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SPORTS



Grant Smith, Seth Maxwell and Grant Prible set up defense for Indiana Wesleyan University.

Moe's headed to the Hall

Former Marion coach named to Grant Co. Hall of Fame

By Sean Douglas

The Marion Giants boys basketball program has produced several Hall of Fame coaches.

Bill Green, of course, is the standard, leading Marion to six of their eight state championships throughout the school's illustrious history. Others like Jack Cole-scott and James Blackmon have made and continue to make their mark on the program.

And in a class full of high-profile coaches, another former Marion great is set to be inducted, as Moe Smedley will take his place in Grant County Sports Hall of Fame later this year.

Over his 35-year coaching career, Smedley spent time at Eastbrook, Marion, Manchester, and Northfield, compiling a record of 437-345. His finest coaching came at Marion, where he finished with a record of 120-67, good for a .642 winning percentage. Smedley's best season in 1999-2000, when he led Marion, and future NBA great Zach Randolph, to a 28-1 record and Marion's seventh state championship victory. After leaving Marion in 2004, Smedley moved on to Northfield, where he coached for another 10 years.

"He only has one state championship ring, but you look at some of the pro-

2018: IWU's season of growth

By Sean Douglas

Grant Smith, like Kyle Mangas, was an Indiana All-Star his senior season. In his freshman year at IWU, he only started one contest, but offered a scoring spark and tremendous athleticism off the bench. Smith was IWU's fourth-highest leading scorer at 9.3 points per game, while ranking second on the team with 37 steals.

Joel Okafor, in his second year out of Nigeria, took his game to another level in his junior season with the Wildcats. He started 37 games for the Wildcats at the point guard and was one of the most effective two-way players in the history of the program. Okafor averaged 7.1 points, 4.0 rebounds, 3.5 assists, and 1.4 steals, while leading the team in assists (128) and steals (50).

"Joel was our heart and our toughness," Mangas said. "He was out there on the court guarding the best player every single game. He was our point guard. I have never played with someone who played harder than him. That dude, he gets after it."

"Joel was a dog. He did all the dirty work," Coffey added. "He was a warrior out there, and a fearless leader. It didn't matter if he had a broken hand or if he was beat up — he just went out there and competed every day. The passion that he brought really got our team fired



up. He brought the same fire each and every day."

Coffey, much like Okafor, elevated his game in his sophomore season with the Wildcats. After appearing in all 36 games the year previous, Coffey started 22 games in 2017-2018, averaging 7.1 points per contest. He shot 41.8 percent from the floor, while knocking down 42.8 percent of his shots from the perimeter.

"Canaan was just solid," Mangas said. "He was a guy who we knew would knock down some threes, but [we also] knew he was going to make the smart play every single time."

Every great team, whether it be in the high school, collegiate, or pro ranks, needs leaders — guys who can carry the teams throughout the highs and lows of each season. For

the 2017-2018 Wildcats, that was Ben Carlson and Jacob Johnson.

"I had no idea what type of talent or what level of competition it was going to be. I had never seen an NAIA team before," Maxwell said. "I wasn't able to come in and compare us to anybody. It was very different, but I think I was really blown away by the leadership. Ben Carlson and Jacob Johnson, they came in and were super intentional. I was really impressed by the work ethic of a lot of the guys and seeing the way they were in the weight room and in the gym. That definitely made me feel comfortable and confident in whoever we were going to face."

The two seniors had already tasted success in their college careers, winning a national championship in 2016. They knew what it

took to win. They knew what it took to be successful. And most importantly, they embodied Tonagel's IAmThird philosophy and lived it every single day.

"Ben was one of the most important pieces of the team because of what he did behind the scenes and his leadership," Tonagel said. "Ben had the heart to lead this team. He was very bold in leading this team. Each team takes on the personality of its leader, and they took on the personality of Ben Carlson. He just had a huge heart for his teammates."

"Those two guys were some of the best leaders I've seen out on the court and off the court," Coffey added. "Jacob had played a lot of minutes. He was a three or four-year starter, so he knew what was going on. He had experience. You could lean on him to make a big play. Ben might be my favorite teammate of all time. He was just such a team first guy. Whenever Evan came in, they gave Ben the starting job just because he had the experience, but Ben handed that role over to Evan just for Evan's sake. [He and Jacob] were awesome leaders."

For the third time in five years, the Wildcats boasted a roster that was ripe with championship potential.

"We knew we had Kyle coming

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