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Slinger

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OWLS WIN REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

LOSE SECTIONAL SEMIFINAL TO EVENUTAL STATE CHAMPION

The 2007 – 2008 Slinger Owls were rolling through the season, and appeared to be improving on both the offensive and defensive ends of the floor, when a key injury sidetracked the Owls. Slinger was tied for 1st place in the Wisconsin Little Ten with a 9 – 1 conference record, and an overall record of 14 – 2, when Senior point guard Austin Kearns suffered a knee injury (torn meniscus) that required season-ending surgery.

It took the team a few games to adjust to the loss, as the Owls dropped three of four games to close out the regular season. Stellar defensive play kept the Owls in games, but they lost at Oconomowoc by the score of 49 – 46, and then dropped a pivotal conference game at home to Wisconsin Lutheran by the score of 50 – 43. They recovered to pick up a 58 – 47 conference win at West Bend East, before dropping a home game against Hartford by the score of 40 – 30. The lack of offensive firepower was a sign of things to come.

In the Wisconsin Lutheran game, the Vikings were missing their two leading scorers because of suspensions. The lead changed hands several times. The Owls took a 41 – 40 lead on a long three-point shot by senior guard Jake Henning with just under six minutes left in the final quarter. However, Slinger could only manage one more basket the rest of the way as the Vikings took the lead, and then pulled away with some good free throw shooting down the stretch to close out the game and take over the WLT conference lead. Henning led the Owls with 15 points.

Slinger still was awarded with the #1 seed in the six-team Cedar Grove Regional. After a bye in the opening round, the Owls hosted the Mayville Cardinals who had defeated Campbellsport in the first round. Mayville entered the game with an overall record of 8 – 13, while Slinger had finished the regular season with a 15 – 5 overall record.

The Owls dominated the contest from the very start. Slinger completely shut down the Cardinals in jumping out to a 17 – 0 lead at the end of the first quarter. The Owls scored the first 21 points of the game. After a 17 –

2 third quarter, Slinger led 50 – 12, and ended up winning by the score of 68 - 30.

The win over Mayville advanced the Owls to the Regional Championship game against Sheboygan Falls, who had defeated Kettle Moraine Lutheran by the score of 47 – 44 in the second round of the WIAA tournament. The game was played on Saturday afternoon, February 23rd, at Cedar Grove.

Slinger jumped out to an early lead, but Falls rallied to take a four-point lead early in the second quarter. The Owls closed out the half on a strong run to open up a 31 – 29 halftime lead. The game stayed close throughout. The Owls opened up an eight-point lead early in the fourth quarter, but could not put Sheboygan Falls away. A three-point shot at the buzzer bounced off the rim as the Owls held on for a 64 – 61 victory to capture the Regional Championship for the first time since 1999. Senior guard Eric Nehm led the Owls with 22 points, while senior guard Jake Henning hit five more three point shots and tallied 17 points for the game.

In the Sectional semifinal game held at Homestead High School in Mequon, the Owls faced former Parkland Conference foe, New Berlin Eisenhower.

The Owls started out hot, and jumped out to an 18 – 7 lead, but the Lions rallied to cut the lead to 23 – 18 by halftime. In a very physical battle, the second half was close throughout. No team led by more than two points throughout the fourth quarter. Eisenhower possessed the ball for the final two minutes of regulation before missing a shot at the buzzer. The score was tied at 36 at the end of regulation. The Owls inability to score continued into the overtime, as they lost a heartbreaking 44 – 40 overtime game to end their season.

New Berlin Eisenhower advanced to the WIAA Division 2 State Tournament in Madison with a 51 – 48 victory over Brown Deer the next day. The Lions then stayed hot and beat defending state champion Monroe, and then Adams-Friendship, to capture the Division 2 State Championship in convincing fashion.

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Slinger **HOOPS** Annual Golf Outing – Saturday August 23rd

Please mark your calendars for the annual Slinger **HOOPS** Golf Outing and Cookout scheduled for Saturday, August 23rd. We will be playing the highly rated Washington County Golf Course. The cookout following the event will again be held at the Tim Wiedmeyer residence at the top of the Whispering Pines subdivision in Slinger. Even if you're not a golfer, we would love to have you join us for the cookout. A separate flyer with the **HOOPS** golf outing details is attached. This is a great chance to spend a day with fellow Slinger basketball supporters. Why not get a hold of some of your former classmates and put together a foursome? It is always a fun evening regardless of the weather conditions (as last year proved!).

INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM RECOGNITION FOR 2007 – 2008 SEASON

After completing a 17 – 6 season that included a third place finish in the Wisconsin Little Ten (WLT) Conference and the Cedar Grove Division 2 Regional Championship, several Slinger Owl players received recognition. Despite playing just 16 games as the result of a knee injury, senior guard Austin Kearns received Honorable Mention All-State recognition from the both the WBCA (Coach's Association) and the AP Sports writers. Kearns edged out Flavien Davis of Wisconsin Lutheran for WLT Player of the Year. Austin was also recognized, for the second year in a row, as the Washington County Player of the Year. Senior guard Eric Nehm received First Team WLT honors, as well as First Team Washington County recognition. Senior guard Jake Henning earned Honorable Mention WLT and Washington County

honors. Senior forwards Ricky Hanke and Devin Mayer all earned Honorable Mention Washington County honors for their play.

The team rose to as high as 5th in the Wisconsin state rankings for Division 2 schools during the year. This is the second highest ranking ever for the Slinger boy's basketball team. The 2002 – 2003 team reached a ranking of 4th that season, while the 1998 – 1999 team also reached 5th in the rankings. The 1976 – 77 team that advanced to the WIAA state tournament was ranked as high as 6th that year. The 17 wins ties for the fourth most victories in a single season in school history, and the Regional Championship was the fifth in school history, with the last Regional Championship occurring in the 1998 – 1999 season.

Coach's Corner

By Head Coach Alan Schieve

Wow! What a season! The 2007-08 basketball season had enough suspense throughout the year to keep any Owls' fan on the edge of their seat. It started with a rout of rival Pewaukee, lose a tough road game to eventual Conference champ WISCO, lead the conference at the halfway point, suffer a devastating injury to a key player, and finish with a flurry as the team regrouped and made a run at getting to Madison. And throughout it all, this group of guys played really, really good basketball.

No one was really sure how this team of experienced seniors would react after the 06-07 season that saw a collapse in the second half of the year. But they were able to bounce back and live up to expectations they had faced since they were in middle school. With 10 seniors and five that had been on the varsity from at least their sophomore year, they played like an experienced group should play. Starters Austin Kearns, Eric Nehm, Dan Schaefer, Jake Henning, and Ricky Hanke really came together with some dominating performances. Austin was named 1st team AC and player of the year. Eric also was 1st team AC and Jake was honorable mention AC. Jake broke the school record for most three-point baskets in a season. Ricky and Dan really gave us an inside presence both on offense and defense. Devin Mayer, Gus Gehring, Joe Neary, Luke Hejlik, and Kyle Wagner gave us outstanding depth and we rarely missed a beat when they came into the game. Unfortunately, we have to say good-bye to those seniors and they will be missed.

I think we need to take a moment and recognize the contributions of Austin Kearns to this past season as well as his 4-year career in the Slinger basketball program. He has been one of the few 4-year varsity players in the 29 years I have been in Slinger. For the past 3 years he has been a starter. The last 2 years he has been first team AC and, this year, he was named player of the year. Entering this year he had a very realistic chance of breaking the career scoring

mark. But, with all his accomplishments probably his most impressive was his all around play in his senior year. He bypassed any individual records he could accomplish and made the conscious decision to be more of a play-making point guard and not as much of a scoring point guard. This made us very tough to beat because of all the weapons we had. Unfortunately, his season was ended early with a knee injury. Even though the guys regrouped in the tournament without Austin, it would have been very interesting to have had Austin in the sectional semi-final loss to eventual state champ New Berlin Eisenhower.

So, after a year where we played pretty much all seniors, where does that leave us for the 2008-09 season? We will have 5 juniors returning for their senior year. Jay Allen, who did see some quality minutes this year, Kegan Schieve, Travis Riesop, Dustin Hau, and Mike Wojtanowski did a great job being with our red team. We feel the experience those guys got playing against our seniors everyday in practice will make them ready to be full time players as seniors. Coach Held does a great job preparing our JV players for the varsity so we will be looking for contributions from many of those players.

It has been a great year for the Slinger Basketball Program, one that will be remembered for years to come. To those seniors who are leaving us we say thank you for everything you have done for us, and good luck in your future endeavors whatever they may be. I want to thank Slinger **HOOPS** and all of its members for their continued support. I hope you enjoyed this past season as much as I did coaching. Have a great summer and I hope you will continue to support Slinger Basketball.