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Slinger

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OWLS STUMBLE DOWN THE STRETCH

After finishing the first half of the Wisconsin Little Ten Conference season with an impressive six win and one loss mark, with an overall record of 9 – 4 at that point, the Slinger boy's basketball team struggled down the stretch of the season.

Slinger managed to pick up just two wins the rest of the season. After having the outright lead in the conference standings at the halfway point, the Owls ended up just 8 – 6 in conference play which was still good for a second place finish tied with Watertown and Oconomowoc. Pre-season favorite Wisconsin Lutheran ended up running away with the conference title finishing 12 - 2 in WLT play. After Slinger beat Wisconsin Lutheran on January 5th to pull one game ahead of the Vikings, Wisco won their final 12 regular season games.

In the January 5th game at Slinger, the Owls fell behind 7 – 0 in the first minute of the game. After a quick timeout, the Owls settled down and took control of the game until Wisco made a run in the final minute. The Owls opened up a 56 – 48 lead with a minute to play, before the Vikings finished on a 6 -1 run, including a made three-point shot at the buzzer to make the final score a bit closer.

After a nonconference win over Kewaskum and a conference win at West Bend East, the Owls traveled to the US Cellular arena in downtown Milwaukee to participate in the Martin Luther King Classic against Milwaukee Washington. The Owls struggled mightily against the team that finished the regular season ranked second in the entire state of Wisconsin. Washington dominated throughout en route to 68 – 34 thrashing of the Owls.

Slinger rebounded from that loss to pick up a key conference victory on Friday, January 19th, at home against the Hartford Orioles. This was the first game between the schools since 1983. Despite poor shooting, the Owls controlled the game throughout with good defense and excellent rebounding. Some good free throw shooting down the stretch closed out the 45 – 39 victory. That win, coupled with a

Watertown loss to West Bend West, left Slinger in sole possession of first place at that point.

However, the rest of the season for the Owls was characterized by bad shooting and generally poor defense. The Owls struggled to put all of the pieces together for a full game.

The slump started with a home loss against Watertown that dropped the Owls into a first place tie. Slinger opened up a nine-point lead midway through the second quarter, but the Goslings took the game over from that point on. The Owls were dominated on the boards, and ended up losing by a score of 59 – 52. The following Tuesday night, the Owls struggled from the floor. A late three-point shot that could have given the Owls the lead did not fall as Slinger lost 43 – 39.

The erratic play continued right into tournament play. Slinger had dropped five of seven games heading into the WIAA Division 1 tournament game. The Owls had only picked up wins over Beaver Dam (50-36) and West Bend East (66-52) in games in which they played well.

Slinger drew the 7th seed out of the 14 teams in the Oshkosh Sectional. On Tuesday, February 27th, they hosted the Sheboygan South Redwings. South entered the game with an 8 – 12 overall record, while the Owls were 11 – 9. The Redwings put on perhaps the most impressive shooting display ever seen in the new Slinger gym hitting over 70% of their shots from the floor, while hitting 20 of 23 free throws. After South opened up a 15 point lead midway through the third quarter, the Owls could get no closer than 10 point the rest of the way as they lost 69 – 47 to end the season.

Sheboygan South lost in the Regional Final game to Neenah. Oshkosh West won the sectional to advance to Madison for the second straight year, and went on to defeat Milwaukee Vincent in the Division 1 championship game to win their second straight State title.

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Slinger Owls 2006 - 2007 Schedule and Results

Nov 25	at Pewaukee (nc)	L 48-62	Jan 15	Milw Washington (nc)	L 34-68
Nov 29	at Grafton (nc)	W 86-64	Jan 19	Hartford	W 45-39
Dec 5	at Watertown	W 61-46	Jan 26	Watertown	L 52-59
Dec 8	West Bend West	W 60-44	Jan 30	at West Bend West	L 39-43
Dec 14	at Beaver Dam	W 62-57	Feb 2	Beaver Dam	W 50-36
Dec 16	Campbellsport (nc)	W 65-49	Feb 9	Oconomowoc	L 63-70
Dec 19	at Oconomowoc	L 51-61	Feb 13	at Wisconsin Lutheran	L 40-70
Dec 28	at Germantown (nc)	L 65-79	Feb 16	West Bend East	W 66-52
Jan 5	WI Lutheran	W 57-54	Feb 23	at Hartford	L 51-54
Jan 9	Kewaskum (nc)	W 51-48	Feb 27	Sheb. South (WIAA)	L 47-69
Jan 11	at West Bend East	W 54-49			

Conference Games in Bold; Overall Record 11 - 10

Coach's Corner

By Assistant Coach Nate Grimm

In reflecting a bit on the season and on some of the comments of **HOOPS** members after games, it would seem like we have a few major things to address this off-season that our players can control: work ethic, focus, taking defense personal, and the ability to make shots. They are all interrelated and we talked about this with our players in the end of season meeting. In the off-season, it is easiest to address work ethic and ability to make shots first.

The Slinger gym is the same gym they practice in during the week, the rims are the same rims that many of the players have been shooting the round ball at since they were young. The size of the court hasn't changed from those days either. Yet for many of the Freshman, JV and Varsity, they weren't too successful shooting the basketball in practice or in games in that gym this year. Some players were good shooters in middle school and yet aren't good shooters in high school. How do we change that? My answers will focus on nurture rather than nature since our players and coaches can do nothing about genetics at this point in their lives.

First of all, let's address the lack of progress from middle school to high school for some players from the standpoint of what the students can control. Some of this may be due to a mental block that some players place in their mind that prevents them from acting. As you are quite aware, just because a player is a good shooter in 8th grade doesn't mean they will be successful at the varsity level. One has to look at the degree of difficulty of the sport between 8th grade and the next levels and if the player is preparing himself in practice to simulate competition at a high level. In the middle school years, there isn't always a high level of defense played and the same degree of scouting isn't being done that players see at the varsity level. And to be honest, because the defense isn't as good at the 8th grade level and defenders make more mistakes, there are more open shots. And because of varying degrees of physical growth, some good athletes in 8th grade can dominate those who haven't hit puberty without using proper technique. As the defenses get better, and the players that use good technique grow physically, and the competitors separate themselves from the recreational players, more quality time needs to be put in by all of our players to match the gains made by other players in the state. We've had some players who were not the best players in middle school make great gains after middle school because they figured this out. To be blunt, I don't know if we have enough of our high school players right now who approach the game with the desire to get better during the season and off-season. Our players can control their work ethic in-season and out of season, but it is my belief that too many of our players are content with the levels they are at. Our inability to defend athletic players and to beat defenders on offense would seem to indicate we have some work to do. The concept of our players training their bodies and minds past the levels they've always worked should have positive effects: more open looks shooting, and finishing

plays better around the basket. As one gets older, the game gets harder, and so the hardest workers should be the varsity players in the off-season. Hard work will lead to productivity, and productivity will lead to wins and playing time that is earned.

Once the work ethic gets better, it opens the door to becoming better shooters, but it doesn't mean we will be better shooters. It doesn't matter how good an athlete one is or how many times they shoot the ball if they can't learn to focus on the right things shooting the ball during games. That takes self-discipline. During the season, our shooting drills stress elbow in, elbow lift, shooting in rhythm with their legs involved, getting a pass at the right time thrown to them in the shot pocket, getting their feet set, getting arch, etc. Since the games are over now until November and the coaches have one contact week with players in the summer until November, it would make sense for the player to spend time before November setting up personal intense workouts where they practice shooting the ball the right way without distractions like in a game. Unless he can learn how to create a shot for himself off the dribble, he needs a little help from teammates to get the ball at the right time and to get space and so he needs to work with teammates on this. The players must create a realistic, pressure filled, regimented workout without making it a time to socialize. Please encourage our players to develop that. We need to have our players learn to like pressure to be successful on Friday nights. Developing an intense workout that simulates the in-season games is the only way to get practice shooting how you do in the game.

If you see our players this off-season, please ask them about how their training is going. Coach Schieve informed our players at the end of season meeting that the gym will be open Monday and Wednesday mornings from 8:30 to 10:00 in the summer and on Thursday nights. The weight room will be open to train for success in the morning from 7:30 to 8:30 in the summer. Once the body and the mind have been trained, and our players re-commit to basketball fundamentals without having to be told to do it, our players can begin to think about playing at a championship level. We can't have another summer like we did last year where we didn't get all of our players to our one-week camp, tumbleweeds blew through our gym during morning shooting opportunities, and absenteeism was high in our sophomore league in Mequon. We need athletes willing to internalize deeply the fundamentals. It will show up during the season if they don't. Our alumni and parents can help be a part of the solution by working with the players and coaches in emphasizing consistent philosophies that will also help our players succeed in life when there is an obstacle.

Thanks for your support this year and your continued support in the off-season as we keep the standards high for success at Slinger.

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