

Six Teams To Watch In Shore Basketball

By **Chris Christopher** - December 18, 2018



Brick's (from left right) Cole Groschel, Brandon Bautista, Jalen Jackson and Shane Williams hope to deliver another winning season. (Photo courtesy of Brick senior Mackenzie Centofanti)

The following is a look at the Toms River North, Central Regional, Brick Township, Southern Regional and Lakewood boys high school basketball teams and the Manchester girls team.

Last season's individual statistics are in parentheses.

TOMS RIVER NORTH

Head coach: Rory Caswell, eighth season

Career record at North: 156-42

Assistant coach: Tom DeRiggi

Last season's overall record: 25-5, including 14-0 in Shore Conference Class A South

Key returners: 6-5 senior forward **Nick Dunzack** (six points per game), 6-6

junior forward-center **Najea Hallenbeck** (eight points, seven rebounds per game), 6-2 junior guard-forward **Collin Baker** (three points per game), 5-10 junior guard **Jakari Spence** (eight points, five assists per game), 6-5 junior guard-forward **Mike Vansprang** and 6-2 senior guard-forward **Ryan Schlosser**

Key newcomers: 5-10 junior guard **Jarrold Pruitt**, 6-3 senior guard **Aaron Craig**, 6-2 sophomore guard **Jake Kazanowsky** and 6-2 sophomore guard **Zack Browne** and 6-3 senior forward **Will Marsh**

Outlook: The Mariners have won five Class A South titles over the previous seven seasons, including the last four, and look for North to again be at the top of the heap.

“Obviously, we lost some experience and scoring to graduation from last year’s very successful team,” Caswell said, “But we do not expect to drop off. I can see us being better with the emergence of a very talented junior class which already has a ton of varsity experience. We have a lot of experience back from last year’s team along with a lot of skilled newcomers. We believe this team has a very high ceiling because of its overall size, length and skill set. I see us as a top team in the Shore Conference.”

Dunzack, Hallenbeck, Baker and Spence are three-year varsity players who played major roles on last year’s team. Hallenbeck hopes to play college football and his name is on the lips of Rutgers, West Virginia and Boston College.

“Vansprang will likely be our fifth starter,” Caswell said. “He will handle the ball a lot at point guard to allow Spence and Baker opportunities to get down the floor. Schlosser, our sixth man, is a quick, slashing guard who will play all three guard positions. Spence has the potential to be one of the top point guards in the Shore Conference. Baker, Vansprang and Schlosser give us plenty of talent and shooting at shooting guard and small forward. Pruitt,

Craig, Marsh, Kazanowsky and Browne are all coming off successful football seasons (North was 6-2-1)."

Dunzack and Hallenbeck are formidable inside.

"Our size and inside scoring will be our strength," Caswell said. "I believe Dunzack and Hallenbeck can be among the best scoring power forwards and centers in the Shore Conference. Both have good post up games with great size and both shoot the three-pointer very well."

North plans to throw different looks at its opponents.

"Our depth will allow us to be versatile in the way we play this season," Caswell said. "We can either go with our long-big lineup and play a large zone with three guys who stand 6-5-plus in the back line or we can use our athletic depth, which will allow us to play five long athletes and full court press when needed."

CENTRAL REGIONAL

Head coach: Mike Clemente, fourth season

Career record: 41-39

Assistant coaches: Dan Torsiello, John Fredo and Adrienne Cangelosi

Last season's record: 8-18



Central's Mike Clemente is in his fourth season at the helm. (Photo courtesy of the Central Regional High School boys basketball team)

Key returners: 6-2 senior guard **Darius Martorano** (13 points, two assists, five rebounds per game), 6-1 senior guard **Nick Altieri** (eight points per game), 5-9 senior guard **Walter Maldonado** (two steals, 2.5 assists per game), 5-8 senior guard **Nasir Dillard**, 6-2 junior forward **Nick Firetto** (two rebounds, one steal per game), 6-4 junior forward **Eugene Brown** (two rebounds per game), 5-10 sophomore guard **Marvin Goodwine Jr.** (seven points, two steals, two rebounds, 1.5 assists per game) and 6-9 sophomore wing **Kyle Rhoden**

Key newcomers: 5-10 senior guard **Isaiah Johnston**, 6-4 senior forward **Shirod Perkins**, 6-2 junior guard **Cody Blocker**, 6-3 sophomore forward **I-Meer Johnson** and 6-5 freshman forward **Justin Soranno**

Outlook: One of the state's most interesting prospects, Rhoden transferred to Central about halfway through last season after playing on the Rutgers Prep varsity team. Rhoden played in one game for Central, scoring 11 points and adding five rebounds, five assists, four blocks and three steals in a loss to Holmdel.

Rhoden, a 185-pounder, spent the off season playing for the New York Rens, a New York City team that competes on the NIKE circuit. He's a product of the Central Regional Middle School team.

"The circuit is the highest level a player can play on," Clemente said. "He has always been an elite defensive player. He can defend multiple positions, including point guard. He blocks shots and plays above the rim. He has always run the floor very well."

Rhoden has improved his offense.

"We put a lot of work into his offensive game heading into this season," Clemente said. "We totally changed his jumper, breaking it down from scratch. He is able to step outside the three-point line and score and he has the ability to score the ball around the basket. We changed his shooting 180 degrees. We made shooting a lot simpler for him and he is going to continue to get better."

Clemente said Rhoden, who is enrolled in honors classes, made an unofficial visit to Princeton University last spring.



Central Regional hopes for a winning season. From left to right are sophomore Kyle Rhoden, senior Nick Altieri, sophomore Marvin Goodwine Jr., senior Walter Maldonado, senior Darius Martorano and freshman Justin Soranno. (Photo courtesy of Dan Torsiello)

"Rutgers is also keeping an eye on him," Clemente said. "There is a big buzz surrounding his name at the (NCAA) Division I level. We are all very excited. We all have high expectations of Kyle, but everyone has to realize he is only 16 years old."

Martorano began playing for the Golden Eagles as a sophomore when they were 22-6. He starred at wide receiver for Central during the 2018 season.

"He earned his playing time that year with his defense," Clemente said. "He and Altieri are our captains. Darius became a big scorer during the second half of last season. He gets a lot of steals as he gets into the passing lanes. We will

run a lot of our offense through Darius. He knows how to push his teammates to get better.”

BRICK TOWNSHIP

Head coach: Mike Gawronski, seventh season

Career record: 49-95

Assistant coaches: Jesse McMahon, Chris Golden and James Walker

Last season's record: 15-9

Key returners: 6-3 senior guard-forward **Shane Williams** (17.4 points, 10.7 rebounds, 4.3 assists, 1.9 steals and 2.8 blocks per game), 5-10 senior point guard **Jalen Jackson** (13.8 points, 2.3 rebounds, 4.6 assists and 2.7 steals per game), 6-2 senior forward **Cole Groschel** (2.8 points, 6.7 rebounds and 2.4 steals per game), 5-9 junior guard **Val Grigorian**, 5-8 junior point guard **Brandon Bautista**, 6-foot junior shooting guard **Anthony Maniscalco** and 6-1 junior forward **Aziz Osman**

Key newcomers: 5-7 senior guard **Rob Guerra**, 6-4 senior center **Jack Melone**, 6-2 senior forward **Jack Dougard**, 5-7 junior guard **C.J. Laverin**, 6-2 senior forward **Joaquin Ragland** and 6-2 sophomore forward **Ryan Duffy**

Outlook: Williams is 89 points from the career varsity 1,000 milestone.



Brick coach Mike Gawronski hopes to guide his Green Dragons to their fourth straight winning season. (Photo courtesy of the Brick boys basketball team)

Gawronski, a 2007 Brick graduate, is third on the Green Dragons' career scoring list with 1,315 points. He played shooting guard for three varsity seasons. Atop the school's career scoring list is Joe Spitale. Stan Czekay is second while Mike Arace is fourth. They are the lone players in school history to score either 1,000 or more career varsity points.

"We will look to continue to improve on last year's record," Gawronski said. "We have improved our record in each of the last six years (2-23, 2-19, 3-12 13-12, 14-11 and 15-9). This is a trend we will look to continue as well as look to make noise in the Shore Conference and state tournaments."

SOUTHERN REGIONAL

Head coach: Eric Fierro, ninth season

Career record: 119-92

Record last season: 14-13

Assistant coaches: John Pampalone, Joe Nagy, Brandon Snyder, Rob Barrett and Jim Bailey

Key returners: 6-1 senior guard **Vinnie Deck** (10.6 points per game), 5-6 junior guard **Will Devane** (1.4 points per game), 5-10 senior guard **Joe Infurna** (2.0 points per game), 6-3 senior forward **Alex Manno** (2.2 points per game), 6-2 senior guard **Cole Markley** (6.8 points per game), 6-2 junior forward **Cole Robinson** (2.3 points per game) and 6-4 senior forward **Johnny Tilton** (5.2 points per game)

Key newcomers: 6-foot sophomore guard **Luke Infurna** and 6-6 sophomore forward **Jay Silva**

Outlook: It figures to be a fun season for the Rams.

"A challenging schedule will make for an exciting year," Fierro said. "We are a work in progress. We have senior experience mixed with young talent."

Southern will compete in the Seagull Classic against Elizabeth at Holy Spirit, the Shoot Down Cancer Classic against Holy Spirit at St. Augustine Prep and the Box Out Cancer Classic against Collingswood at Millville.

LAKESWOOD

Head coach: Randy Holmes, 13th season

Career record: 251-74

Record last season: 17-7

Assistant coaches: Gene Drumright, Tim Brown and L.J. Clark

Returning player: 6-4 junior forward **Ryan Savoy** (8.0 points, 8.0 rebounds and three blocks per game)





Lakewood High School varsity basketball player Omari Barksdale (#13), a junior, prepares to assist a teammate during a game last season. (File photo by Steve Peacock)

Key newcomers: 5-10 guard **Omari Barksdale**, 5-10 junior guard **De'Andre Harris**, 6-foot junior guard **Sean Antoine**, 6-1 senior forward **Sincere Moore**, 5-10 senior guard **Junior Bravo**, 6-3 senior forward **Zymere Calhoun**, 5-10 junior guard **T.J. Paturzo**, 6-3 junior forward **Ty'mir Bergstrom**, 5-8 junior guard **Erick Torres** and 5-8 freshman guard **Mathew Vargas**

Outlook: This could be a rebuilding year for the Piners.

"For the first time in many years, the Piners are in survival mode," Holmes said. "This year's team lacks experience. We are hoping to be competitive. Our numbers are down on the freshman, junior varsity and varsity levels."

MANCHESTER TOWNSHIP GIRLS

Head coach: Dave Beauchemin, eighth season

Career record at Manchester: 103-83

Record last season: 26-5

Potential starting five: 5-8 junior guard **Kemari Reynolds** (12.2 points, 3.3 assists per game), 6-foot senior guard **Leilana Correa** (17.1 points, 6.5 rebounds per game), 5-9 junior guard **Serenity Anderson** (5.6 points, 4.2 rebounds per game), 6-3 sophomore forward **Destiny Adams** (15 points, 8.7 rebounds per game) and 5-foot-10 senior forward **Dakota Adams** (10.4 points, 9.9 rebounds per game)

Top reserve: 5-6 junior guard **Nahkaleigh Hayes-Jones** (6.4 points per game)

Outlook: Correa, who transferred from Rutgers Prep during the off season, and Dakota Adams have committed to play for West Virginia and Bridgeport (Conn.), respectively.

Beauchemin expects a big season from the Hawks.



Manchester senior Dakota Adams is a rugged player up front for the Hawks. (Photo courtesy of Jill Ocone)

"Ourselves, St. John Vianney, Manasquan, Red Bank Catholic and St. Rose are the top five teams in the Shore Conference," he said. "Correa, Destiny Adams and Reynolds are the top three players in the Shore Conference to watch. We have high scoring potential with great athleticism. There is a lack of depth in our front court."

Chris Christopher

Chris Christopher covers sports for Micromedia Publications Inc. with knowledge, pride and passion. His beats are the high school, college, professional, youth and recreational scenes. A three-time New Jersey Press Association award winner for sports writing, Christopher was inducted into the Shore Football Coaches Foundation Hall of Fame in 2015 for his work in the media. The Lakewood resident enjoys taking walks in Ocean County Park and on the boardwalks in Ocean and Monmouth counties and rooting for the New York Mets.

