

Shortly before the season started, Mentorhigh.com interviewed Coach Krizancic...

Mentorhigh.com: You're approaching win No. 400 as a coach. Among your many victories at Mentor, which one(s) stand out the most?

Coach K: I'd have to say the one win in '97 against Glenville when they were number 2 in the state...22-0. The hype was big time, couldn't get anybody else in. There were 500 people outside. Another big win was 2001 against Glenville, they were on an 18 game winning-streak., we were No. 5 in the state earlier in the year. You could feel the electricity; it was that kind of game. I would say those games are 1 and 2.

MH.com: Besides Lebron James and his SVSM team in 2003, who is the most talented individual and team you have coached against?

Coach K: Melvin Levit was one of the most athletic people ever. They beat us for the district title in 95. Glenville in 97 and 01 had a front line of three guys (who were) 6'7, 6'8. Shaker had a few. The LEL had a streak for five years when three guys from the LEL won Mr. Basketball: Damon Stringer (Cleveland Heights), Emmanuel Smith (Euclid), and Sonny Johnson (Warrensville) won Mr. Basketball. We (the LEL) had three out of five years where we won Mr. Basketball. So the LEL has just been loaded with some talent.

MH.com: If there is one rule you could change about high school basketball, what would it be?

Coach K: Shot clock. We played a tournament in San Diego with a 25 and 30 second shot clock and it didn't affect us a whole lot. I'd love to see the shot clock in Ohio.

MH.com: What are the strengths and weaknesses of this year's Mentor team?

Coach K: We can shoot - but I don't wanna live by the three. We're smart. Last year turnovers killed us. I think we have some people who can handle the ball and make very good decisions. Weaknesses - we're gonna be young, we're not going to be strong or big. Pretty similar to what we've had - just a little smaller.

MH.com: What will the starting five look like?

Coach K: Without one or two football players, Jaron Crowe, Joey (Meyer) and Scott (Branchick), Daniel Hammonds (transfer from Virginia), and the 5th one will be rotated until Ben Pike gets here from football.

MH.com: Now that your son Cole is a freshman and on the team, how do you try to treat him like the rest of the team?

Coach K: You said it. I try to treat him like the rest of the team. One advantage is for both of us is that he has a lot of friends on the team. He's played up with a lot of these guys. That's helped a little. But every time you yell at him or don't yell at him you think about it a little more. You're always going to hear both ways. I've coached long enough that I don't think it's going to

bother me that much.

MH.com: What do you think about the changes to the postseason tournaments in the area? St. Ignatius joins Mentor at the Euclid District and the new regional tournament is at Cleveland State instead of Toledo.

Coach K: When I first came up the region was at Cleveland State and there were some great crowds. You go with what God deals. Our district became a little tougher. Ignatius is always a quality team. Kenston moves down. There is a lot of thing you can't control. A lot of coaches are pushing for what Columbus has where the teams from the four regions come together to seed all the teams. You could end up in a different district every year.

MH.com: What does the LEL look like this year?

Coach K: Euclid is really good - they have everybody back. Cleveland Heights has a couple good guards. (Travis) Kelce is a really good athlete. Those are 1-2. Shaker has the good guard that signed DI and Shaw is always athletic.

MH.com: What do you think of this year's schedule?

Coach K: It's solid for us, but it's not one of the better ones we've had. For the young ones it's solid. You still have Warren Harding and VASJ - probably top five in the state in their classes. (Toledo) Whitner has a guard that signed with Purdue. Towards the end we're loaded with Euclid, Harding, and VASJ.

MH.com: What would a successful season look like to you?

Coach K: W's (wins) are always great. Last year went great we had the nice run where we beat Cleveland Heights, Harding, Joes. We definitely wanna get to the districts. At the end of January and February (Mentor plays Cleveland Heights, Euclid, VASJ, and Warren Harding in February) you want to be able to compete against the best teams we play. W's - we gotta win some big games.