

2007-08 Season Out Look

This years Centurion Basketball team sports an exciting look with the return of six varsity lettermen and the addition of eight players from last seasons outstanding junior varsity team. Coach Hallman will again have the luxury of choosing players from a deep and talented roster as the Centurions make a run at the Foothill League Championship and the CIF playoffs. During Saugus' 24-6 summer (2007) in which the team won both the Westmont and Hart summer tournaments, the team gained a great deal of valuable experience as they rarely had their full roster available due to other sport or team commitments, giving many of their new, younger players an opportunity to learn on the court.

The 2007-08 schedule will again be a challenging one. The Centurions open their season, as always, with the annual Saugus Shoot Out, hosting Santa Barbara, Westlake, West Ranch, Crescenta Valley, L.I.L.A., Cesar Chavez, and Bethel Christian High Schools in a pool play format. Following a non-league home game against El Camino Real Saugus will travel to the Oak Park Tournament and play powerful Calabasas, Oak Park and Royal High Schools in pool play. The Centurions will continue the rest of their pre-league season on the road, facing Camarillo High School, compete in the Santa Barbara Holiday Classic, and finish with Ventura and Beverly Hills High School before opening Foothill League play.

The always competitive Foothill League looks to kick it up a notch this year. Of the 18 All League selections last year, 15 were underclassmen, including Saugus' Mike Cassio (1st Team), Mitch Weber (2nd Team) and Mario Wright (2nd Team). With all six teams coming from the Santa Clarita Valley, Tuesday and Friday nights will have a Hatfield and McCoy feel to them.

The Saugus Centurions

Guards – Saugus has traditionally had great point guards during Coach Hallman's 14 years at the helm. Players such as Bryan Finley, Mark Holmquist, and Shant Bicakeci will be joined by **Michael Cassio** and **Mark Watanabe** as great floor leaders in the Saugus tradition. After averaging 9.7 points and 2.5 assists per game Cassio was named to 1st Team all Foothill League and Saugus' Most Valuable player last year. Michael is a hard working, dedicated gym rat who leads with joy and enthusiasm and is a great teammate who has been named one of the teams' co-captains. Watanabe, who will make his varsity debut this year, is a quick, aggressive defender who is really beginning to open up his offensive game. Do not be surprised to see these two point guards on the floor at the same time this year. **Mitch Weber**, the other co-captain, is a third year varsity player who will move from forward to guard this year. Mitch, a returning 2nd Team All Leaguer and two-time Saugus Defensive Player of the Year, has really turned up his game on the offensive end of the floor over the last six month. Weber is an eager competitor with no back down in his body. **Wade McDiffett** is a senior guard playing varsity for the first time this year. An outstanding shooter McDiffett will be used to stretch out the opponents defense with his ability to shoot the three point shot. Once Saugus' football

team completes its outstanding season, quarterback **Desi Rodriguez** will make his varsity basketball debut. Rodriguez is a pedal to the metal hustler who can be counted on to make things happen, most of them good! At 5'10" Rodriguez defends, rebounds, and bangs with the best of them.

Forwards – Penciled in to start at one forward spot is 6'2" senior **Joey Dietrich**. During the summer Dietrich was often used to defend the opponents point guard or top scoring forward. With his long arms, quick feet, and hustle Dietrich makes an ideal “shut down” defender. After playing center for the past two years the coaching staff hopes to successfully transition **Mario Wright** (2nd Team All League) to forward once his football season ends. With his size, speed, and athleticism Mario should give this team a greater rebounding and defensive personality. Fans will also see Wright move back into the center position when necessary. Senior **Josh Benham**, another returning varsity player, could push Wright and Dietrich for starting spots, but with his versatility Coach Hallman sees him as an ideal 6th man. At 6'2" Benham has excellent defensive anticipation and hands, rebounds well, and has a well rounded offensive game. Junior **Miles Orr** plays defense like a starving man looking for a meal. That alone will get him on the floor. Miles has the tools to be a good offensive player and as he gets more comfortable with the Centurions offensive system fans will get to see those tools used quite often. Junior **Noel Mansour** also moves up from JV to Varsity this year at the forward position. Mansour is an outstanding three point shooter who adds versatility to his offensive game every day. During the summer he impressed the coaches by rebounding and defending better than it was first believed he would. Noel is another player that as he gets more comfortable with the demands of varsity basketball, will push the players ahead of him for playing time. Senior **Michael Sayer** also makes the move from Junior Varsity to Varsity ball this year. Sayer is a quiet, hard working player who gives everything he has, every day. His job is to make his teammates better with his effort and enthusiasm and he does a great job with that.

Centers – The growth of **Cameron Diorio** as a player has been a key factor in the coach's decision to move Mario Wright to forward. It has taken some convincing, but at 6'4 and 225 pounds, Diorio is able to bang inside and rebound for the team, yet with his soft touch, Cameron can step outside and be a lethal three point shooter. Diorio has also shown himself to be an adept passer, a crucial skill for a center in this offense. Junior **Kyle Eaton**, 6'3", will back up the center spot while also learning to play forward. Eaton will be counted on to use his speed and hustle to run the floor, providing great offensive and defensive transition for this team. Senior **Connor Harding** will join the varsity this season, providing great hustle and enthusiasm for the team. Harding is a positive, unselfish teammate who makes a difference with his hustle and attitude every day.