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OWLS FINISH SEASON ONE WIN SHORT OF MADISON

TEAM FINISHES 17 – 9 WITH TOURNEY RUN

After a regular season that fell just short of a share of the Wisconsin Little Ten conference title, the 2014 – 2015 Slinger Owls found the consistency it was looking for much of the year during WIAA tournament play. The Owls played their best basketball of the season in the month of March, winning three tournament games and advancing to the Sectional Final game before being defeated by a tough West De Pere team in a game played in Ashwaubenon. While the Regional Championship was the seventh in the history of the school (along with 1977, 1987, 1996, 1999, 2008, and 2013), the trip to the Sectional Final was just the second in the history of the school. Slinger advanced to the state tournament in 1977.

WISCO captured the outright WLT conference title for the tenth consecutive season, but it was not without a fight. Heading into the final regular season game at Wisconsin Lutheran, a Slinger win would have created a four-way tie for the conference championship along with WISCO, Beaver Dam, and Oconomowoc. Unfortunately, the Owls were dominated by WISCO in that final game by the score of 78 – 53. WISCO finished 11 – 3 in conference, while Beaver Dam and Cooney finished 10 – 4, and Slinger finished at 9 – 5 in conference and 14 – 8 overall for the regular season.

As the calendar turned to March, the Owls opened WIAA Division 2 play as the #4 seed in the southern half of the Ashwaubenon Sectional bracket. Slinger hosted #5 seed Menasha on Friday, March 6th. After a sluggish first half, the Owls found their stride to rebound from a 2-point halftime deficit outscoring Menasha 17 – 5 in the third quarter. The Owls maintained control throughout the fourth quarter to close out the 60 – 45 victory.

The next night, the Owls traveled to Port Washington to play the #1 seeded Pirates. Port was ranked #7 in the final state coaches poll, with a 17 – 5 record with all five of those losses against WIAA Division 1

schools. Slinger jumped out to an early lead and played a nearly flawless first half. Employing a couple zone defenses that allowed the Owls to shade toward the best Port Washington shooters on defense, and hitting shots both inside and out when on offense, Slinger dominated the first half in taking a 34 – 19 lead into halftime. The Pirates rallied in the third quarter and cut the lead to 39 – 34. However, solid play and fabulous free throw shooting by the Owls pushed the lead back up to double digits en route to a convincing 62 – 48 win and the Regional Championship plaque.

Next up was a Sectional match up against conference foe Beaver Dam the following Thursday at Watertown. The Golden Beavers had swept the Owls during the regular season. The game was close late into the third quarter with Owls leading most of the game. Then, sparked by a three-point basket by Freshman Derek Sabin (just his third of the season), the Owls started to pull away. They gradually increased the lead to double digits with five minutes left in the game. Dominating rebounding allowed the Owls to control the rest of the game on their way to a 61 – 48 win.

On Saturday, March 14th, Slinger traveled to Ashwaubenon to play West De Pere with a trip to Madison on the line. The Phantoms had advanced to state the previous year and had several key players returning. West De Pere came out hot and jumped out to a 22 – 9 first quarter lead. The Owls cut the lead to 22 – 20, before falling behind 29 – 20 heading to half. The Owls fell behind by 14 points midway through the third quarter, before rallying to cut the lead to 51 – 46 with five minutes left in the game. But the Owls could get no closer. West De Pere hit 9 of 10 free throws down the stretch to help pull away from the Owls by the score of 69 – 54. The Owls finished the season with an overall record of 17 – 9. Only four teams in Slinger basketball history have won more than 17 games in a season.

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Slinger Owls 2014 – 2015 Basketball Schedule

Nov 28	Milton at Fort Atk (nc)	W 60-44	Jan 24	Grafton (nc)	W 55-39
Nov 29	Nicolet (nc)	W 72-44	Jan 29	at West Bend West	W 45-44
Dec 5	West Bend West	W 71-68	Feb 3	Oconomowoc	W 53-48
Dec 9	at Sussex Hamilton (nc)	L 44-55	Feb 6	Hartford	L 40-47
Dec 12	at Oconomowoc	W 49-48	Feb 7	L Geneva Badger (nc)	W 63-58
Dec 19	at Hartford	W 65-52	Feb 12	at West Bend East	W 72-48
Dec 20	Burlington (nc)	L 61-62	Feb 17	Beaver Dam	L 44-60
Dec 23	at New Berlin West (nc)	W 64-53	Feb 20	Watertown	W 51-37
Dec 30	at Plymouth (nc)	L 42-65	Feb 26	at Wisconsin Lutheran	L 53-78
Jan 6	West Bend East	W 62-46	Mar 6	Menasha (WIAA)	W 60-45
Jan 9	at Beaver Dam	L 63-65	Mar 7	at Port Washing (WIAA)	W 62-48
Jan 15	at Watertown	W 49-33	Mar 12	Beaver Dam (WIAA)	W 61-48
Jan 23	Wisconsin Lutheran	L 42-67	Mar 14	West De Pere (WIAA)	L 54-69

Slinger Owls 2014 – 2015 Honors and Awards

Two Slinger Owl players received Wisconsin Little Ten Conference recognition this season. Senior Josh Hau followed up on his 2nd team All-Conference recognition during his junior year by being named 1st team All-Conference this year. Senior Jay Smith was a unanimous pick for 2nd team All-Conference. In team awards voted on by the players and coaches, Jay Smith was voted the team Most Valuable Player. Junior Chris Evans was named the Most Improved Player. Seniors Josh Hau, Jay Smith, and Aaron Brewer were named captains.

Hau will participate in the WBCA Division 2 State All-Star game in Wisconsin Dells on Saturday June 20th. Josh was initially an alternate, but will be replacing State of Wisconsin co-player of the year, Henry Ellenson from Rice Lake, who is out with a broken hand. Josh is the first Slinger Owl player to be selected for the game since Kirk Emmer in 2012.

Several individual and team accomplishments were achieved. Josh Hau was a part of 51 wins during his three years on the Varsity squad (51 – 23 overall) which is the third highest total all-time. The 51 wins are the most wins in any three-year period in Slinger basketball history. Hau finished with 748 career points which ties him for 7th place on the all-time Slinger scoring list. Tyler Reinhart finished the season with 122 assists, which is the second highest single season total (129 by Ryan Voels in 1995 – 1996) since the program has maintained that record (back to 1979). Hau became the eighth player in Slinger history to shoot at least 80% from the free throw line in a single season with at least 40 attempts (at 80.7%). Jesse Bellefeuille tied the single game record for three point baskets which was first set in 1995.

Coach's Corner

By Head Coach Alan Schieve

Another year and a lot of good things accomplished. A strong regular season, 14-8 overall and 9-5 in the conference, followed by an outstanding post season run that found us one win shy of making our first state tournament appearance in 38 years. And let me tell you, those 2 weeks of tournament basketball were a blast!

While we would probably consider the regular season a bit of an underachievement, it certainly was not a disappointment. The conference was probably stronger than it has been in the last 5 years and it showed because on any given night anyone could get beat. WISCO again was conference champs but they were beaten 3 times, and we entered our last game of the year against WISCO with a chance to tie for the conference championship.

Then the post season began. We truly believe that playing a more demanding schedule this year really helped us out. Once we got that first tourney win under our belts the players really understood the level of preparation and play that was needed. All of the credit has to go to the players. They really stepped up their efforts and execution in games. It started with our seniors, Josh Hau, Jay Smith, and Jason Erdmann. Their leadership was very good. Juniors Jesse Bellefeuille, Tyler Reinhardt and Chris Evans did some outstanding things for us. And we got solid play off the bench from Derek Sabin, Max Merkes and Kurtis Fritz. Not to be forgotten was the effort we got from our practice players Aaron Brewer, Blake Bingen, Jacob Rothenhoefer, Collin Schmelebeck, Mitch Behm, and Tyler Evans, and the job they did pushing the guys who were getting game minutes.

There are always many people involved when a team has post season success like we had this year. It includes parents, community members and administrators - too many to mention everyone by name. But I do need to recognize the efforts of the coaching staff and their contributions to our little run at the end of the season. Josh Feller, Nate Grimm, Hank Karius, Marshall Olson, Ron Reichle, John Murray, and Ted Peters were instrumental because of the effort and time put in during those last 2 weeks as well as all season long.

Unfortunately, all good things do come to an end. It was a great year but now we have to say good bye to 5 outstanding young men in Erddy, Josh, Jay, Blake, and A-Brew. Their legacy will always be remembered. We are excited about next year and have a lot of talent returning. Our underclassmen need to step up and develop their games the way our group of seniors did this year. We expect to feed off of the momentum from our WIAA tournament success. Thanks to all our **HOOPS** members again for all your support. It was great seeing so many of you sitting in the stands especially during the tournament. It was a blast and the hope is that it will continue. Have a great summer. **GO OWLS!**

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