

HOT STARTS: In the first week and a half or two weeks of play in the basketball season there are some teams that have gotten out to good starts. In Section 1, Cambria Heights got off to a nice start. The Highlanders started play against two WPIAL squads, beating Riverview by 30 and Kittanning by 2. Also in Section 1, Forest Hills is out to a 2-2 start. After beating Shade out of District 5 and losing to Mt. Pleasant out of the WPIAL, the Rangers opened league play with a non-section loss to Johnstown but rebounded by beating Bishop Guilfoyle by 1.

In Section 2, it's hard to find anyone in the entire conference off to a hotter start than Somerset. The Golden Eagles, led by Coach Scott Close won two non-league contests against Ligonier Valley (73-28) and North Star (85-67) with relative ease. They then dismantled Bedford and Bishop Carroll when they got into their league schedule. Two other squads that are perennial powers in Section 2 are city rivals Bishop McCort and Johnstown. The Crushers got off to a 1-1 start for the coverage week, splitting games in the UPJ Tourney. Pat Hollern's club dropped the opener against Quad-A Hollidaysburg but rebounded to take third place by defeating Penn Cambria. Last but not least the Johnstown Trojans only played one game in the coverage week but they were more than impressive, blowing out Forest Hills 56-39.

TOP PERFORMERS: Early on there hasn't been a more dynamic duo than Anthony Papini and Ryan Fisher of Somerset. Papini dropped 15, 18, 16 and 18 on Ligonier Valley, North Star, Bedford and Bishop Carroll while Fisher had monster games against Bedford (26) and Bishop Carroll (30).

Cambria Heights' John Link won the Kittanning Tournament MVP after a 19-point performance in the championship game.

The Johnstown Trojans' had a balanced attack in their opener over Forest Hills with three players in Carlton Wyatt (17), Paul Weatherly (15) and Richard Agurs (14) all reaching double figures. Weatherly also grabbed seven rebounds in the victory.

UPJ-bound Jordan Miller of Central Cambria twice scored 39 (versus Conemaugh Township and Bishop McCort) and dropped 33 in a loss to Penn Cambria.

ON THE HORIZON: Speaking of the Trojans, they have an absolute bear of a week. On Monday they host Altoona in the rivals' annual Boys'/Girls' Varsity doubleheader. Wednesday they host a very tough Somerset team and then Friday there are at Westmont (more on that contest below in COACHSPEAK).

Bishop Carroll also has an exciting week ahead. The Huskies host three games, Monday they take on WestPAC member Windber, Wednesday they host Westmont and they finish the week with what should be an extremely intense match-up with fellow Catholic school Bishop McCort.

Aside from the Hilltoppers above mentioned contest with Johnstown, Westmont has a tough with games Monday against Bishop McCort and Wednesday at Bishop Carroll.

A couple of other quality Wednesday match-ups in the LHAC are Cambria Heights at Central Cambria (nice matchup of scorers in Link versus Miller) and Richland at Bishop McCort (always a neat story when a one coach goes up against a mentor and former coach in Hollern vs. Koshute).

COACHSPEAK: I had a chance to touch base with Scott Close to ask him about his team's early success. "The first two games were in the Somerset Kiwanis Vance Coleman Tournament. Anthony Papini earned MVP honors while Ryan Fisher was named to the all-tournament team. Our team is built to run and shoot. We'll put a lot of points on the board and hope to outscore our opponents. Johnstown is definitely the team to beat in District 6, but we hope to be competitive in the LHAC and D6AAA."

Speaking of Johnstown, first-year coach Dave Roman, Jr. has an interesting contest Friday night as it marks his first return to the place he called home for ten years: Westmont. Roman was 201-77 and

won four district titles during his tenure as the Hilltoppers' head coach. "I am sure I won't sleep much on Thursday night. There will be a lot of emotions on Friday night. It will be different dressing in the visitor's locker room and sitting on the other bench. I better remember which coaching box is mine so that I don't get a technical foul. I still care about those kids. I have remained close with several of the seniors. The bottom line is that we have a job to do up there on Friday night. I will be focused during preparation and during the game on winning a basketball game for Johnstown", remarked Roman.