

The Northern Westchester
Examiner
Sports
Covering Putnam County and Northern Westchester Sports

Best Swishes!



2020
Basketball
Preview Edition



**County Center
Final 4 Dreams
Will be Tough
to Come By**

RAY GALLAGHER/RICK KUPERBERG/BOB CASTNER PHOTOS

The 2020 basketball season will open this week at a gymnasium near you, and while hopes are high this winter challenging for the Section 1 title will be extremely difficult for the local hoopers in and about the Northern Westchester and Putnam County region where the boys' hoops teams -- outside of Haldane's automatic entry -- were denied entrance to the Final 4 in 2019... see Boys' Hoops Previews

Hangin' & Bangin'!

Challenging for Sectional Titles a Tall Order in 2020

By Ray Gallagher
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The 2018-19 boys' hoops season was not the banner campaign we've come to expect in the Northern Westchester/Putnam County region. There wasn't a single team from the region – outside of Class C Haldane, with its automatic qualifier – to make it past the quarterfinals. In fact, only Class AA Mahopac and Class B Putnam Valley won its opening-round game to reach the quarters. Both were then eliminated, leaving many in the area to wonder where it all went wrong.

Truth be told, it won't be easy to turn those fortunes around in 2019-20 as teams like Mahopac and Put Valley and Somers have lost a ton of senior talent, and others will need to mesh what little star power they have with young, developing talent in a hurry to make up the ground. Sometimes, it takes years to recover: Walter Panas is still reeling from the loss of its 2018 graduating class, and both Mahopac and Put Valley could be due for a dip in production.

In this neck of the woods, there are no Mount Vernons and Peekskill is no longer the Peekskill we were once awed by, but here's a couple of quick predictions as a new era dawns in neighboring Dutchess County: Class AA Arlington will run away with the League I-A title (with Mahopac, Carmel, RCK, Jay EF) this winter; and reigning NYS Class A champion Poughkeepsie will be the new Peekskill – the kind of former Red Devil team that used to spank Class A with a paddle -- for as long as second-year Pioneers Coach Cody Moffett remains on board. The Pioneers, who have been as inconsistent as they have been good over the last 30 years, will be the team to beat so long as Moffett can hold that talent-rife program together, and much of Class A will trail the Pioneers in envy.

That's our take as we enter the 2019-20 season: Let's see if anyone from the NWE/Putnam area can challenge that notion, and let's see who is earning tickets and who is purchasing seats to the Westchester County Center Final 4 in early March.

CLASS A LEAGUE II-E HENDRICK HUDSON

Seventh-year Coach Jordan Hirsch's Sailors (68-59 since he took over) will be directly in Poughkeepsie's path twice a year, and it wasn't that long ago that it was the Sailors who were either battling for or grabbing league title rights.

"Basketball is extremely important in the city of Poughkeepsie right now, and you can credit Cody with that effort," Hirsch said. "They have to be considered the favorite, even after losing a bunch of seniors to graduation."



RAY GALLAGHER/RICK KUPERBERG/BOB CASTNER PHOTOS

Lakeland senior Jack Kruse is a lights-out shooter who could average 16-18 PPG or more this year.

The Sailors came back down to earth last year, losing in the outbracket round and finishing 5-16 after reaching their first Final 4 in nearly three decades in 2018. Outside of League II-E foe Peekskill, the road trips within the league will be long for the Sailors, who will also compete with Dutchess-based Beacon and Lourdes in the five team league.

Projected Starting 5: Sr. F, Tommy Fuchek; Jr. G, Nick Hiltley; Sr. F, Sergio Siverio; Sr. F, Marcus Lenz; Sr. G, David Goldman; Sr. G, James Cavaliere; Sr. G, Jared Aaronson

Main Contributors off Bench: Fr. G, Dean Hiltley; Jr. G, Jeremy Rench; Jr. G, Josh Gillison; Jr. F, Chris Connolly; Jr. G, Jack Kapfer

Hiltley was the club's leading scorer last

season as a sophomore with close to 300 points, and Fuchek led the team in assists as a forward.

The Sailors will need to do all the little things that don't show up in the scorebook if they are going to challenge behind Poughkeepsie. "This team's strength is chemistry and collective motor," the coach said. "They play extremely well together and pride themselves on making effort plays."

The Sailors are on the "smallish" side and will have to crash the boards. "This isn't necessarily something to improve (because it's out of our control), but we lack height," Hirsch admitted. "We will need to play very disciplined, physical and tough to battle teams that have significant height advantages over us."

Outlook: Without a true sniper and little size to speak of, the Sailors would do well to exceed last year's victory total and qualify for the playoffs. Facing Poughkeepsie and Beacon twice this winter will give the Sailors an idea of where they need to be. Both clubs are uber-talented. Peekskill is also in the league.

"What I've enjoyed most in working with this year's group is how competitive they are. Every practice is high energy and this team is looking to win every drill in practice," Hirsch said.

Poughkeepsie is coming off of a state title and federation run, so the Sailors will have seen the best the class has to offer. The usual suspects include Tappan Zee, Byram Hills and an improved Rye program. Additionally, Clarkstown South, a perennial Class AA power, has dropped down to Class A.

LEAGUE II-C

LAKELAND is one of the few teams in the area to return some significant talent, despite Joey Vetrano – the B.C.-bound baseball star -- opting to concentrate solely on baseball this season. The 6'3" senior's departure from the hardwood will hurt Coach Steve Fallo's Hornets (11-11) along the boards and in the paint. The Hornets are lucky to have enough depth to make up for that loss and a healthy Jack Kruse goes a long way. The 6'1" All-Conference senior swingman missed the better part of last season but can drop 20 on any given night off a silky smooth jumper and a knack for the rack.

"We are actually playing really well together at this point," Kruse said. "Communication and defense are getting stronger as we go along. We are just trying to use our speed to our advantage, so we are trying to get in the best shape possible. Shooting is definitely a strong suit of ours. We're going in with confidence and a crazy fan base behind us."

That fan base – should it turn out -- can expect to root on a team that hopes to contend for a Final 4 spot at the County Center in March.

"That's the goal, no doubt," Kruse said.

Projected Starting 5: Kruse, G Augie Karaqi (5'10"), G Mike Arcure (5'8"), G Jeff Owusu (5'9") and G Rob Nardelli (5'11") are expected to round out the guard-heavy starting five.

Main Contributors off Bench: C Kevin Keegan (6'2"), F James Barefoot (5'10"), F Brian Cummins (5'10") and F Aidan Welcome (6') will push for starting time and afford Fallo with solid situational athletes off the bench. F Reed Thompson (6'2"), G James Apostolou (5'10") and athletic F Landon Ruggieri (6'1") are all in the mix.

Outlook: There's no doubt the Hornets *continued on next page*

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Somers F Joe Grippo will be a go-to player for Tuskers in 2020.

will put points up with Kruse and Karaqi supplying the giddy-up to the offense, but the lack of size will undoubtedly hamper the Hornets' chances of challenging the big dogs of Class A; like defending champion Poughkeepsie, finalists Tappan Zee and semifinalists Greeley and Rye. Lakeland hopes to counter that with 'Speed and Snipe', something the Hornets will need to apply.

"We need to become a better defensive team," Fallo said. "Hopefully, we can compete for a league title and be competitive every night. "We'll play a fast-paced game and we can shoot the ball. Everyone on this team has a green light to shoot if they've got a good shot."

Lakeland can settle for another .500 season or they can push the limits of 13 wins and a quarterfinal playoff push or bust, which is well within reach despite the competition. But one thing they should not settle for is anything less than a league title.

Lakeland will open today at Lourdes and play its home opener at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 5, against Arlington in the opening round of the Relay for Life Tournament,

with Tappan Zee playing Suffern in the first game at 4:30 p.m. This is one of the toughest tournament fields in the section this season. As of press time, the consolation and finals of the tournament are scheduled for noon and 5:15 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7.

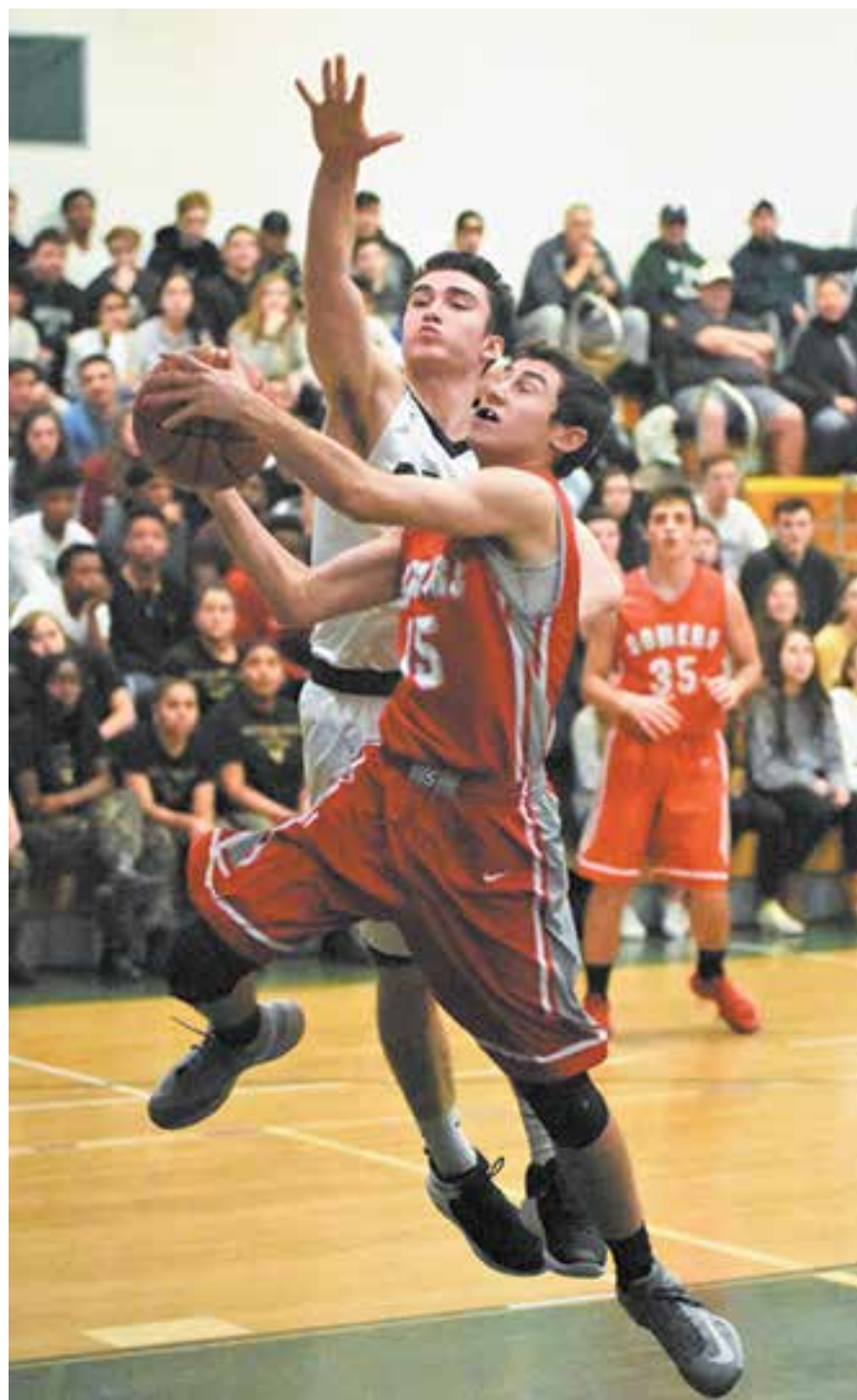
WALTER PANAS

After a highly successful 2018 season that saw the Panthers reach the Final 4, Panas came back to earth last season, finishing 5-16 under Coach Mike Auerbach, now in his third year at Panas, ninth overall (89-76). The unit has had a strong off-season, which should enable them to be much more competitive this season.

Projected Starting 5: includes some key returnees and a blend of rookies: Arturo Macchia 5'10" So. G; Caleb Evans 6'2" Jr. G/F; Robert Ennis 6'0" Sr. G; Josh Nnadiri 6'2" Sr. F and Tom Palmaffy 6'0" Sr. F.

Main Contributors off Bench: includes sparkplug Lorenzo Santucci 5'9" Sr. G; Alex Tavarez 5'10" Fr. G and big Anthony Sarcone 6'6" Sr. C.

Ennis and Santucci are big-play threats,



Brewster's Paul Catalano and Somers' Andrew Lasher will each get after the League II-C title this winter.

returning seniors with the most varsity experience. Santucci (10 PPG) can score the ball effectively and get to the rack, while Ennis worked into a consistent role the second half of the year after missing all of November and December with a knee injury.

"Santucci is an explosive scorer who has rounded out his game in the off season, while Ennis will do a lot of everything for us," said Auerbach, a former Panther in his own right. Macchia played off the bench last year for us as a freshman and will step into a much bigger role this year. He's an athletic guard who plays with a ton of energy and is as competitive as you can get. Palmaffy missed all of last season rehabbing a knee injury but has had an excellent off-season for us. He's a physical forward who plays bigger than his size but can also step out and be a threat from the perimeter. Lukas Velez and Mike Ramos

are both returning seniors who will provide us depth at both the guard and forward spots. They both have improved over the off season and are capable of contributing when called upon.

The loss of 6'5" senior C Jason Keefe, who recently underwent surgery for a knee injury sustained during the football season, is a big blow to the Panthers' paint presence.

"While he will miss the entire season, Jason's a terrific leader for our program and having him around will be an important part of our development as a team," the coach said.

The key newcomers will need to make up for the loss, including Evans, a talented transfer back from Beacon. "Caleb is about 6'2" with point guard skills," the coach said. "His ball-handling and passing will be a big

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Brewster G Kobey Hart will look to take over as one of the lead Bears in 2020.

part of our offense. He is also a good shooter who can string together makes in bunches."

Nnadiri is a 6'2" senior who transferred into Panas in September from Nigeria. He's an athletic wing who will really help us defensively. Sarcone is a 6'6" senior who

played a big role for us during the off season. He's a mobile center defensively and can also finish around the basket on offense. Tavaraz was the leading scorer for our JV team a year ago as an eighth-grader. He's a very talented guard whose skills and basketball



Panas sophomore G Arturo Macchia is a player to keep an eye on going forward.

IQ are ahead of his age. Simmonds, who is currently injured, is a junior guard/forward that we looked forward to working into the mix once healthy. Andrew Keefe and Zapata are both junior forwards who were solid contributors a year ago on JV.

"We feel like we can be much more athletic than a year ago," Auerbach admitted. "We've looked good in the off-season and pre-season when we can get out in transition either after a stop or by forcing a turnover. We also share the ball well as a team and can get scoring from a handful of guys."

The Panthers are not big or bulky, so what they lack in size they need to make up for in other ways.

"We don't have a ton of bulk up front, but are hoping our length and athleticism can make up for that," the coach said. "Also, despite having seven seniors we don't have a lot of varsity experience because of a rash of injuries sustained over the last couple of years."

Outlook: Five wins a year ago was an aberration from a Panas program that habitually challenges for double-digit wins, including playoff victories. The goal should be to double last year's win total (at the very least), challenge Lakeland, Somers and the rest of the lot for the league title and win a playoff game.

"We're optimistic we can have a much better season than a year ago," Auerbach said. "We've looked very good at times in the off season when we can get the game at

our pace and tempo. The energy in the gym is excellent. Their attention to detail and willingness to learn and grow as group has been very positive."

Lakeland returns a lot of key players and should be among the front-runners in the league. John Jay CR returns some starters and Auerbach was impressed with their JV a year ago.

SOMERS

The faces may change, but the pace remains the same at Somers. Frenetic, tempo-setting defense and transition offense are the common denominators each and every season, and that won't change in 2020. Plus, if there is any truth to the whispers around the program, Tusker Coach Chris DiCintio will want to go out like he came in: Swinging! After 11 years at Rye and now in his eighth season at Somers, DiCintio (220-164) has considered the notion of life after varsity basketball.

After 16-5 season and an opening-round loss to Beacon, the Tuskers do return enough chips to cash in on another successful season and certainly have more than enough to challenge the likes of Lakeland for the league title.

Projected Starting 5: Guard-heavy lineup includes Drew Lasher 5'10" senior guard is as fast and athletic as any backcourt player in the league; Joe Grippo 5'11" senior guard;

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Carmel senior G Jarid Garcia will take control of the Rams backcourt in 2020.

Dylan Berliner 6'1" senior guard; Ben Germaine 6'2" junior forward; Bennett Leitner 5'9" sophomore guard.

"Drew has an outstanding ability to get to the rim with the ability to score from the perimeter, and he's a lock down defender," DiCintio exclaimed! "Grippio is a tough, athletic guard with smooth stroke. Dylan is a long, lanky guard that can score from anywhere on the court. Quick release with deep range and an uncanny ability to score in traffic using his length. Ben is a strong, fundamental forward with high Basketball I.Q. His ability to hit the outside shot enables Somers to use him as a stretch four if needed, and he's a tough rebounder. Bennett is a fast and tough guard that plays older than he is. His ability to defend and lead make him one

of the league's best sophomore guards. He's a very unselfish player."

Main Contributors off Bench: Size off the bench enables the coach to make situational subbing. Kenny McGrane 6'4" senior forward (long, athletic forward that can do damage inside and out); Nate Townsend 6'5" senior forward (tall forward with an excellent fundamental game);

Henry Gilroy 6'4" junior center (veteran with the ability to defend and score around the rim);

Daniel Loscher 6'2" junior forward (tough forward that has a smooth stroke from the perimeter and an uncanny ability to rebound the basketball); Robert Repp 6'2" junior guard (smart, fundamental guard that knows how to direct the team at point).



Yorktown senior Roni Brucaj will steer the ship for the Huskers in 2020.

Outlook: The Tuskers lost four starters from last season's 16 win season, including All-Section guard Lucas Fecci and All-Conference center Max Germaine. Lasher and Leitner will need to fill the Fecci role. He was a pain in the ass for opponents to deal with. Lasher has the speed and athleticism to fill such a role and his experience for this team will be invaluable. Add in the scoring threat of Dylan Berliner who can hit from anywhere on the court, and the Tuskers should be just fine in the back court. Senior Joe Grippio and Sophomore Bennett Leitner, both whom were starters along with Lasher on the very successful soccer team this past fall, will make the Tuskers fast and athletic on both ends of the floor.

"The big test for the team will be our inside game," DiCintio said. "All we lost leaves some question marks. Ben Germaine, the younger brother of Max Germaine, will be called on to man the middle along with

Gilroy. If we use our speed and athleticism to press and play fast and Germaine and Gilroy can man the middle, Somers should have no trouble continuing to compete at the same level the Tuskers basketball program has become accustomed to."

DiCintio agreed that Lakeland could be the team to beat in the league, with the Tuskers providing a stiff challenge. Panas will be improved while Yorktown, Jay and Brewster round things out.

Like most coaches in Class A, DiCintio figures Rye, Poughkeepsie and Tappan Zee will be the primary contenders for the Final 4. Somers will host its annual Mike DePaoli Holiday Tournament on Thursday 12/13 through Saturday 12/15 featuring Mahopac vs. Kennedy on 12/13 and Somers vs. Yorktown on 12/14. The championship is on 12/15.

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YORKTOWN

In his second season at Yorktown, Coach Mark Pavella is still very much in the process of a rebuild, looking to build off last year's outbracket playoff loss, in which 22-seeded Huskers (7-14) found the sledding tough in a 62-47 to No. 11 Beacon. Yorktown didn't have the horses to run with the top challengers in Class A last season and things could be equally tough in 2020.

Projected Starting 5: A very fluid situation, according to the coach. Roni Brucaj F 6'2" Sr.; Sam Pincus 5'11" G Jr.; Rob Miller 5'11" PG Sr.; Anthony Granitto 6'2" F Jr.; Eddie Brucaj F/C 6'5" Soph.

Main Contributors off Bench: Sean Vogel 6'1" F Sr.; Jared Faivre 5'9" SG Jr.; Matt Mahoney 6'1" SG Sr.; David Dippolitto F 6' Jr.; Antoine Cole PG 5'7" Fresh.; Daniel Trashani G 5'10" Jr.; Jack Prybylski G 6'1" Soph; Martin Kopacz F 6'3 Sr.

"We have nine new players on the varsity this year," Pavella said. "We have good senior leadership, and the guys compete in practice. I'm excited about the new season. All of the underclassmen will have a chance to contribute. It's a hard-working group that plays well as a team. We will need to rebound the ball and defend to be able to compete each night."

Outlook: With nine new players, the Huskers are an enigma, but opponents can expect a physical style of play that should translate into some low-scoring scraps within the league. The Brucaj brothers will be impactful players and young Eddie has a chance to make a name for himself.

"I think the league is competitive top to bottom this year," Pavella said. "Any team can step up and win it this year. Panas has looked good this off-season."

Pavella, like many coaches believes, Tappan Zee, Poughkeepsie and Byram Hills are the teams to beat in Class A, and he likes Beacon to make some legit noise.

Yorktown opens the season with a challenging contest at 6 p.m. today at Fox Lane. The Huskers will then host the annual George Budries Yorktown Boys' and Girls' Memorial Basketball Tournament Friday (6:30 p.m.) against Walter Panas.

BREWSTER

Veteran Coach Tom Nelligan will draw blood from a stone given the chance, and the 2020 Bears will need every ounce he can squeeze out of them after losing all they did to graduation. The Bears went 6-15 last season and were knocked out of the playoffs in the outbracket round.

Projected Starters: As of press time, Nelligan would only commit to three starters: Junior G Kobey Hart; senior G Paul Catalano; senior F Nick Girard.

"We've been inconsistent in scrimmages," the coach said. "We need to be more determined on defense, and we may play as many as 10 guys as season gets going. Paul Catalano and Nick Girard are stepping up as leaders, but all jobs are up for grabs. We're very young, only three seniors and we have three sophomores up with us and no returning starters."

Outlook: Finding enough wins to qualify for the playoffs will be a grind for this youthful unit, but they won't lack for effort. Nelligan's teams always play in a manner similar to his coaching style; all out. Hart has some legit basketball talent, and can score the ball effectively. Opposing coaches are aware of it and will look to lock him off, so Girard will need to pound the boards for points and Catalano, who is very athletic, will need to become a primary option. They should be able to win some low-scoring league games should they find the will to compete night in and night out.

CLASS AA CARMEL

The Rams will welcome their fourth new coach since George Coates left in 2013 after the sudden recent resignation of Paul Brennan, who will be replaced by Joe Ross this season. Ross is no stranger to the program, and basketball in general. He's worked for several years with various Carmel teams before this season. Over the course of a 20-year career, he's have also been a head coach with St. Joseph's College (Brooklyn) and Sarah Lawrence College (Bronxville), and his attention to detail will be evident from the get.

Projected Starting 5: Jarid Garcia (G, senior, 5'10); Drew Fiore (G, soph, 5'11); Alex Beauchesne (G, senior, 6'0); Kevin Kovacs, (F, senior, 6'3); Ben Autieri (F, junior, 6'0)

Main Contributors off Bench: Nick Harrington (F, senior, 6'0), Tommy Prisco (F, senior, 5'10), Trevor Cayea (G, soph, 5'9), Kevin Dall (F, soph, 5'10), Nick DiLeo (F, soph, 6'2)

"This team will defend, can go to deep into its bench and has multiple players who can contribute at multiple positions," Ross said. "We will have to look beyond the talented Garcia and find others to become consistent offensive threats. Time on the floor and day-to-day experience are things that will help this team move forward."

When Garcia returns (out until early December with mono), the Rams get back an explosive returning starter, who should be among the top players in the league. Beauchesne, an All-Section football stud, is among the top defenders in the section and will be looked to provide more offense this season. Kovacs is said to be a long wing who can score from a variety of spots on the court, hopefully picking up some of the slack for graduated wing Shane McNerney, and



Mahopac junior John Cosentino will be one of four new starters to open season for Indians.

sophomore Fiore will be asked to contribute at multiple positions.

Harrington will be looked to provide some much-needed scoring and sophomores Fiore, Dall, DiLeo and Cayea will all be asked to quickly contribute at the varsity level while preparing for their future.

Outlook: A rash of injuries have plagued the program in recent years and a 5-14 2019 finish was not the expected outcome last year, but it did set up immediate elimination in a first-round playoff loss to Suffern.

The unit returns just two players with significant varsity experience and will take some time to figure things out, but it is also talented, unselfish and works hard, according

to the coach.

"We are excited to see what it looks like in February," he said.

What it looks like leading up should be a team that gives every ounce it has to make up for the evident shortcomings and the number of starters lost to graduation.

A strong, well-coached Arlington team should cause problems for the rest of league, including Mahopac, Jay EF and RCK. The Admirals have country-boy strength inside along with smart/talented guard play.

Outside of the league, Mount Vernon remains the class of the section.

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Haldane senior F Mame Diba is a force to reckon with this winter.

MAHOPAC

Another program, another new coach, but this one has integral ties to the Mahopac basketball community. First-year Mahopac Coach Tom McMahon has previous ties to the varsity program, having served a brief stint as its head coach over a decade ago, and he's had his finger on the pulse of the Indian hoops community for decades while serving as a St. John's CYO bigwig. He knows the kids in the program inside and out, and he hopes that knowledge serves him well as the Indians enter the 2019-20 season with a slew of new faces. Few programs in Section 1 were hit by graduation as hard, with four starters and a host of key bench players, having graduated from a team that went a very respectable 12-8 before bowing to

Suffern in the quarterfinals.

Projected Starting 5: Vin Bastone (JR, G/F, 6'2"), John Cosentino (JR, G, 5'10"), Matthew McMahon (SR, G, 6'0"), Ryan Reilly (SO, G/F, 6'3"), Luke Syku (JR, G, 5'11")

Main Contributors off Bench: Michael Callahan (SO, G/F, 6'2"), Patrick McMahon (SO, G, 6'0"), Colum Ranaghan (SO, F, 6'3"), Chris Clark (JR, G, 5'11"), Adam Mitchell (SR, F, 6'0"), Mike Kertelits (SR, F, 6'3"), Tommy O'Brien (SR, G, 5'10").

"We have some decent shooters and a deep rotation," said McMahon, who has two sons on the team and has worked vigorously with the unit throughout their CYO days. "Rebounding, player and system development are things we need to work

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on. We are very inexperienced with only two returning players who saw meaningful varsity minutes last year. We also have a new coaching staff, so the boys have had to learn an entirely new system."

Outlook: Teams will look to lock of Matt McMahon, who can knock it down from beyond the arc with great proficiency, so Bastone, a legit athlete, will have to get good in a hurry to form a competent 1-2 punch. Outside of Arlington, the Indians should be able to compete with the likes of Carmel, Jay EF and RCK, which is said to be improved. The Admirals are clearly the team to beat and should run away with the league.

"Our goal is to compete night in and night out and get better every single day as guys start to get used the system, the varsity experience and what it takes to be successful at this level," McMahon said. "We will also be focused on building a culture at the varsity, j.v., freshman and modified levels. With a good mix of upper and underclassman, we should be one of the better shooting teams, but we will have to work to rebound and secure the ball on that end of the floor. We have a challenging schedule and a very tough league, so we will need to be prepared and mentally tough every night."

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Mahopac's schedule is loaded with legit opponents, including Arlington and RCK twice, plus perennial powers Mount Vernon, New Rochelle and White Plains.

OSSINING

Fifth-year Pride Coach Mike Casey (38-43) has settled in at Ossining (5-15) and hopes to ride the basketball buzz within the community. The Ossining girls have won nine-straight Section 1 titles and enter the 2020 season as the reigning NYS champs, so Ossining is all about balling. The program has seen some of the finest players in the country go through it in recent years, including Obi Toppin (Dayton) and the Griffin brothers, Alan (Illinois) and Duke-bound Adrian, both of whom transferred to Stepinac.

Projected Starting 5: Jaeden Carr PG So. 5-10 (All-League); Khy'Leil Hawkins Jr. 5-9; Griffin Dahle Jr. 6-3; Mark DeAngelis Sr. 5-9; Zaysean Goodson Sr. 6-3.

Main Contributors off Bench: Jordan Smith Sr. 6-2; Caden Hallinan Jr. 6-2.

Carr, Hawkins and Dahle are players to keep an eye on, as are Hallinan, Jalen Blalock, MJ Aurora, Sr.; Thomas Kress, Sr. Jamir Harris, So.; John Rivera, Jr.; Vinny



Putnam Valley sophomore G Cole Durocher will be one of many new faces for the rebuilding Tigers.

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Bernardo, So.; Chris Acosta, Jr.

"The Pride will look to multiple players who can score the ball," Casey said. "The defense will need to continue to progress throughout the season."

Outlook: League I-D is stacked with perennial powers like White Plains, Horace Greeley and Fox Lane, which have dominated in recent years, and White Plains is said to be the team to beat while the Quakers are in transition with a new coach. That said, Greeley has been rock solid in recent years. Port Chester rounds out the league that is there for the taking.

"We are looking to bounce back from last season," Casey said. "While only returning two starters, there are several returners who saw significant minutes last year. Ossining is looking to be competitive while pulling off some big wins. White Plains has an edge on Greeley. Class Favorite is Mount Vernon, aren't they always?"

CLASS B PUTNAM VALLEY

The No.1 seed headed into the tournament last fall, former Coach Mike McDonnell's Tigers (18-4) ran in to a Woodlands buzz saw in the quarterfinals where the eight-seeded Falcons busted up the Class B bracket. And since that point in time, Putnam Valley is no longer the same. McDonnell resigned and went to Kennedy Catholic. Twelve seniors and all five starters have graduated, leaving veteran Coach Al Morales with an unsettled situation as he takes over the Tigers after several years at Kennedy. In essence, the coaches traded places, and Morales inherits a full-blown rebuild. That said, the Tigers have looked better than expected in the pre-season, including a scrimmage against Brewster.

Projected Starting 5: With so many new faces, nothing has been solidified as of press time, but the following players figure to have an impact. Cole Durocher, 5'8" G soph.; Arthur Holzman, G soph.; Joe Lewis, 6'2" F sr.; Anthony Williams, 6' G sr.; Mike Doebbler, 6'4" C; Matt Aviles, 6'2" F sr.; Mike Reichardt 6'1" G sr.; Mike Cioffi, 6' G sr.

"We are very athletic," Morales said. "But we need to work on our defense and taking better care of the ball."

Aviles is the wild card. He has the potential to average 15 PPG if he comes to play and dedicates himself at both ends of the floor. He can turn his high school career into something special if he desires to do so.

A 6'4", Doebbler has something you can't teach, so if he can wreak some havoc in the middle and pick up points off the boards, the Tigers will benefit immensely. Durocher needs to let the game come to him and when he does, he can score the ball.

Outlook: This will not be a typical PV year where you can pencil in double-digit wins and a solid playoff run. The Tigers had been to five Final 4's and two championship appearances over the last six years before the 2019 season, but matching that type of success will be a tall order for such a young unit. The schedule has been dialed down

some, and the league includes North Salem, Pawling and a Haldane club that should/could challenge for the league title before a strong run at the Section 1 Class C title.

Morales, a solid X's and O's coach, has a learning curve to adjust to as well, having not coached against Section 1 foes for many years. That said, he knows talent well and can coach up those that are eager to learn. If the Tigers can find 6-8 wins on this schedule, that'll be a tough challenge, but they have managed to do that and more the last decade. Anything less will be a major disappointment.

"Since we have a young team, new system and coach we will need some time to get going," Morales said. "We must focus on making defense our best offense while taking it one day at a time."

Defending champion Dobbs Ferry and Valhalla are said to be strong challengers for the Class B title this season.

CLASS C HALDANE

There is little doubt about the effort of a Blue Devil team under 14th-year Coach Joe Virgadamo: You go hard or you go home. The feisty coach accepts nothing less than all-out and that's what the Blue Devils will need to meet their lofty pre-season goals. After losing to Class C champion Hamilton in the semis last year, the Blue Devils (14-7) return a ton of talent ready for another go at what would be Haldane's first sectional title since three-peating in 2016; what was the finest era in school history.

Projected Starting 5: Daniel Santos 6'2", G, Jr.; Darrin Santos 6'1", G, Jr.; Alex Kubik 5'10", G, Sr.; Matt Champin (All-Conference) 6'4", F, Sr.; Mame Diba (All-League) 6'4", F, Sr.

Main Contributors off Bench: Soren Holmbo 6'2", G, Fr.; Matteo Cerbone 6'3", F, Fr.; Jagger Beachak 6'2", G, Sr.; Doug Donaghy 5'11, F, Jr. Newcomers to watch include Soren, Matteo, Vincenzo Scanga, Christian Pezzullo, Johnathon Bradley.

"Our starting lineup can change as our practices have been very competitive," Virgadamo said. "I think we will have different guys stepping up and scoring any given night. We are very long and athletic. We are going to try to get deep into our bench early on. Our ball movement and communication has been outstanding."

Outlook: 15 wins is a realistic goal, as is the League III-E title. There's no reason to believe Haldane can't reestablish itself as a legit Class C challenger either, with all the Blue Devils return. Champlin is a difficult matchup for anyone and Diba is just coming in to his own. They are a versatile, nightmarish frontcourt duo. The guard play is sound but will need to find another next level if the Blue Devils are going to compete for the section, given the gritty style of Hamilton and Tuckahoe.

"We have a very competitive schedule this year and we will be ready for a tough Class C sectional tournament," the coach said. "Putnam Valley and North Salem will be tough in our league. Hamilton is the favorite being that they return everyone.



Haldane senior G Alex Kubik is one of many returning starters for the title-hungry Blue Devils.

Tuckahoe will also be solid with (former Greeley coach) Felix Nicodemo."

CHSAA KENNEDY

Al Morales is gone, Mike McDonnell is in. The Gaels (2-22) struggled through their CHSAA season last year, but McDonnell believes his backcourt is among the deepest he's ever coached.

With just one returning senior, F 6'2 Connor O'Reilly, the Gaels are made up of primarily juniors.

Key varsity returnees: Guards Lou Hoinkis and Jaden Wilson; four new transfers this summer led by talented point guards Chris Ward Jr. from Ardsley, Jaden Watkins (Spackenkill) and sharpshooting

Denis Ward (Carmel) along with forward Donovan Ramgahan of Arlington.

The team will compete in Class B

CHSAA and faces a very strong schedule: St Dominics, St Mary's,

Holy Trinity and Kellenburg (LI), Albertus Magnus, Somers Tourney, Regis, Salesian and Sacred Heart.

"This is the deepest group of talented guards I've ever coached," McDonnell said. "The boys have worked

their tails off from the summer until now and are hungry to challenge for a Class B championship."



Sports

Girls Hoops Notebook

No Shortage of Talent Among Local Hoopers

By Tony Pinciario

The **OSSINING** uniforms and team colors have not changed, but it will be a new-look Pride girls' varsity basketball team for the 2019-20 season. Throughout the last decade, Ossining and veteran Coach Dan Ricci have had one of the best or best players in Section 1 on its roster from Saniya Chong to Shadeen Saumels to Andra Espinoza-Hunter to, most recently, Aubrey Griffin, Kailah Hunter and Jaida Strippoli.

The Griffin-Hunter-Strippoli triumvirate had an outstanding career, leading Ossining to yet another Section 1 Class AA and State title last year. Griffin is a freshman at UCONN while Hunter has joined Samuels at Seton Hall and Strippoli is playing at West Point.

"This is the first year in the last decade that I don't feel we have the best player in the section," said Ricci, in his 29th year and owner of 500 varsity victories.

Despite this, Ricci is confident in his team's collective ability.

"One of our strengths is depth," Ricci said. "There is not much separation between player one through 14. We will be as good as our work ethic takes us."

One thing Ricci can count on is his team's annual determined work ethic. Seniors Julia Iorio (guard) and Adriana McFadden (forward) will lead the Pride this season. The returning seniors will be joined by a pair of sophomore newcomers to varsity -- Michelle Mercado and Katie Marx, both guards.

Ossining opened the season, today, against fellow Section 1 Class AA power, Mount Vernon. The Pride will have an adventurous

December, travelling to Virginia for a tournament then making its annual trip to Orlando, Fla., for a prestigious tournament.

In her first three years coaching her alma mater, Kristi Dini has transformed **PUTNAM VALLEY** into a rising power. Putnam Valley went 20-2 last year, won a league title and was on its way to a sectional-final matchup with Irvington, but was upset by Woodlands in the Section 1 Class B quarterfinal round.

The Tigers return two prime-time players in senior Kelli Venezia and junior Arianna Stockinger.

"Kelli is a big-time guard who can score different ways and is a lock-down defender," said Dini, the former Putnam Valley basketball and field hockey great. "Arianna plays inside and outside and is also a big time defender."

The Venezia-Stockinger tandem will be joined by a core of underclassmen.

"We have some young talent returning from last year that are going to surprise people now that they're a year older and had an off-season full of hoops under their belt," said Dini, who starred at Boston University.

One aspect Putnam Valley has become known for under Dini is its suffocating defense. Defense will again be Putnam Valley's strength, led by G Cyera Daughtry. Dini noted that her team is dealing with several injuries early on, but underclassmen Eva DeChent and Amanda Orlando will start. Depth is an issue the Tigers will have to overcome.

"Our strength has always been our man-to-man D and our guard play," Dini said. "We have several big injuries this year, including two season-ending so we have changed some things around."

"We have more scoring options this year and just need to play together and we will be in good shape."

Putnam Valley debuted Tuesday, against Pleasantville.

Dini has upgraded the schedule as Putnam Valley will play Ursuline, Arlington, Irvington, Hastings and Dobbs Ferry, as well as participating in the Har-



Putnam Valley returns a ton of talent for a run in Class B this winter

rison and Lakeland tournaments.

SOMERS was once again among the Section 1 elite in Class A last year. The 2018 Section 1 Class A champions returned to the Westchester County Center for the final four, last year, in Coach Marc Hattem's third year. The Tuskers were in line for another sectional title, but Tappan Zee emerged with the upset in the championship game.

The Tuskers graduated two starters, including all-section player Hannah Angelini, who is playing at Scranton. The Tuskers do return a veteran senior nucleus of Dani DiCintio, Emily Arena, Pooja Rao and Jordan May, as well as junior Taylor Penzo.

Hattem welcomes three freshmen to varsity in Ava Giudice and Lauren McCartin, Alexa Warycha. Senior Alexis Atkinson returns to the court after last playing as a freshman. Hattem pointed out Atkinson is committed to Iona for soccer.

Somers, like Putnam Valley, is battling the injury bug. Hattem said he has yet to have the full team together because of injuries. He anticipates mid-to-late December before the team is whole again.

"Hopefully, we will have our rotation set by January," Hattem said. "In all my years of coaching I have never been hit as hard by injuries and kids missing time. A strength is our experience from making deep runs in sectionals the last few years."

Somers has its season-opener, tomorrow, against Rye. The Tuskers will be heading to Amsterdam (N.Y.) for its holiday tournament. The field includes Shenedehowa (Section 2) and Curtis (Publi School Athletic League).

WALTER PANAS has gone unnoticed in Northern Westchester and Putnam with the success of Ossining, Somers and Putnam

Valley, in recent years. However, last year, the Panthers emerged as a sectional contender and appear to continue this year.

Panas finished with a program-best 19-4 record and advanced to the Section 1 Class A final four at the Westchester County Center. Even though the Panthers lost to Somers, it did not deter from what they accomplished. Coach Matt Evangelista returns everyone from last year, except for excellent all-around player Julia Araujo.

Panas returns its starting five -- seniors Katherine Reynoso (guard/forward) and Kristen Scrobola (forward) and juniors Kristen Cinquina, Cailean Nolan and Alex Sudol, all guards.

Panas also has six more returning players in seniors Emma Anderson (forward), Faith Cesarini (guard/forward), Megan Mucci (guard/forward) and Lexi Turners (forward). Junior Erijona Rraci (center) and sophomore Lyndsay Kagan (guard) complete this group.

With 11 players back, only two new players join varsity, sophomore Lizzie Bergamini and freshman Kelsey Cregan, both forwards.

"The strength of our team will be our experience as we are returning 11 players from last year's 19-4 County Center team," said Evangelista, in his ninth year. "We should be an excellent outside shooting team that is athletic and can defend well."

"We have limited size and could affect how we rebound the ball. We will also have to replace a player, Julia, that led the team in every category except scoring (rebounds, assists, steals, charges etc.) from last year. It is going to take more than one player to make up for her contributions. Also, our schedule has many tough teams on it both in, and out, of our league."

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RAY GALLAGHER/RICK KUPERBERG/BOB CASTNER PHOTOS
Ossining Coach Dan Ricci will rely heavily on senior G Adriana McFadden this season.

Sports

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Girls Hoops Notebook



Lakeland senior Amanda Cole will play many roles for Hornets this season.



Brewster junior F Alexa Mark (25) played big minutes last year and will take much bigger role this season.



Hen Hud senior Caitlin Weimar should set fire to Sailor record books this winter before heading to Marist next fall.



Walter Panas F Kristin Scrobola provides Panthers a solid two-way presence.

Evanglista set up a difficult schedule for his team, which he hopes will prepare the Panthers for the postseason and also will result in a league title.

Pelham will host Panas, Wednesday, 12/4, in the season-opener for both teams.

LAKELAND begins year number six under the guidance of Coach Miranda Mangan.

The Hornets had a strong second half of the 2018-19 season, qualified for sectionals and earned an out-bracket win over Saunders. Lakeland lost to third-seeded Byram Hills in a quarterfinal game.

Lakeland will look to carry the momentum from the second half of last year into the 2019-20 season. The Hornets enter the season with a deep veteran core highlighted by seniors Brianna Monte (forward), Sofia Portante (guard) and Megan Jennings (guard).

Juniors Amanda Cole (guard), Sarah Pinkowski (guard) and Ava Pagliaroli (guard) also return as do sophomores Tyler Hormazabal and Hannah Devane, both guards.

Four juniors make the step up to varsity -- Nancy Pagliaroli, Eddie Vivanco and Angelina Ameneiros, all guards, and forward Nicole Haughney. Eighth-grader Nichole Ljuljic (guard) also takes the giant step up to varsity.

"We return a core group of players that saw a lot of action last season, mixed with talented youth," Mangan said. "We hope to have a balanced scoring attack and use our versatility on defense to make up for our lack of size."

Lakeland opened its season, Tuesday, against Nyack. The Hornets are hosting the Relay for Life Tournament, 12/6-12-7. Putnam Valley plays Clarkstown North (4:30 p.m.) followed by Lakeland-Carmel (6:30 p.m.) The consolation game (1:45 p.m.) and final (3:30 p.m.) are Saturday, 12/7.

HEN HUD continued progressing under the guidance of Coach Ken Sherman last year. The Sailors finished with a 12-10 record, were league champions and won a first-round sectional game.

Hen Hud has one of the top players in Section 1 in Marist-bound senior center Caitlin Weimar, who is fresh off an excellent volleyball season. Weimar, who will attend Marist next fall and play basketball, and her volleyball teammates advanced to the state final four.

"Obviously, Caitlin is a big strength of ours as she averaged double-doubles last year in points and rebounds," said Sherman, in his 11th year.

Weimar is joined in the starting lineup by fellow returnees, senior Jacklyn Kenny (guard/forward) and junior Grace Moretti (guard).

Joining the returning trio are seniors Mylene Smith, Gia Gabari and Faith Pugh, all forwards, and sophomore guard Colleen Ryan.

A new era will debut at **BREWSTER** this season as the Bears graduated all-everything Maggie DePaoli and Meagan Beal in June.

DePaoli was a four-year starter and surpassed 1,000 varsity points and Beal started three years. Beal is playing lacrosse at Furman.

The duo led Brewster to an 11-11 record and a sectional berth.

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Sports

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Girls Hoops Notebook



Carmel senior F Stephanie Ogbemor hopes to take her game to next level in 2020.



Somers C Jordan May and Hen Hud's Kira Varada will play much bigger roles this season for Tuskers and Sailors.



Mahopac junior F Caitlyn O'Boyle should explode at both ends of floor this winter.

Coach Mike Castaldo, in his eighth year, will turn to his returning quartet of juniors Carly DeLanoy (guard) and Alexis Mark

(forward) and sophomores Grace Galgano (center) and Madison Dakin (guard/forward) to lead the team. Sophomores and guards Sophia Alzuguray and Adrianna Calicchia join varsity.

"Our strengths are we are a big, physical team that can shoot well," Castaldo said. "We are very young and probably won't start one senior."

Brewster played Beacon in its season-opener, Tuesday. The Bears will host their annual tournament, 12/12-12/13.

Youth will be served for **PEEKSKILL** and Coach Jaycee DeGroat this season.

The starting lineup will feature three sophomores, a seventh-grader and one senior. Senior Krista Godbee and Jaiana McGriff will be the leaders of this young team. Last year, Peekskill finished with a 9-11 record and qualified for sectionals.

Joining Godbee in the starting lineup are sophomores and guards Takyla Cowan-Hongach, an all-league selection last year, Kiki Mercado and Amani Cleveland, and seventh-grader Bethany Overby (forward).

Junior Shaynna Sessions

(guard/forward) and Sage North (guard) will come off the bench along with McGriff.

"We are very excited to watch the growth of our players," DeGroat said. "We are a very young and inexperienced team with a lot of potential. We need to keep working hard and focus on details. We believe if we can come together and trust one another, we will open a lot of eyes in Section 1."

CARMEL welcomes John Sullivan as its new coach. Sullivan inherits a team that went 6-15 last year. Carmel qualified for sectionals and lost in the first round.

The Rams graduated Khadijah Johnson and Claire Cody, who made the St. Bonaventure team as a walk-on.

Sullivan does have three returning starters – seniors Danielle Bello and Caroline McIntyre, both guards, and sophomore Madeline McMath (forward).

Carmel adds sophomores Kristina Leonard (guard) and Shannon Cuccia (forward) to varsity.

"We have good size inside and some good shooters," Sullivan said. "As a new coach I hope to change the mindset of the girls in my program. Push them to have that competitive confidence, that they can each alter a tough situation and turn it into team success. The girls are motivated to obtain our goals for this season, not just as a sendoff for the six seniors, but to jumpstart the program back to relevance!"

Carmel played Port Chester, Tuesday, in its season-opener.

Coach Brian Mundy had a successful first season at **YORKTOWN**, guiding the team to a 13-8 record and Section 1 Class A berth. Yorktown did graduate four seniors, including two starters, one of whom was Kat Severino.



Haldane senior G Isabela Monteleone will be key to defending champion Blue Devils' success in 2020.

Three starters are back – senior Jesse Barer (point guard), junior Ashley Zeolla (center) and sophomore Melissa Severino (guard).

Some of the new players to varsity include junior Alyssa Perrino (forward), sophomores Erisa Krasniqi and Artesa Gashi, both forwards, and freshman Emily Ward (guard).

"Our strengths are chemistry, teamwork, rebounding, defense and our inside play," Mundy said. "We have great leadership from senior captain Jesse Barer. We have game-by-game goals and whatever happens from there happens."

Yorktown will host Beacon, Thursday, in a first-round game of its annual George Budries Tournament.

MAHOPAC is aiming to overturn its record from last year – 7-14 – and Coach Chuck Scozzafava is positive it can be done.

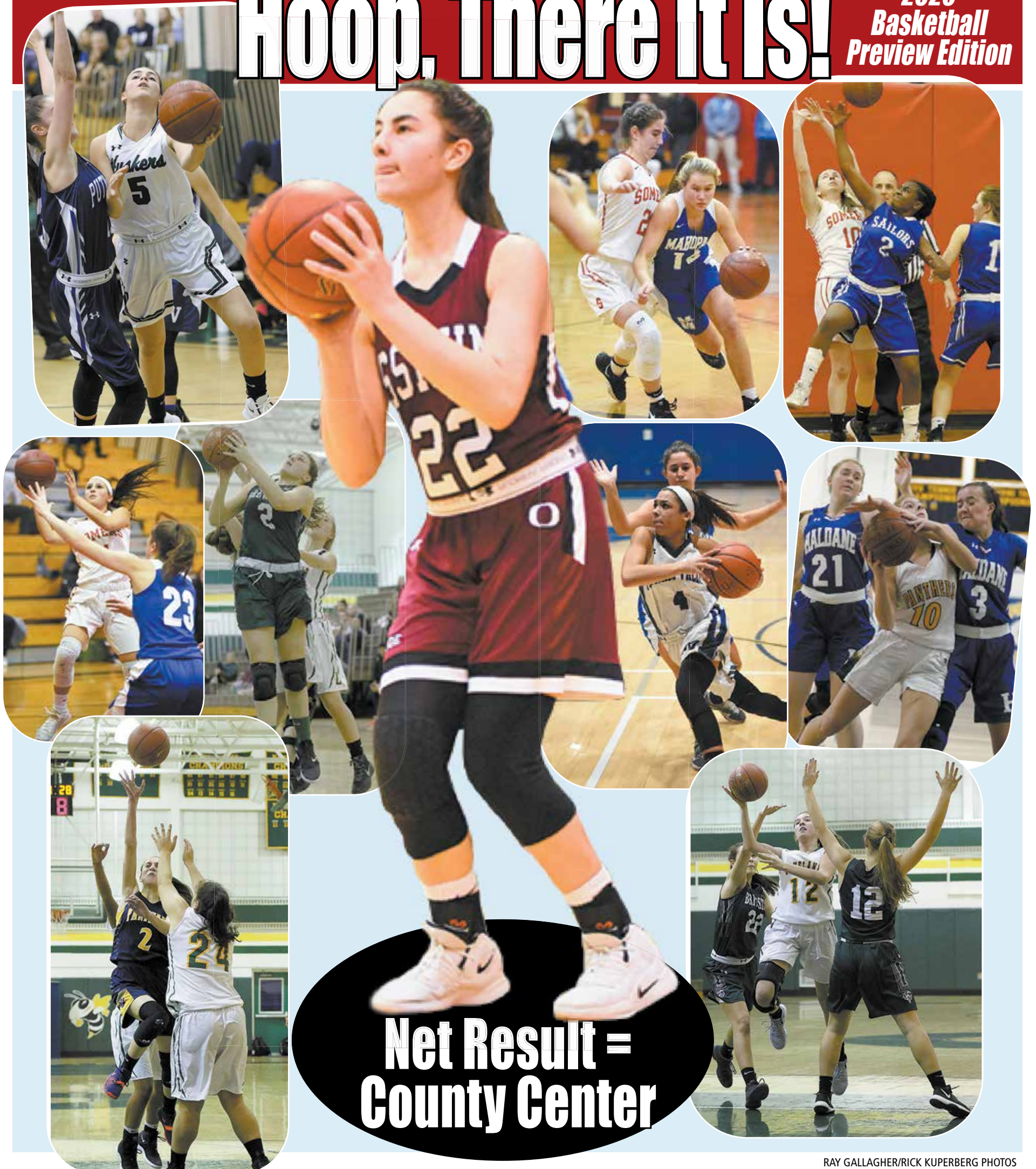
Scozzafava feels this way because of his four athletic returnees – Shannon Becker, Caitlyn O'Boyle, Mia Klammer and Melanie DeMeo.

"I feel we have an athletic team, with improved outside shooting," said the seventh-year coach. "I like how the girls are working hard and working together."

"We're always looking to continue to get better during the season, win the league, and go deep into sectionals."

Hoop, There It Is!

**2020
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RAY GALLAGHER/RICK KUPERBERG PHOTOS

From reigning NYS Class AA champion Ossining to six-time defending Class C Section 1 titlists Haldane and all points north, the 2020 basketball season will tip off at Section 1 gymnasiums across the Northern Westchester and Putnam County region this week with visions of the Westchester County Center and the Final 4 dancing in the heads of all... see 2002 Hoops Previews