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Thursday, Nov. 17, 2011 0 comments

# Lady Panther cagers tip-off Saturday

By Steve Oliver - Progress Sports Writer

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This Saturday the O'Fallon Twp. girls' basketball squad will open their 2011-12 hoop campaign with a home date against Chatham-Glenwood.

Coach Ryan Massey is hopeful that this year's team will be able to put significant distance between themselves and the .500 mark — a pattern that has doggedly plagued the Panthers during the last several seasons.

In recent campaigns, no matter the make up of the squad, the OTHS girls' team has sprinted to a quick start but faltered down the stretch to finish at or near an even split between victories and defeats.



The seniors on this year's O'Fallon Lady Panthers basketball squad include, from the left, Jocastia Mister, Mariellen Veach, Kendall Butler, Victoria Ham, Kaitlin Kendall, E'Shara Gaddy and Taylor Klingelhoef. - Courtesy photo

Last year continued the string with the Lady Panthers ending the season with a 16-13 mark. Massey believes this newest edition has the right stuff to do some major damage both in league play and in the non-conference portion of their schedule.

"We return several key players who have been mainstays of our program for the last couple of years as well as a total of seven seniors all of whom have made contributions at the varsity level," Massey said. "We have a nucleus of players with both experience and basketball skill which should make us competitive even though the conference will again be challenging."

The Panthers will feature scoring potential from the perimeter as well as the post with the return of their two most dominant players at the positions.

Senior Taylor Klingelhoef will be playing in her fourth varsity season and during her first three campaigns has been an invaluable asset to the Panthers in every phase of the game. A scorer who can fill the basket from the perimeter as well as with penetration off the dribble, the talented OTHS guard gives O'Fallon a consistent scoring threat as well as a tenacious defender.

Her skill set will be mirrored in the post by three-year starter — junior Katie Roustio. Coming off another banner season on the volleyball court, the 6'2" Roustio who possesses exceptional athletic skills will be a load for the opposition in the post. The team's leading rebounder during the last two years, Roustio possesses a soft shooting touch and an accurate which has made her one of the Panthers' best options in their offensive sets.

"Taylor and Katie give us a very potent one-two scoring punch that should cause problems for our opponents," Massey said. "They have already demonstrated that they can compete successfully and excel at the varsity level. Both have earned MVP tournament awards and All-SWC honors. I expect the same level of play from them this year — with the added bonus of an extra year of experience."

The experience doesn't begin and end with O'Fallon's inside/outside duo of Klingelhoef and Roustio, however. O'Fallon will feature depth and positive experience from returning starters Kendall Butler and Kaitlin Kendall — both seniors.

The Panther duo have also added scoring punch to the OTHS attack in previous seasons as well as being excellent defenders. Both are capable of hitting shots from beyond the arc and will be able to help on the boards.

Additionally, Roustio will be flanked by sophomore Taylor Underwood who was inserted in the lineup during last winter's campaign and received increasing minutes on the court as the 2010-11 season progressed. Underwood's impact was immediate as she was able to provide

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the Panthers with an additional scoring threat inside to take the pressure of Roustio and give O'Fallon another dominant rebounder.

Seniors Jocastia Mister, Mariellen Veach, Victoria Ham and E'Shara Gaddy are vying for playing time as the Lady Panthers' kick off their campaign along with several underclassmen, who Massey expects to contribute valuable minutes in O'Fallon's attempt to put the .500 mark in their rear view mirror.

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