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## Puxico High School Boys Basketball Preview

NOVEMBER 17TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

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The Puxico Indians boys basketball program is blessed with depth and experience entering its 2023 - 2024 campaign.

“We’ve got length inside and good guard play outside,” Puxico third-year coach Bryant Ferneti said. “It makes for a good combination. We should be able to play a lot of guys. We are going to try to keep pressure on teams the whole game since we can go so deep. I feel like we can play 11 guys on varsity so that should allow us to push the pace the entire game.” Puxico has four seniors, 10 juniors, eight sophomores, and six freshmen on its high school roster.

“We’ve got a good group of kids that are dedicated,” Ferneti said. “They really put in the work over the summer to get better. Their families also did a great job of making sure they were at the gym working hard.”

The Indians return most of its starters off of last season’s varsity squad that finished 17-9 before falling to eventual district champion Greenville.

“Seniors Jaydon Mitchell, Trevor Fortner, and Thomas Burch all three saw quite a bit of varsity playing time as juniors, and even as sophomores,” Ferneti said. “They all three bring something different to the table. Mitchell is a good ball-handler and defender. Fortner has good size and possesses the ability to score inside and outside. Burch can also shoot it and play in and out as well. “Junior forward Scyler Zimmerman has also seen time on varsity since his

freshmen season,” Ferneti continued. “He gives us good size and length. He can do a lot of different things on the court.”

The other nine juniors on the varsity squad were part of a Puxico JV team that finished 23-2 and beat Woodland in the title game of the SCAA Tournament last season. “Our junior class saw a lot of time on JV last season,” Ferneti said. “But they also had a very successful season. We have several juniors that should be ready to help us on varsity right away. We also have two sophomores - Jett Hancock and Landan Burchard - who should be ready to help us on varsity.”

Expectations remain high for the Puxico junior varsity squad as well. The Indians JV has received the No. 1 seed in the eight-team Bell City Invitational that begins Nov. 20.

No. 1 seeded Puxico plays No. 8 seeded Bloomfield in its first game at Bell City on Nov. 20 at 4:30 p.m. Other opening-round games include: No. 4. Leopold vs. No. 5 Kelly at 6 p.m., No. 2 Bell City vs. No. 7 Gideon at 7:30 p.m., and No. 3 Advance vs. No. 6 Scott County Central at 9 p.m. Semifinals are Nov. 21 with the title game of the JV tournament taking place Nov. 22 at 8:30 p.m. at Bell City.

“Our sophomore group has always enjoyed success,” Ferneti said. “People know those guys have had success in the past. We are going to let our sophomores play down in the first tournament and see how things go from there. We’ve got some freshmen that have improved since last year that are also ready to help on JV. I think depth should be a strength for our JV squad as well.”

The Puxico varsity also opens its season in tournament play at the Bernie Invitational beginning Nov. 28. Seedings for event will be released Wednesday.

“Last year the tournament was extremely balanced,” Ferneti said. “I think every game in the first round was a single-digit game, including the 1/8 game. We hope to get a high seed but that doesn’t mean you can overlook your first-round opponent. I’d like to think we will be seeded in the top half of the field with what we are bringing back but we better be ready to play on the first night.

“But we are looking forward to the season,” Ferneti added. “We had some really good weeks over the summer. We’ve played a lot of games leading up to this and our first days of practice have went very well.”

Playing for the varsity Indians are #1 Landan Burchard, #2 Logan Robison, #10 Jaydon Mitchell, #12 Jett Hancock, #13 Mason Parsley, #15 Tyler Brown, #21 Jerrett Powell, #25 Kaysen Long, #32 Waylon Powell, #33 Nikki Jones, #34 Thomas Burch, #35 Scyler Zimmerman, #44 Carson Ward, #52 Trevor Fortner, and #55 Elijah Russel

Article by Dustin Ward

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