



Racers gearing up for playoffs

By **Tim Masmar**
STAFF WRITER

ELGIN — The Elgin Racers look to slam dunk a two-game losing streak when they return to Judson College tonight at 7:15 p.m. to play Grand Rapids in their final home game of the season.

With only two games remaining in the regular season, the Racers (14-5) have put themselves in position to be a legitimate contender when the 24-team International Basketball League begins its single-elimination playoffs on July 13-16 in Elkhart, Ind.

"It would be nice to enter the playoffs on a roll," Racers coach Jim Condill said. "We are looking forward to playing our final home game this season. I think we have a chance (in the playoffs). How well all the players mesh together is going to be the key. We may be undersized, but I think we've shown we are very talented."

Owned by Bob Fischer, the Racers have tactically blended team chemistry and balanced scoring together to overcome a lack of height — until tonight — regularly beating opponents with quickness, stamina and desire. In the wake of the two consecutive road losses, two new players — both 6-foot-7 or taller — have been added to the roster and will make their Racers debut tonight.

"Considering we haven't had much size all year I think this season has turned out better than we expected," said Fischer, who purchased the team formerly known as the Windy City Dawgs at the midway point of last season. "It has been one disappointing thing after another with the big guys we've tried to get, but we've recently added a couple new guys and we expect them to come in and make a difference.

"We want to finish strong and take a shot at winning the playoffs. There are a few good teams that will probably challenge for the title and we know we are right up there with the best of them."

Prior to the losing streak, which began with a 134-117 loss to the same Grand Rapids team that the Racers will play tonight, the Racers had been riding a nine-game win streak that culminated with a stirring fourth-quarter comeback against visiting Colorado last week.

At that point, the Racers seemed to be clicking on all cylinders. New addition Brandon Watkins and Nick Zachary spearheaded the win, but Corey Brown, Brandon Moore, Rodney Rollins, Frank Richards, Luke Condill, and Sherick Simpson all played equally important parts — much like they have done all season.

Simpson and Brown, both expected to be named league all-stars, along with Zachary all average around 20 points per game, while Moore, Rollins, Richards and Condill can also be counted on for double-digit scoring on a nightly basis.

"We know we have been undersized all year, but we try to use that to our advantage. We have to," said Zachary, who has both started and come off the bench this season. "Coach (Condill) just asks us to go out and play our game. He gives us a lot of freedom to do what we do. Everybody understands that they can't play all the time, but when you're in there, you have to bring to the table what you've got."

As successful as the Racers have been on the court, the public overall, has been slow to pick up and identify with the fast-paced action. Admitting the finished product still needs to be tweaked here and there, Fischer realizes it is going to take some time to establish a loyal fan base.

"We've still got a lot of work to do to get the word out, but we've just got to keep working and get more involved in the community," said Fischer, who expects a sellout for tonight's game. "We've been one of the model teams in the league this year and we will continue to be as long as I'm here."