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**HOOPS**

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## **OWLS OFF TO HOT START**

**Tied for First Place in WI Little Ten Conference at Christmas Break**

The 2007 – 2008 Slinger Owls have jumped out to a hot start during the first half of the season. With 10 seniors on the 15 man roster, the Owls have shown experience and poise that sometimes escaped them last season. At the Christmas break, they are tied for first place in the Wisconsin Little Ten (WLT) Conference with pre-season favorite Wisconsin Lutheran (Wisco) and Watertown, all with 3 – 1 conference records. Each team has split with the other two teams so far this season, with Slinger beating Watertown and losing at Wisco.

The Owls opened the season at home against the Pewaukee Pirates on Saturday, November 24<sup>th</sup>. The Owls jumped out to quick lead and took a 32 – 20 lead into halftime. Slinger never looked back as they ran away with a convincing 60 – 37 victory.

The following Tuesday, Slinger hosted the Grafton Blackhawks in another nonconference game. The Owls pulled away from a 33 – 33 halftime tie with a strong third quarter, then closed out the Blackhawks with an early fourth quarter run to pull away for a 69 – 58 victory. Four seniors scored in double figures in the game for the Owls, led by point guard Austin Kearns with 18 points. He was joined by guard Jake Henning with 15 points (all on three-point shots), forward Dan Schaefer with 12 points, and forward Devin Mayer with 10 points.

The Owls opened up Wisconsin Little Ten Conference play by hosting the Watertown Goslings in a key early season game on Friday, November 30<sup>th</sup>. Slinger, Watertown, Wisconsin Lutheran, and West Bend East all return virtually all of their key players from last season. The Owls struggled early on the offensive end of the floor, but stayed in the game with tough defense, and trailed just 21 – 19 at halftime. Midway through the third quarter, the Owls began a run that carried into the fourth quarter. During that stretch, Slinger outscored Watertown 20 – 3 to open up an 11 point lead. Poor free throw shooting and a couple turnovers down

the stretch kept the game close. A late three-point attempt by the Goslings missed badly as the Owls held on for 44 – 41 win. Jake Henning paced the Owls with 14 points while Eric Nehm added 11.

The following Thursday, Slinger traveled to West Bend to play the West Spartans. The physical game was close throughout. Austin Kearns hit a key three point shot early in the fourth quarter to open up a six point lead. From there, excellent free throw shooting by the Owls kept the lead at five points or more for the remainder of the game as Slinger emerged with a 44 – 37 victory. The Owls were 17 for 20 from the free throw line for the game.

After the Beaver Dam game scheduled for Tuesday, December 11<sup>th</sup> was postponed because of a snow storm, the Owls hosted Oconomowoc on Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup>. An outstanding defensive effort allowed the Owls to control the game throughout. Slinger led 23 – 14 at halftime, then pulled away in the fourth quarter for a 50 – 35 win. Jake Henning continued his torrid three-point shooting and paced the Owls with 13 points, while Austin Kearns and Dan Schaefer each scored 10 points.

In a sluggish road performance on Monday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, the Owls beat the Campbellsport Cougars 62 – 52. Austin Kearns led the Owls with 19 points.

The following Thursday, Slinger traveled to Milwaukee to play Wisconsin Lutheran in a key nonconference game. After a fast-paced first quarter resulted in a 12 – 12 tie, turnovers plagued the Owls in the second quarter. Easy layups off of those turnovers led to Wisco opening up a 28 – 19 halftime lead. Slinger showed great resolve and cut the lead to four points twice in the fourth quarter, but a 10 for 10 performance from the free throw line by Wisco closed out the game, as the Owls suffered their first loss of the season by the score of 53 – 47. The loss created a three-way tie for the WLT lead.

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## Slinger Owls 2007 - 2008 Schedule

Nov 24	Pewaukee (nc)	W 60-37	Jan 12	at Watertown
Nov 27	Grafton (nc)	W 69-58	Jan 15	Beaver Dam
Nov 30	<b>Watertown</b>	W 44-41	Jan 18	<b>West Bend West (<i>HOOPS</i> Night)</b>
Dec 6	<b>at West Bend West</b>	W 44-37	Jan 21	Port Washington (nc)
Dec 14	<b>Oconomowoc</b>	W 55-40	Jan 24	<b>at Beaver Dam</b>
Dec 17	at Campbellsport (nc)	W 62-52	Jan 31	<b>at Oconomowoc</b>
Dec 20	<b>at WI Lutheran</b>	L 47-53	Feb 5	<b>Wisconsin Lutheran</b>
Dec 22	at Sheboygan Falls (nc)	W 79-41	Feb 8	<b>at West Bend East</b>
Dec 27	at Madison Edgewood (nc)	W 50-42	Feb 14	<b>Hartford</b>
Jan 4	<b>West Bend East</b>		Feb 19 – 23	WIAA Regionals
Jan 8	<b>at Hartford</b>		Feb 29 – Mar 1	WIAA Sectionals

For additional information and stats check out our website [www.SlingerHoops.com](http://www.SlingerHoops.com)

### Slinger *HOOPS* Night and Post-Game Party – January 18th

Mark your calendars for the annual Slinger *HOOPS* Night Fan Appreciation Game and Post-game party. The Owls will host West Bend West in a Wisconsin Little Ten Conference game on Friday night, January 18<sup>th</sup>. All *HOOPS* members receive free admission to the game. You will be able to join at the door to take advantage of this offer. The post-game party will again be held at the Kettle Moraine Bowl on Highway 60. There are free sandwiches, snacks, and beverages for all who attend. It is a fun night to socialize with your fellow Slinger Owl supporters. We hope to see you at the game and at the party.

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### *Coach's Corner*

*By Freshmen Coach Tony Dobson*

The 2007-2008 Slinger Owls are off to a hot start this season. Currently the Owls have an overall record of 8-1 with a 3-1 mark in conference play. As a coach, I see a few obvious changes that have led to a great start by this senior led team.

The first change this season has to be the Owls commitment to getting the job done on the defensive end of the floor. Currently the Owls have the 10<sup>th</sup> ranked defense in the area allowing only 44.9 points per game. The most dramatic change has come in our post defense. Our big guys are doing a much better job of defending the post and getting after the rebounds. In addition, our guards continue to pressure the ball, taking advantage of fast break opportunities. Defense is an area the Owls will have to continue to focus on if they want to be successful moving forward.

The next thing that jumps out at me is our unselfish play. The Owls are making a conscious effort to make the extra pass. This unselfish play has allowed this team to get better looks and, in turn, knock down more shots. Our team shooting percentage is up significantly from last year. Our ball movement this season has made it very difficult for teams to defend us.

Finally with a team led by seniors, we have the experience and maturity needed to endure the ups and downs of a long and challenging season. We bounce back much more quickly from bad calls or bad bounces during the game. Our players have come to understand that when they get yelled at by one of the coaches, it is not a personal attack, but just part of the intensity of the game. We are playing with a "Team" mentality, which has been a big reason for our current success. All of these traits are important characteristics for our younger players to take note of.

The 2007-2008 Slinger Owls are only in the early stages of this season and have a long way to go. It is very important that we maintain our focus, practice hard and continue to do the little things that make us successful. With our senior leadership and team play, the Owls appear committed to finishing strong in 2008!