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‘Learning on the job’

New Stevenson girls hoops coach provides new opportunity in MAC Red

By Sue Teggart
 C & G Sports Writer

MADISON HEIGHTS — There’s a new face roaming the sidelines for the Utica Stevenson girls basketball team.

Just three weeks before the players hit the hardwood, Troy Marks — who coached the JV team at Utica Ford II for the past four seasons and assisted varsity coach Matt Joseph — took the reins.

With only eight weeks of playing and practice under their belts, Marks said, the squad is still undergoing a crash course in learning his new system.

“We want to play more of an up-tempo game,” Marks said. “They’re used to maybe walking it up the floor and setting things up. We’re going to be creating offense off of turnovers and look to that easy score.”

“It’s still a learning curve here,” Marks continued. “We have about half of our stuff in halfway through the season. It’s kind of learning on the job right now.”

Learning that new system will be key to turning around the Titans’ fortunes. Last year, they held opponents to 45.2 points, but only averaged 41.2 on offense on their way to a 2-8 divisional record.

“I think as the season progresses, with the new coach and the new system, it will all sink in,” said junior Lauren Hopfner.

Marks expects Hopfner to lead the team from the point guard position.

“I really want her to step up and take control of this team,” Marks said. “I’d like her to shoot more and take it to the hole more. She needs to get people in position, push the ball up the court and be the coach on the floor.”

Hopfner joins a large group of returning players, including seniors Alaina Kristoff (guard), Dayna Berzak (guard), Jill Matthew (guard/forward), Steph-anie D’Ascenzo (guard/forward), Katie Reading (forward) and Jessica Lesperance (guard), and juniors Sarah Prybys (forward) and Samantha Simmeron (forward).

Reading averages 10 points and 10 rebounds a game, while D’Ascenzo is one of the Titans’ major outside threats.

At 5 feet 11, sophomore newcomer Kelsie Kopicki is also being counted on to be a strong inside player. Other newcomers include sophomores Beverly Krall (guard) and Angela D’Ascenzo (guard).



Photo by Tracy Dreslinski
 Stevenson junior Lauren Hopfner looks for a pass during a Dec. 28 game against Rochester Adams at the Bishop Foley tournament. Stevenson aims to turn around last season’s 2-8 mark in the MAC Red with new coach Troy Marks at the helm.

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“We have a lot of quick girls who are fast and physical,” Hopfner said. “This year, we have a lot better work ethic ... people are putting the time in they need to make the team better.”

Through the first part of the schedule, the Titans were 2-5 overall. Marks said the squad would need to keep improving if they want to stay in the Macomb Area Conference Red Division, as conference realignment will take place next season.

“Where we sit right now, and with realignment ... if we don’t make some noise in the conference, we may move down,” Marks said. “We open conference play against Ford, so we’ve really got to be ready to play.”

The Titans host Utica Ford II at 7 p.m. Jan 7 in their MAC Red opener.

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