

Sports



(Photo by Jenna Larkin, Illinois Valley News)

11 Junior Michael Weaver passes the ball to a team mate during the home loss at Ken Mann Memorial Gymnasium against Rouge River Adventist.

School closures affecting basketball season

By
Jenna Larkin
IVN Contributing Writer

The boys' basketball program at Illinois Valley High School is off to a rocky start due to school closures, a lack of practice sessions and game cancellations.

"In the 12 years I have been coaching, this is the toughest," said head coach Jeff Winters.

Of the almost four weeks of the basketball season, there have been very few practices and no games. This is due in part to the recent storm the Valley endured. Because of the school closures, practices have been put on hold along with the first five games.

Winters also said that IVHS is not the only school strug-

gling with not having games; most of the other schools that compete against Illinois Valley have also dealt with school closures, limited practices and games. On a positive note, the boys were able to get a practice in on Friday, Dec. 13, the first since the schools have been closed.

Normally there are usually 10 to 11 varsity players and the J.V. team has about 11 players. This year, however, due to injuries and poor grades, some of the boys aren't able to play. Winters is hoping some of the guys that are struggling with grades can bring them up and play, which would help boost the numbers for the teams.

With many of the players on varsity coming up from J.V. most of the positions are up for grabs and the competition is fierce. There is only one returning player, now a senior, that has a for-sure spot. Coach Winters is confident that all the players will get equal playing time, ensuring the success of the boys becom-

ing a strong team.

"When I am coaching, what I look for, what any coach looks for, is good chemistry between the players, a team that plays as a team and for the players to know what other teammates are going to do before they do it," said Winters of a team growing together.

Despite the setbacks, Winters is staying positive. With the coming week and the hope that school will be back in session before the holiday break, the team will be busy with make-up games that began on Monday, Dec. 16 with a 39-58 home loss against Rogue River Adventist Academy. On Tuesday the team traveled to North Valley after press deadline, while Wednesday the team was set to play at home against Prospect Charter. The team was set for a break on Thursday, but expected to hit the road again on Friday at Riddle.

Eighth-grade basketball coming together nicely

By
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With 15 boys on the roster, and a 2-3 record so far, head coach Beau Lindsey is looking forward to a great basketball season with the eighth-grade boys of Lorna Byrne Middle School.

Coach Lindsey has been focusing mainly on teaching the boys how to play the game. Although there are five returning players, many of the participants are fresh faces to basketball. Lindsey said that it is definitely a learning experience not only for the players but for him and the other coaches as well. One of the goals for the team this season is to learn to play effectively together as a team.

"So far the boys are learning really fast and picking up on the skills needed," said Lindsey.

Similar to what the IVHS football program

did with the younger football players, the high-school basketball team showed LBMS players some of their drills for offense and defense. With a fairly new team it is making it hard to try and emulate the high-school's basketball program, although Lindsey is attempting to do so in preparation of the eighth-graders moving up to the IVHS as freshmen next year.

On December 5 the boys played an away game against North Middle School and were able to get a victory, winning by four points. But, with a week of no school due to weather, all practices and games for last week were canceled, making getting the boys ready for the rest of the season tough. Even with less practices than normal, Lindsey says the boys have improved greatly and keep improving not only at the game of basketball but as a team as well.

"Win or lose, if the team learns how to play the game and learn to play together, that's a win for me," said Lindsey.

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