 23.. Taryn McConkey
- 24.. Kovi Cardin

year one. Being a year older and knowing the expectations with good girls makes building a little easier. The future is bright for this group, and I'm excited to be a part of their journey."

McMinn will travel to the 5StarPreps HoopJam the Dec. 19-22 for its second permitted bracketed tournament appearance. Its pink out game commences January 16th in the District 4-4A clash against Rhea County in Athens.



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Sequoyah Boys

Continued from Page 9

ly the double athletes that played football transition back into a basketball mentality.

Five Chiefs played football this fall, including quarterback Josh Phillips and receiver Eli Byrum.

"As a coach, we want to go so pedal to the metal cause we get so antsy. But a lot of it is just about easing those guys back into it and not putting too much on them too fast," Bailey said.

The Sequoyah offense expects to be more free-flowing this season after averaging 42.9 points per game last season.

"We want to play free and we want to get up and down the court a lot more. We want to be in transition a lot more and we want to run and jump," Bailey said. "I am hoping to get 10 solid guys and I can sub five in and five out."

Eight of the 10 players who averaged 10 minutes or more last season return, including Caden Stallcup, who became a proven leader on the court.

"We want to play free. We have some guys who can really shoot it, especially when they get going. So we want to let the 3-ball go, but we also want to attack the basket," Bailey said.

Sequoyah also hopes to be able to jump into its press, letting the game breathe.

"Talking with the guys, they are a lot more open to playing that way and a lot more open to doing those things," Bailey added. "Once you allow the guys to have fun and to learn, I think they are more open to you and the coaches."

Sequoyah allowed an average 59.1 points per game.

"We are definitely a man-to-man team, but we are going to throw some zone in there," Bailey said. "The guys know I am defensive-minded, but I also know the game has changed so much. A lot of time, your best defense is your best offense."

Bailey referred to the defensive scheme and goals of his team being "comfortable in chaos."

"We want teams to do things that they do not normally do and that plays into our hands," Bailey added. "We started playing that way this summer. It has really keyed in for us."

Bailey noted that positions have not been fully determined, but the players are experimenting in the spots this preseason.

"We want to build the

0 .. Caden Stallcup .. Sr.
1 .. Hunner Batson .. Jr.
2 .. Eli Byrum .. Jr.
3 .. Josh Phillips .. Sr.
4 .. Christian Chambers .. Sr.
5 .. Riley Lane .. So.
10 .. Aiden Cochran .. Jr.
11 .. Colton Runyan .. Jr.
12 .. Miles Atkins .. So.
13 .. Noah Watson .. Fr.
14 .. Cordell Davis .. So.
15 .. Leo Hessick .. Jr.
21 .. Logan Lee .. Sr.

confidence to do those things. So far, it has been okay and the guys seem to love it, and we are going to look to do," Bailey said.

That trust has been shown in the preseason. Bailey noted the difference when practices started to run.

"I was able to sit back and relax more because

these guys are so seasoned," Bailey said. "They know that this is what I expect and they also know what they have to do to be successful."

Sequoyah's district does have some changes. Lenoir City leaves for Class 4A while Alcoa joins from Class 2A.

The rest of District 5-3A will feature returners Heritage, Loudon, Sequoyah and South-Doyle.

Sequoyah will start the season against Seymour and Rhea County before traveling to Sweetwater.

The Chiefs will also compete in the Harriman Christmas Tournament.

"When I say it is our turn now, I fully believe it," Bailey said. "These guys are ready to win."

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Central Girls

Continued from Page 24

"In the last two or three days of practice, seeing our leadership of those three attack the court every day has been special," Stone said.

Central has one junior, although a very important one -- Malea Masingale. Masingale was the alpha dog in Central's summer scrimmages, regularly leading the team in scoring. She will be called upon to do the same during her junior campaign.

"She took our team by the reigns this summer. And I'll credit (head women's basketball coach) Jason Smith at (Tennessee) Wesleyan for this -- he said just give it to 21 and go play. Malea finally figured out she could do that and when she finally understands how good she is, she's going to be the best player on the floor most nights. It's going to be fun to watch. The expectations are there for Malea."

Four sophomores are listed on the varsity roster for the Chargerettes -- Millie Latham, Alahna Powell, Lily Arwood and Sofia Watson. Powell is one of the three key Chargerette returns

along with Kirkpatrick and Masingale that saw major minutes last year. Latham and Arwood were varsity bench players.

"Alahna can play as a guard. She can play as a big. She can play a stretch four, the three, whatever you need Alahna to do she will do it. She's been a great teammate, always encouraging and never a bad thing to say about anybody."

"Millie can guard on the defensive end one through five. I don't really expect her or need her to score -- she just plays a role and plays it to perfection. She's probably going to be the hardest working player on the court most nights."

"Lily Arwood is a big presence inside for us. She's expected to control the game down there inside when she gets the ball. She's going to take on a role that Central hasn't had in a while of a true big. We're better on the floor when she plays her role to perfection as a true big."

"It's Sofia Watson's first year on the varsity here. She's going to do all the little things to help you win.

3 .. Millie Latham .. So.
5 .. Sofia Watson .. So.
12 .. Maddie Kirkpatrick .. Sr.
14 .. Kytalin Davis .. Fr.
15 .. Abbie Plemons .. Fr.
21 .. Malea Masingale .. Jr.
22 .. Alahna Powell .. So.
23 .. Maggie Peterson .. Sr.
25 .. Lily Arwood .. So.
31 .. Emma Wilson .. Fr.
35 .. Jessi Cole .. Fr.
40 .. Mirra Freeman .. Fr.

She'll make winning plays, and she knocks down shots when she has the opportunity."

Stone boasted about several key freshmen that have earned the right to see the floor right away, so long as they continue to work for it in practice.

"We have three freshmen that are dressing varsity for us right now," Stone said. "All of them have different roles, which is awesome. Because sometimes it can be overwhelming for freshmen."

Kytalin Davis, Emma Wilson and Abbie Plemons all either started or played substantial minutes with the varsity over the summer.

Davis played the point guard position essentially full time, while Kirkpatrick

rehabbed the knee injury.

"She handled the ball for us in a true point guard role. She played off ball screens, is a great distributor creating shots for people. I couldn't be more pleased with the way she handled herself."

"Emma Wilson is a big-guard guard that can play a stretch big for us. Her game is mostly outside and when she spots up and you hit her, she's going to knock shots down."

"(Plemons) is going to absolutely shoot the lights out from outside and she's going to guard your guards with high effort. Her effort in practice has been incredible."

Stone also mentioned freshman Jessi Cole as a piece that has continued to improve, and as a post player Stone said Cole has pushed upperclassmen Freeman and Arwood to get better.

Central opens the season at Rhea County Nov. 18 in a hall of fame game, and then will travel to play state power York Institute at Roane State Nov. 22 before playing in the Farragut Thanksgiving tournament.

Sweetwater Boys

Continued from Page 11

backed down from the challenge in the preseason.

"Our coaching staff has been super happy with the effort and the coachability that these guys have come in with," Allen said. "We just have a lot of new faces and a lot of new mixes. We are just trying to work on the basics and get better."

Senior Briley Swafford is a returning player who played as a sophomore and has had a good shot in the preseason

and "is leading very well," per Allen.

Junior Colton Holder and sophomore Tyler Stamey have also taken steps forward for the Wildcats.

Transfer Brayden Garrett also has the shot to make an impact for Sweetwater.

Freshmen Kasen Mizer and Micah Upton have also been competing.

"They are going to get some playing time, but we are playing freshmen against

seniors again and that is just a hard road," Allen said. "The game is a little faster at high school, but I am hoping they will pick it up quickly."

Sweetwater will add more elements to the roster when football players - like Brayden Dowell, Landon Dacus and Ashton Johnkins - return and get more involved.

Sweetwater was in a similar position last year by playing a younger roster.

While the names may have changed, Allen and staff have gone through a season before that brings them a new perspective.

"Just trying to have a positive outlook even though it can be very hard," Allen said. "Basically, they are playing up three years and that is extremely hard. When it gets hard, can they continue to grow and continue to

SEE SWEETWATER BOYS, 28

Sweetwater Boys

Continued from Page 27

stay positive even though it is very hard?"

The Wildcats, who won 11 games last season, will bring an element of mystery with having an overhauled roster.

"We are going to play really hard," Allen said. "I look forward to seeing what they will do. Will it be enough? I don't know, but we can start where we are at."

"We have a lot of young kids who are trying to learn. We are trying to learn a lot of basketball, get our basketball IQ a little higher and try to compete the best that we can."

Sweetwater averaged 51.1 points per game last season while allowing 55.6.

"We want to have a good year and we want to try to learn. We want to play hard, play smart, play physical, play together and do the

2 .. Briley Swafford .. Sr.
10 .. Ashton Johnkins .. Fr.
11 .. Tyler Stamey .. So.
12 .. Kasen Mizer .. Fr.
13 .. Brayden Garrett .. Jr.
14 .. Treyton Richesin .. So.
15 .. Landon Dacus .. So.
20 .. Caleb Lauth .. Jr.
21 .. Micah Upton .. Fr.
23 .. Brayden Dowell .. So.
25 .. Zach Sisk .. Fr.
30 .. Gabriel Buckner .. Fr.
33 .. Colton Holder .. Jr.
35 .. Danny Contreras .. Fr.

best that we can do," Allen added.

Sweetwater will have to grow up fast on the court and that journey starts with Sequoyah in November and Midway on Dec. 1.

The Wildcats will also run through a road slate in early December at Loudon, Polk County and Wartburg

SEE SWEETWATER BOYS, 29



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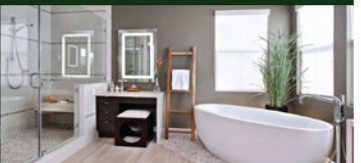
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Meigs Girls

Continued from Page 12

Six freshmen are on the roster for the Lady Tigers this season, with at least four of them poised to contribute right away. In particular, Baker described Anna Kate Hennessee as “probably one of the more well-rounded freshmen that we’ve seen in a while.”

“She’s one that can score in a lot of ways,” Baker said of Hennessee. “She’s quick off the dribble and she does a really good job of finishing around the rim. And she shoots the ball well.”

Also among the freshmen, Kenlie Cornelius is a tenacious defender who could also be counted on to handle the ball at times. The athletic and quick Kenzlee Hughes is also adept at defense, and Cali Armour brings energy and hustle along with some athleticism.

Rounding out the freshman class are Anna Beeler and Evelyn Wingate.

The Lady Tigers begin their season Nov. 18 at Loudon, then come home Nov. 20 to take on Harriman. Meigs’ non-district slate also includes a home-and-home against Van Buren, who finished last season as the Class 1A state runner-up. The Lady Tigers also play home-and-homes against McMinn County, Polk County, Midway, Ooltewah and Sale Creek.

That is to prepare Meigs for a District 3-2A slate that Baker expects will be challenging, considering the Lady Tigers might be among its younger teams. The rest of the district is still chasing powerhouse McMinn Central – new coach, roster turnover and all – until proven otherwise. Kingston, who has been competitive with the Lady Tigers in the battle for second the last couple of years, brings back all but one player from last

1 .. Anna Kate Hennessee .. Fr.
2 .. Taylor McHone .. Jr.
3 .. Cali Armour .. Fr.
5 .. Kenzlee Hughes .. Fr.
10 .. Kenlie Cornelius .. Fr.
11 .. Carly Sneed .. So.
12 .. Ainsley King .. Sr.
13 .. Kennedy Smith .. Jr.
15 .. Olivia James .. So.
21 .. Anna Beeler .. Fr.
22 .. Lilly Hughes .. So.
23 .. Kylie Jones .. So.
25 .. Mackenzie Wingate .. Jr.
31 .. Evelyn Wingate .. Fr.
33 .. Kinslee Coffelt .. So.
35 .. Elora Crowder .. So.

year. Tellico Plains also returns a core of players from last year’s 17-12 team, and Sweetwater seeks to break through this season with Lilly Woodruff back along with some promising incoming freshmen.

“Anything we accomplish will be very hard to earn, and it will be well

earned, whatever we accomplish,” Baker said. “Because everybody knows our district is really, really tough. It’s a battle night in and night out. And I think we’re going to be one of the younger teams in the district this year, so there’s going to be some growing pains with that. But I think that while we are young, this team does have a high upside. I think that we have potential to make some noise in February as long as we keep growing and developing throughout the season. We’ve got a tough schedule, but we’ve got some outstanding young people in our program and they come from great families, they do things the right way, and they’ve got a lot of good potential. We’re excited.”

Sweetwater Boys

Continued from Page 28

Central.

The preseason Christmas schedule also features a home-and-away with Harriman, with the trip to Sequoyah and a contest against Copper Basin, culminating with the Harriman Christmas Classic.

Sweetwater will play its “High Point” night on Jan. 22 against Loudon.

District 3-2A makes one change with Polk County leaving. District play starts on Jan. 9 with Sweetwater going to McMinn Central before a trip to Meigs County.

The Wildcats host Tellico on Jan. 20 before going to the Bears on Feb. 6.

Sweetwater and Kingston clash on Jan. 16 in the Den before going to Kingston on Feb. 3.

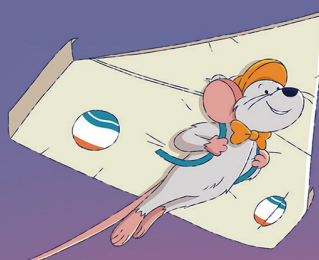
McMinn Central and Meigs County come to Sweetwater on Jan. 27 and Jan. 30, respectively.

“Tellico is Tellico and Meigs is going to be really good,” Allen said. “We are just going to try to compete. If our kids could find a way to get into those top four and make it to the region, it would be an awesome thing.”

“If not, it is a year of growth and we are moving to the next year and trying to take this program to the next level.”

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Tellico Boys

Continued from Page 13

ly what we are trying to do.”

Up and down the roster, Tellico fields experience. Chadwick Davis and Rylan Woods lead the charge with several talented players across the court, including Kinley Atkins and Kinzer Hudgins.

“Rylan and Chadwick had a good summer playing on the (AAU) tour, playing against really good talent,” Swanson said. “These other kids are working hard and they have had a whole year of playing against talent last year.

“They have not only the taste for winning, but the taste of what it takes to get there. That is the most important thing.”

Trevor Kibler has started his school year off to a strong start with a school record 12 receiving touchdowns in football. He did not miss the summer on the court, though, and will be a key player for the Bears.

“He played really good in the summer and filled that void spot we had empty from graduation,” Swanson said. “He makes us really, really long when we are on the floor.”

Kibler stood out in a depth role as a sophomore. Tellico’s next step this winter might come from the junior

class and the strides they made this offseason.

“I think they see it in practice. Nobody downplays the younger kids and they continue to speak to them and tell them what they need to be doing,” Swanson said. “They set a good example, not only in the weight room but in practice, and I think that is very important to get your program heading in the right direction.”

Tellico averaged 83 points last year, with Davis and Woods averaging over 15 points per game.

“I think we are probably going to be a little faster,” Swanson said. “We are going to play the same; we are going to get after you and play man-to-man. We are going to get tight on you and we have a lot of rim protectors.

“We have good guard play no matter who is in there.”

Hudgins and Aidyn Pilkey will also make strides for Tellico.

“Kinzer has had a good summer and a good workout in the weight room,” Swanson added. “Our first seven or eight are pretty good. (Pilkey) is the one that has come on a lot. And he has come along in the weight room.”

Across the floor, Tellico

0 .. Chadwick Davis .. Sr.
1 .. Aidyn Pilkey .. Sr.
2 .. Ike Hollinghead .. Sr.
3 .. Rylan Woods .. Sr.
4 .. Kinzer Hudgins .. Sr.
10 .. Kinley Atkins .. Sr.
11 .. Toby Millsaps .. Jr.
12 .. Hunter Russell .. Jr.
24 .. Malikah DiCandio .. So.
25 .. Trevor Kibler .. Sr.
32 .. Rafe Burnette .. Jr.
33 .. Eli Hudson .. Sr.
50 .. Lynkon Hamilton .. Jr.

will bring size with Davis and Hudgins as fast guards.

“(Atkins) is the stronger kid in the weight room, his shooting is better and he attacks the rim,” Swanson said.

Juniors Rafe Burnett and Lynkon Hamilton add size and depth for Tellico.

“They will definitely be a help. They are going to give

us those minutes when we need rest,” Swanson said.

Sophomore Malikah DiCandio is also adding to the talented roster.

“He is our second strongest in the weight room and his speed is right up there with the other ones,” Swanson said.

Hunter Russell is another junior who can step up when called upon.

“He is strong and physical, and he knows what his job is when he goes in there,” Swanson added.

“That is the main thing: they know what is expected of them when they go into the game and they are good teammates.”

Tellico will look to press

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Tellico Boys

Continued from Page 30

defensively, something they built last year while allowing just 64.4 points per game.

"We are going to get up on you and trap as much as possible. We are going to look and run off of it, and I feel like it is going to be a fun game to watch," Swanson said.

Hudgins and Kibler will "fall in the right place" on a defense that graduated a talented defender in Reed.

Quarterback Ike Hollinghead will also add to the team, though he may

not be available until later in the season.

"He is a good asset," Swanson said. "He is a good defender, he is strong, he is smart and he can shoot. It would make us a lot stronger."

District 3-2A makes one change with Polk County leaving while Meigs County, McMinn Central, Kingston and Sweetwater will join Tellico.

"I feel like Central and Meigs are going to be right there," Swanson said. "I

feel like Meigs is going to be pretty strong. They were young last year, they are all around the same height and all pretty good scorers."

Four of the five teams will advance to the Region 2-2A tournament. The opposite region features CSAS, Chattanooga Prep, Polk County and Tyner Academy.

"I think (Meigs head coach) Sammy (Perkinson) and Daniel Curtis at Central do a great job," Swanson added. "I told

these boys that we are going to have a bullseye on our back every night that we go out there.

"That is why we have the tough ones early and we need to be ready when it comes time."

Swanson's staff adds Lacey Atkins and Paul Chapman.

"I am thankful to be with Paul and Lacey. They have worked hard with us and I am thankful to be with the girls and the boys," Swanson said.

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