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OWLS HITTING THEIR STRIDE AFTER SLOW START

YOUNG TEAM GAINING EXPERIENCE QUICKLY

After a slow start to the 2010 – 2011 season, the Slinger Owls have shown significant improvement in all aspects of the game. With only three seniors on this year's team, a bit of inexperience showed in the first four games of the season. The Owls have relied on good depth, with ten players seeing action in almost every game, to keep themselves in games in which they have gotten off to a slow start.

Slinger opened the season at Kewaskum on Friday, November 26th. The game was supposed to be part of the Scenic Moraine Thanksgiving Tournament, but Grafton backed out as they had scheduled different games for that weekend. Thus, Slinger played a single game at Mayville on Monday, December 6th.

The Owls displayed sloppy play most of the night. The game was close, with the Owls trailing 23 – 22 at halftime, until Kewaskum opened up a 37 – 29 lead at the end of the third quarter. Slinger could get no closer than seven the rest of the way as they fell to Kewaskum for the first time since 2001 by the score of 61 – 48.

The Owls shooting woes continued in their next game at Pewaukee. The Pirates came out on fire hitting nine 3-point shots in the first half to blow the game open early and taking a 42 – 23 lead into the halftime break. Slinger showed some life in the second half, battling to cut the lead to ten points at one juncture, but the deficit was far too large to overcome as Pewaukee closed out the 61 – 44 game. Senior guard Dan Wimmer paced the Owls with 11 points, while junior forward Dan Sabin contributed 10 points for the Owls.

The continued inexperience, especially on the defensive end of the floor, also showed in the first quarter of the rescheduled Mayville game. The Owls led by the score of 18 – 17 at the end of the first quarter. An early second quarter run got the Owls rolling for the rest of the night, as they jumped

out to a 34 – 24 halftime lead, extended the lead to 58 – 40 at the end of the third quarter, on the way to closing out the 75 – 48 victory. Sophomore guard Derek Merkes and junior guard Kirk Emmer paced the Owls with 17 points each.

After dealing with a couple tragedies in the Slinger community during the week of December 6th, the Owls had to travel to Hartford to play the Orioles in the conference opener on Friday, December 10th. The Owls battled hard all night, but could not get many shots to fall all night. Hartford jumped out to a 30 – 18 halftime lead. Slinger cut the lead to three points in the fourth quarter, but could get no closer as they fell 60 – 52. Junior guard Kirk Emmer led the Owls in scoring with 19 points, while senior forward Kyle Behrens added 17 points to the cause.

The overall quality of play took a turn for the better as the Owls finally played their home opener, hosting conference foe Watertown, on Friday night, December 10th. In a see saw game, which was well played by both team all night, the Owls opened up a 44 – 40 lead at the end of the third quarter. Watertown pulled the game to even at 53 all in the final two minutes. The Owls were able to hold the ball for the final shot. On a side out-of-bounds play, Kirk Emmer split two defenders driving to the basket then dished to Dan Sabin who made the layup and was fouled. Sabin hit the free throw, then the Owls stole the desperation in bound pass to pick up a critical 56 – 53 conference win. Sabin led the Owls with 13 points, while Merkes contributed 11.

The Owls improved play has continued since that game with Slinger picking up a nonconference 49 – 45 win against Sheboygan Falls, a dominating 54 – 31 home conference win against West Bend West, and then a 55 – 35 home nonconference win against Greendale right before Christmas. Those wins improved the Owls' record to 5-3 overall, and 2-1 in conference heading up to the Green Bay Holiday Classic to play two nonconference games.

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Slinger Owls 2010 – 2011 Basketball Schedule

Nov 26	at Kewaskum (nc)	L 48-61	Jan 14	at Beaver Dam
Nov 30	at Pewaukee (nc)	L 44-61	Jan 18	New Berlin West (nc)
Dec 6	at Mayville (nc)	W 75-48	Jan 21	at Oconomowoc
Dec 10	at Hartford	L 52-60	Jan 28	Hartford (HOOPS Night)
Dec 17	Watertown	W 56-53	Feb 1	at Watertown
Dec 18	Sheboygan Falls (nc)	W 49-45	Feb 4	at West Bend West
Dec 21	West Bend West	W 52-31	Feb 11	Beaver Dam
Dec 23	Greendale (nc)	W 55-35	Feb 15	Oconomowoc
Dec 29	at Green Bay vs Seymour (nc)		Feb 23	at Wisconsin Lutheran
Dec 30	at Green Bay vs Shawano (nc)		Feb 26	West Bend East
Jan 4	Wisconsin Lutheran		Mar 4 - 5	WIAA Regionals
Jan 7	at West Bend East		Mar 11-12	WIAA Sectionals

SLINGER **HOOPS** NIGHT GAME AND PARTY – FRIDAY, JANUARY 28TH

The annual Slinger **HOOPS** Night game and post-game party will be held on Friday, January 28th, when the Owls host the Hartford Orioles. The Junior Varsity and Freshmen games will tip off at 5:45 pm, with the Varsity scheduled to begin at 7:30 pm. Slinger will be looking to avenge a 60 – 52 loss in the conference opener. The post-game party will be held at DeCristo's again this year. Last year, we had over 70 people attend the party. Hot sandwiches, appetizers, and beverages are free to any individuals who have made a donation to Slinger **HOOPS** during this season. All fans are welcome to join us at the party, and can make a donation that night. Please try to join us. It is always an enjoyable night to catch up with other Slinger alumni and supporters.

Coach's Corner

By Head Coach Alan Schieve

One of the things I really enjoy about coaching high school players is the diversity you get each year from team to team and player to player. Each year I am not really sure what to expect from my team. This year has been no different. What makes this team unique is to see how quickly these young men have had to grow up, and how well they have handled the tragic events they have had to face. The month of December was a rough month for them and they have had to endure some difficult losses in their lives. But through it all, they have persevered pretty well, and while they will never forget the events of December hopefully it has made them better people.

We had high expectations going into the season. We felt we had good players coming back and that we were going to add some good players from our lower levels. We struggled a lot with the early part of our schedule. We could not find any rhythm on offense, had trouble making shots, and defensively we did not play with the effort and intensity needed to be a good defensive team. With only 3 seniors on the team our inexperience was obvious as we tried to figure it out.

Basketball is a funny game as are most competitive sports. Just when you think it may be a difficult year, things have a way of working their way out. All of a sudden we started making shots, communicating on the court, and playing with a greater sense of urgency on the defensive end. With a huge win over one of the conference favorites in Watertown, we won four games in a row; the last two before Christmas

break in convincing manner. As we roll into a difficult Christmas showcase tourney in Green Bay, we are 5-3 and feeling pretty good about the way we are playing. We are excited about playing Seymour, the 2nd rated Division 2 school in the state. It should give us a good idea of where we are as we get into the major part of our conference schedule.

We have gotten good play recently out of seniors Dan Wimmer and Kyle Behrens on both ends of the floor. Kirk Emmer has begun to show why he is one of the elite players in the conference. Dan Sabin has done a great job all year inside, especially on the boards, while being undersized against his opponents in every game we have played. And we have gotten good contributions from the two sophomores, Tanner Schieve and Derek Merkes. Solid play off the bench from guys like Tommy Brown, Jared Sandretti, Ben Amann, and Scott Burns have been a huge lift, and finally, Perry Lynch, Drew McLean, and Garrett Semrau have been valuable guys in practice as we prepare for teams.

It has been an up and down season for the most part up to this point. But we have found a little consistency in our play recently, and hopefully that will continue the rest of the way. One thing is for sure. We will always provide an exciting atmosphere and hopefully you will be able to get out and cheer for "your Slinger Owls" at some point this year.

Thanks for your continued support. We hope to see you on **HOOPS** Night!

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