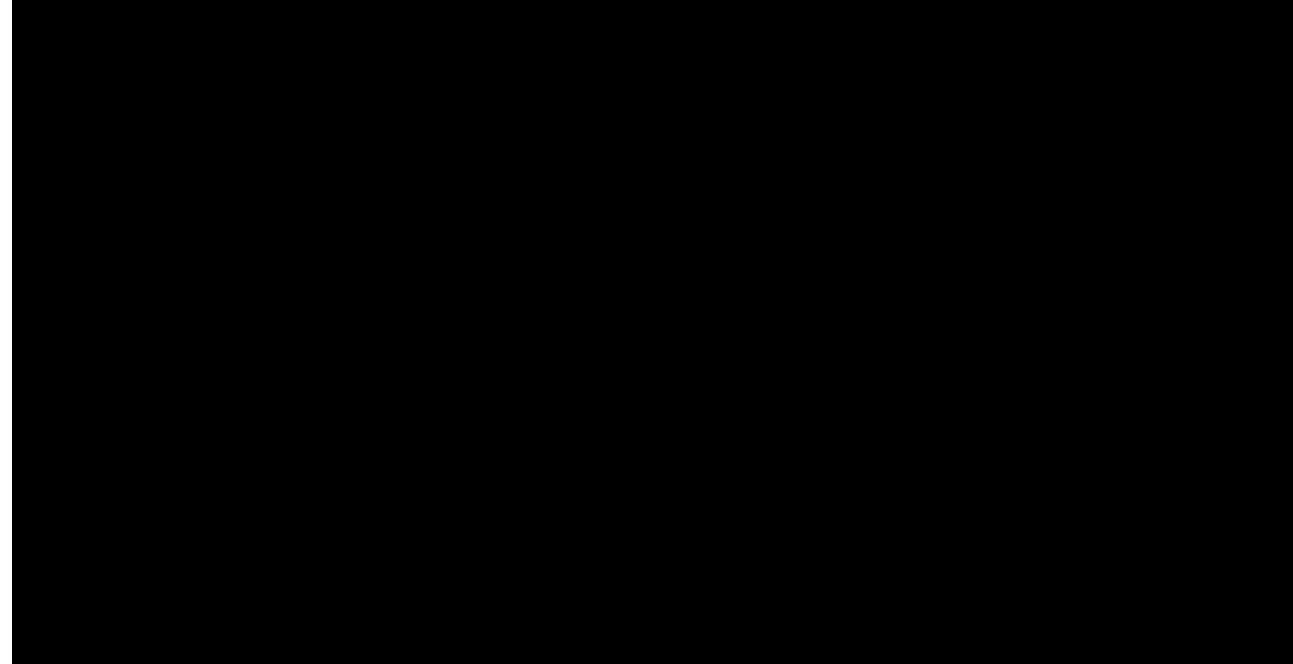




Men's Basketball | 10/20/2016 4:11:00 PM | Shawn Smith, Sports Information Director

UMC Men's Basketball Opens Practice in Preparation for 2016-17 Slate



CROOKSTON, Minn. – The University of Minnesota Crookston men's basketball team opened up preseason practice this week as they embark on the 2016-17 season. The Golden Eagles enter their third season under Head Coach [Dan Weisse](#). They will have a young program this season, but are a year older after being one of the youngest teams in all of NCAA Division II basketball last season. The Golden Eagles will still be young with six freshmen and six sophomores, but will be a year older as they head into an always difficult NSIC schedule.

"Through the first week we have been mixing teams and line-ups in practice," said Head Coach [Dan Weisse](#). "We want these guys to form a chemistry with one another and to get used to playing with different guys so that we can all get on the same page. Our focus right now is to have a competitive environment where we can teach the system to the new guys and throw in some new wrinkles that are new for everybody. As we go forward, we will start to figure out what roles everyone will fall into, but for now we are more focused on the process."

Point Guards

Returning for a second year in the system will be [Kobe Critchley](#) (So., G, Roseville, Minn.), who made strides in his freshman campaign for the Golden Eagles. Critchley is the leading returner for UMC after averaging 9.2 points and 2.7 assists per game in his first season.

Senior [Xavier Hall](#) (Sr., G, Woodbury, Minn.) also returns for UMC. Hall is more experienced after a year in the program and will look to step into more of a leadership role as one of two seniors for the Golden Eagles. Hall came off the bench last season for 2.9 points per game.

[Connor Gamble](#) (R-Fr., G, Stillwater, Minn.), who redshirted last year after a strong high school career in which he was a Top-100 prospect in the state of Minnesota, will look to push for time at the point guard and shooting guard spots. Newcomer [Harrison Cleary](#) (Fr., G, Oak Creek, Wis.) joins the ranks as a combo guard and will also push for playing time after earning All-State honors as a senior at Oak Creek H.S.

Shooting Guard

Both Gamble and Cleary can also play the shooting guard position and will battle for the spot throughout preseason. [Aaron Hollcraft](#) (So., G, Crookston, Minn.), a local product who averaged 1.7 points per game in his first season will also battle for playing time, as will newcomer [Benjamin Rounds](#) (Fr., G/F, McFarland, Wis.), who is coming off a strong career at McFarland H.S., in which he was ranked the 19th-best senior last season in the state of Wisconsin. The Golden Eagles are looking to improve their shooting for the 2016-17 campaign after shooting 33.2 percent from beyond the arc last season.

Small Forward

[Chase Knickerbocker](#) (So., G/F, Annandale, Minn.) played a vital role last season with three starts and 15.2 minutes per game for the Golden Eagles. Knickerbocker tallied 4.3 points per game and shot 35.9 percent from beyond the arc. He will battle throughout the preseason with [Chase Johnson](#) (Fr., G/F, La Crosse, Wis.), [Gabrys Sadaunykas](#) (Fr., G/F, Vilnius, Lithuania), [Darin Viken](#) (So., G/F, Fosston, Minn.) and Rounds. Johnson had a strong prep career in which he averaged 13.1 points per game last season for Logan H.S. Viken appeared in 12 games last season for the Golden Eagles off the bench. Sadaunykas, who played high school basketball at St. Joseph H.S. in California, earning conference MVP honors, while also being named All-Area Offensive player of the Year.

Power Forward

[Gable Smith](#) (R-So., F, Lodi, Wis.) returns after averaging 5.4 points and 4.5 rebounds per game in 24 starts for the Golden Eagles. Smith also led the team with 51 blocks on the season for the Golden Eagles. He will compete at the power forward position with [Chase Johnson](#) and [Josh Lanasa](#) (Fr., F/C, Eden Prairie, Minn.). Lanasa had a strong career at Eden Prairie H.S. and was set to walk-on at University of Nebraska before suffering an injury. He sat out last season to get healthy and will look to compete during the preseason for time.

Center

The Golden Eagles return a plethora of depth at center with all three players earning time last season. [Nate Lorenz](#) (So., F/C, Breckenridge, Minn.) started 24 games as a freshman, averaging 5.2 points and 3.3 rebounds. He is joined by [Jim Warmack](#) (Jr., F/C, East Grand Forks, Minn.), who along with Smith, has the most experience in Coach Weisse's system. Warmack came on strong late last season and averaged 3.4 points and 2.4 rebounds with two starts on the year. [Riley Rice](#) (Sr., F/C, Mullen, Neb.) is another player along with Hall, who will look to move into more of leadership role as one of just two seniors. Rice averaged 1.9 points in 15 games off the bench for UMC.

All of the players UMC has on the 2016-17 roster have been brought in because they are high character young men and are high achievers. It is important to them to succeed in everything they do, whether it is on the court, in the classroom, in the community.

"Whatever these guys do, they are going to do it to the best of their ability," Weisse said. "Those are the kind of guys we want in this program and those are the kind of guys we have with these 15 guys. They are all role models and all guys that my three kids can look up to. Because of their character, I am confident that as these guys continue to grow and develop and stick together, we will see this program progress."

The Golden Eagles will open up exhibition play Nov. 4 at 7:30 p.m. at College of St. Scholastica. The regular-season will commence as UMC plays two games against MIAA opponents with Southwest Baptist University Nov. 11 at 4 p.m. and Lincoln University of Missouri Nov. 12 at 1:30 p.m. in Bolivar, Mo.

[Print Friendly Version](#)

PLAYERS MENTIONED

#14 Xavier Hall G / 6' 1" / Senior	#22 Aaron Hollcraft G / 6' 0" / Sophomore
#25 Chase Knickerbocker G/F / 6' 6" / Sophomore	#34 Nate Lorenz F/C / 6' 7" / Sophomore
#24 Riley Rice F/C / 6' 6" / Senior	#44 Gable Smith F / 6' 7" / Redshirt Sophomore
#20 Darin Viken G / 6' 1" / Sophomore	#0 Harrison Cleary G / 6' 1" / Freshman
#21 Chase Johnson F / 6' 6" / Freshman	#30 Benjamin Rounds G/F / 6' 6" / Freshman

Related Stories

- 06.08.23 Former Men's Basketball Player Cleary Continues Professional Journey with Lahti Basketball in Finland
- 06.06.23 Minnesota Crookston Men's Basketball Adds Fourth Signee with Grand Forks Native Ben Hoverson
- 06.01.23 Minnesota Crookston Men's Basketball Adds Joel Hanson as Assistant Coach
- 05.18.23 Minnesota Crookston Men's Basketball Set to Host Two Youth Camps this Summer
- 05.02.23 Minnesota Crookston Men's Basketball Announces Signing of Twins Mario and Myles Adams of Rosemount

Related Videos

- 05.11.23 Post-Game - Mike Hallquist and Ben Goelz
- 05.10.23 Josh Dykhoff Grand Slam Against Minot State
- 05.10.23 Post-Game - Steve Gust vs. Minot State
- 05.10.23 Post-Game: Josh and Jake Dykhoff against Minot State
- 04.24.23 Post-Game - Mitch Goodwin and Conner Richardson



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA CROOKSTON

© 2023 University of Minnesota Crookston Athletics
The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer