

Strong field for SEBA Classic

Marietta Daily Journal (Adam Carrington)

Dec 11, 2016



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Coach Mike Thompson will bring McEachern to the ninth annual SEBA Classic on Saturday. The Indians are one of five Cobb County schools in the field.

The ninth annual SEBA Atlanta Hoops Festival is taking place Saturday at Pope High School and five local teams, including the Greyhounds, expect to be put to the test.

Region 6AAAAAA contender Sprayberry will face playoff team Duluth to start the day. Hillgrove will follow against reigning elite eight team St. Pius X. North Cobb Christian and South Paulding, both elite eight teams last year in their respective classes, will be the third game. Pope, which is tied for the Region 7AAAAAA lead, will follow against Blessed Trinity. McEachern and Lithonia, both of which made the final four last season, will play in the nightcap.

“We’re excited about the group of teams participating this year,” tournament director William LoPresti said. “Five of them are ranked in the top 10 of their respective classifications and there are three or four teams that are one-loss teams. And if the teams are not in the top 10, they are right on the cusp.”

LoPresti pointed out that the matchup between North Cobb Christian and South Paulding, which is scheduled to start at 4:45 p.m., could be the most intriguing one of the five.

North Cobb Christian (6-2) came into the season as the preseason’s No. 2-ranked team in Class A. Returning all-state player Demiere Brown is averaging more than 20 points a game, and Will Crumly has been dangerous all season at the wing.

South Paulding has won a combined 69 games over the last three seasons and is a contender to win state in Class AAAAAA behind a senior-laden team behind guard and Georgia State-signee Kane Williams.

“Knock on wood, it’s going to be a real good ball game,” North Cobb Christian coach Greg Matta said. “South Paulding, they are good. They are the real deal. We have to come ready to play.”

McEachern coach Mike Thompson is eager to face Lithonia, not only for the competition, but to find out where the Indians stand as a unit going into the January portion of their schedule.

McEachern is 4-0 to start the year. Sophomore shooting guard Isaac Okoro is already getting offers from SEC and ACC schools and forward Babatunde Akinbola is also attracting Division I programs.

“We just figured it’s going to be a really good game,” Thompson said. “We like these games early in the year, and we’ve played a couple of them already. It will be a good test before we get into the thick of the region.”

Pope (6-1) is looking to return to the playoffs with a more experienced group than it had a year ago after graduating a talented 2015 class. Senior point guard Alex Watson has been the team's go-to shooter this season after averaging 16 points last season and Jackson Baylark has carried the Greyhounds inside the paint.

Pope will be playing a Blessed Trinity team that has played the SEBA Hoops Festival in all nine years.

Hillgrove (7-2) has made the playoffs for nine straight years and is projected to make it 10 this year. Demeirre Black is picking up where he left off after averaging 19 points and six rebounds last year. St. Pius X is expecting to be a force in AAAA after graduating a talented senior class.

Sprayberry (7-3) has gotten off to a rapid start behind the services of point guard Eddie Figueroa and will go up against a Duluth team now coached by Cabral Huff, who led St. Francis to back-to-back Class A state championships in 2013 and 2014.

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