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**HOOPS**

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## **OWLS BATTLE THROUGH EARLY ROAD STRETCH**

The Slinger boy's basketball team has survived some tough early season scheduling which saw the Owls play six of their first eight games on the road. With nine juniors seeing significant action in the rotation, early season results have been encouraging, as the Owls have put themselves in a position to challenge for the Wisconsin Little Ten Conference title during the second half of the season. Slinger has learned early that playing on the road against any Division 1 sized school is always a difficult task.

The Owls have posted a 3 – 1 conference record heading into the Christmas break. They are tied for first place with Wisconsin Lutheran (who was the near unanimous pre-season choice to win the conference title) and Watertown. The Owls have a 5 – 3 overall record with non-conference road losses at Pewaukee and Germantown, and a non-conference home win against Campbellsport.

The Owls opened the season on Saturday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, at Pewaukee. The Pirates returned four starters from last year's second place Parkland Conference team. Pewaukee jumped on Slinger early opening up a 23 – 8 lead. Slinger cut the lead to seven points on a couple occasions, but could get no closer as they fell 60 – 48.

Slinger traveled to Grafton the following Tuesday for another non-conference contest. The Owls controlled the pace of the game throughout opening up a 40 – 28 halftime lead. Grafton pulled to within eight points a couple times in the second half, but Slinger pulled away for a convincing 86 – 64 win. Junior guard Austin Kearns tied the school single game scoring record with 37 points, while also dishing out eight assists in the game.

Slinger opened up Wisconsin Little Ten Conference play the following Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, at Watertown. The Owls came out on fire and jumped out to a 10 – 0 lead. Watertown continued to battle throughout, cutting the lead to five points on a couple of occasions, but the Owls pulled away in

the fourth quarter for an important 61 – 46 road win. Kearns again led the Owls with 29 points, while junior forward Ricky Hanke scored 11 points while holding Watertown's leading scorer to just nine points in the game.

The Owls finally got to play a game on their home court on Friday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, hosting West Bend West. Slinger jumped out to an early lead and played a nearly flawless first half opening up a 33 – 17 lead. West Bend West made a run in the third quarter cutting the lead to 43 – 35 heading to the final period. The Owls again showed that they can protect a fourth quarter lead as they pulled away for a convincing 60 – 44 victory. Kearns led the Owls in scoring with 18 points, while junior guard Jake Henning scored 13 points, and senior guard Eric Fassbender played a brilliant all-around floor game and contributed 10 points in a reserve role.

The following Thursday, Slinger traveled to play the winless Beaver Dam Golden Beavers. The Owls struggled to get a good rhythm throughout the game, and atrocious free throw shooting (7 for 21) by the Owls kept the game close throughout. Beaver Dam shot very well, hitting nine three-point shots during the game. The Owls trailed 57 – 55 with four minutes left in the game. Jake Henning hit his sixth three-point shot of the game (tying the school single game three-point record) to give the Owls a lead they never relinquished. Slinger held Beaver Dam scoreless over the final four minutes to pull out a 62 – 57 victory. Henning led the Owls with 22 points, while Kearns scored 16, and junior forward Gus Gehring scored 11.

Two days later, Slinger hosted Campbellsport. The Owls again opened up a big halftime lead (32 – 17), and controlled the game throughout. Austin Kearns scored 21 points, and Jake Henning added 18 points including another five three-point baskets, as the Owls closed out the 65 – 49 win.

Slinger traveled to Oconomowoc on Tuesday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, to play the Raccoons. The Owls

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struggled defensively throughout the game and got killed on the boards. The only lead for the Owls in the game were 3 – 0 and 5 – 4 as Oconomowoc opened up a 28 – 22 halftime lead. Slinger cut the lead to three points in the third quarter, but the Cooneys immediately ran the lead back up to twelve

points. Poor shooting and offensive execution kept the Owls from making a serious run. Slinger could get no closer than seven points in the fourth quarter as they suffered their first conference loss by the score of 61 – 51. The loss dropped the Owls into a three-way tie for first place.

## Slinger Owls 2006 – 2007 Schedule

Nov 25	at Pewaukee (nc)	L 48-62	Jan 15	Milw Washington (nc) at US Cell
Nov 29	at Grafton (nc)	W 86-64	Jan 19	<b>Hartford</b>
Dec 5	at <b>Watertown</b>	W 61-46	Jan 26	<b>Watertown</b>
Dec 8	<b>West Bend West</b>	W 60-44	Jan 30	at <b>West Bend West</b>
Dec 14	at <b>Beaver Dam</b>	W 62-57	Feb 2	<b>Beaver Dam</b>
Dec 16	Campbellsport (nc)	W 65-49	Feb 9	<b>Oconomowoc (HOOPS Night)</b>
Dec 19	at <b>Oconomowoc</b>	L 51-61	Feb 13	at <b>Wisconsin Lutheran</b>
Dec 28	at Germantown (nc)	L 65-79	Feb 16	<b>West Bend East (Senior Night)</b>
Jan 5	<b>Wisconsin Lutheran</b>	W 57-54	Feb 23	at <b>Hartford</b>
Jan 9	Kewaskum (nc)		Feb 27	WIAA Regionals Start
Jan 11	at <b>West Bend East</b>			<b>Conference Games Listed in Bold Print</b>

## Slinger **HOOPS** Recognizes Charter and Ten Year Members

The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Slinger **HOOPS** Night Game and post-game party will be held on Saturday, February 9<sup>th</sup> after the Owls home game against Oconomowoc. The post-game party will again be held at the Kettle Moraine Bowl located on Hwy 60.

Non-members are also welcome to attend to post-game party as the event is used as a recruiting tool to attract more members. Non-members are welcome to join that night. We hope that you will join us for the game and the party. Sub sandwiches and snacks are free at the party as well as beverages. Usually 60 to 90 people attend the post-game party. We hope to have a boisterous crowd to help the Owls avenge their early season loss at Oconomowoc. We hope to see you!

All Slinger **HOOPS** members are welcome, as well as their guests. Members and one guest receive free admission to the game that night. A current list of members will be at the front desk when you arrive.

## Coach's Corner

*By Coach Alan Schieve*

Our first run through the Little Ten conference has been interesting to say the least. We have experienced considerable success, but realize that it is a long season and there are many games left to play and some very good teams we still have to face.

after Christmas as we play two very good non-conference teams in Germantown and Milwaukee Washington. We also must face the conference favorites in Wisconsin Lutheran, West Bend East, and Hartford.

The overall first impressions of the conference are pretty much what we expected. The talent level of the teams from top to bottom is definitely better than we saw in the Parkland. There are not any nights you can afford to not play at your best. This was demonstrated by the loss at Oconomowoc. It was not one of our best efforts and unfortunately we paid the price for it. The other impression of the conference that we were aware of - and it has played out that way - is how physical and rough the play is. For the most part our guys have handled the physical play rather well. We are also impressed at how hard the teams play. To be successful you need to match teams in both effort and intensity.

Finding our identity as a team is something we were not sure of as we entered the season. It is beginning to look like we will be a little more offensive than we have been in sometime. We are averaging more than 60 points a game. We like to get out and run. Our shot selection isn't always as good as we would like but it does make for an exciting team to watch. Where we need improvement is on the defensive end of the court. Slinger has been known over the past years as a solid defensive team. For us to make a legitimate run at a conference title we will have to tighten up the "D" and keep teams from scoring on us.

Considering that we have played five of our first seven games on the road, we are pleased with a five and two record. We also believe that we have made three of the tougher conference road trips winning at Watertown and Beaver Dam, but are very disappointed in letting one get away at Oconomowoc. The schedule gets much tougher

It has been a successful start to a new era in Slinger basketball but we know we must continue to improve to be successful. Hopefully, you will be able to find time during the second half of the season to come out and watch us play. We have many Friday night home games in January and February. We are a fun team to watch. As always, thanks for your continued support and we hope you can come see us play.