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## Take-charge time for Oriskany's Phelps

By Ron Moshier

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ORISKANY — As a sophomore, it was baptism under fire for Oriskany's Ricky Phelps.

Senior guard Shamis Lasher was still recovering from a football injury, so head coach Chris Mahoney called on Phelps to fill in.

He turned out to be the perfect fit — first as a starter, and later as a super sixth man — for a basketball team that capped a perfect 27-0 season with a Class D state championship.

Since then, Phelps has shared Center State Conference Division IV Player of the Year honors with former teammate Ryan Enos — together they led Oriskany to another league title last season. Now, as the only true holdover from that state championship season, Phelps is the heart and soul of an Oriskany team widely considered one of the Class D frontrunners — again — in an eight-team CSC Division IV race that has swapped West Canada Valley for Hamilton and added Morrisville-Eaton.

“Ricky showed his composure back then,” Mahoney said, recalling Phelps' clutch contributions as a sophomore — in particular, that unbeaten team's closest calls, a 69-68 nonleague win at McGraw and a 58-50 win over CSC Division IV rival New York Mills. “He made the free throws at the end against McGraw, and he kind of took that game over in the fourth quarter against Mills.”

Phelps, a six-foot senior swingman who has proven he can score inside and out, has taken charge this season, too. For starters, he was named the Most Valuable Player of New Hartford's “All in for Vin” Maugeri Memorial Tournament after scoring 25 points and handing out five assists in Oriskany's 68-61 win over Canastota, and he had 15 points, 10 rebounds, six assists and four steals in a 65-36 victory over Frankfort-Schuyler.

And Tuesday night, in what Mahoney called an early-season “statement game” between old small-school rivals, it was Phelps' 28 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists that led Oriskany to a 79-49 win over New York Mills in the teams' CSC Division IV opener at

Oriskany's Keith Davis Gym. Donovan Williams scored 10 points and Brandon Reid had 11 rebounds as Oriskany improved to 3-0 overall.

"It's his growth on and off the court that really has been evident with Ricky," Mahoney said. "It's good to have a guy like that — a coach and a leader on the court like him. Some of these guys haven't had the chance to play at the same time with him that much, because he was always playing up (a level).

"Now, they know it's their time, too."

Phelps led last year's team in scoring at 18.6 points per game. He also made 49 3-pointers and averaged 6.8 rebounds.

"He's even more of a complete player now," Mahoney said. "He has the ability to score with his left or right hand, and his ability to get to the hoop is second to none in the league, I think. That's what helps make us good as a team.

"It's his leadership on the court. Not just as a vocal leader — they all see what he does, and it's 'Do as I do.'"

Enos averaged 14.9 points and nearly five assists and finished his senior season with 69 3-pointers — a school-record 10 in one game. Oriskany was 10-2 in the league and 12-10 overall in a season that ended with a 66-60 playoff loss to eventual Section III Class D champion Madison.

Phelps is the lone full-time starter returning, but brothers Mykal and Aaron Warcup played their way into the starting lineup last year, and the latter was named to New Hartford's all-tournament team after scoring 28 points in the two games.

Donovan Williams, a 6-2 senior, scored 17 points in each one of those games. Senior Brandon Reid is the other starter, with Matt Enos and Colton Davis usually the first off the bench for a very deep Oriskany team.

"I can start 10, 11, maybe 12 different guys," Mahoney said. "There's not a lot of pressure on any one guy to do everything for use, and Ricky's not looking out for himself. He's looking at us as a team, and what we have to do to reach our goals.

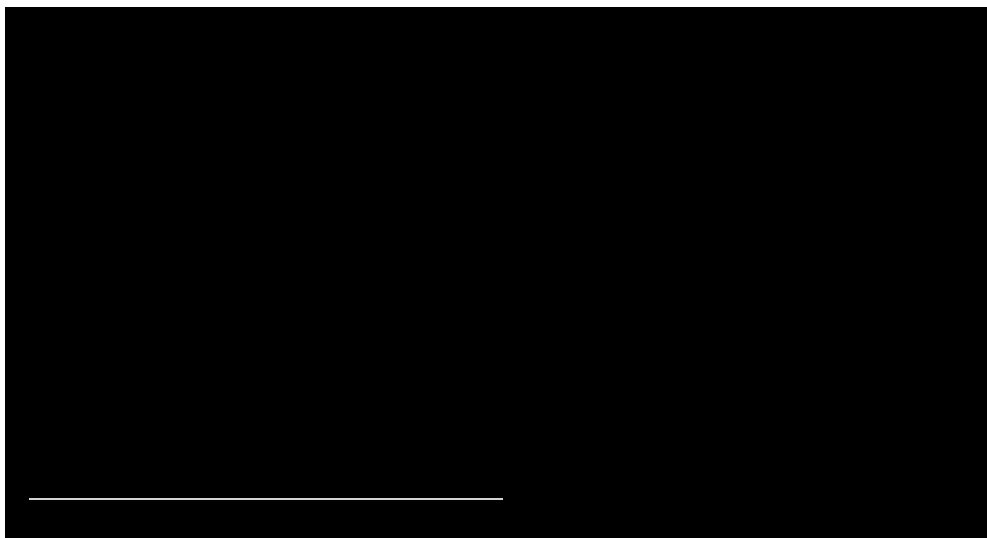
"We're long and athletic and we can get up and down the floor, so we have to use that to our advantage. We've got some potential, it's just going to come down to how hard we want to work."

- **Hamilton** coach Tom Blackford, like Mahoney, has coached a Class D team to a state championship — not once, but twice. He returned to Hamilton last year and won his 500th game — his career mark of 504-266 includes 20 seasons at Hamilton (324-152) and 14 at Fayetteville-Manlius (180-114). Now, the Emerald Knights are considered one of the favorites thanks in large part to the return of 6-2 senior Trevor Dow, a first team all-star who averaged 15.7 points and had 27 3s last season, and point guard Ryan Hunt, who averaged 7.5 assists.
- **Morrisville-Eaton** returns three starters, including 6-foot-7 senior Cameron Clark, a first team all-star last season.
- **New York Mills** went 14-9 under new coach Mike Meyers, and the Marauders are led by the return of guards Justin Ellsworth, Nick Briggs and Alex Matrassi.
- **Old Forge** was 11-9 last year and coach Tom Greco returns first team all-star guard Josh Kelly, who averaged 11.3 points last season.
- **Owen D. Young** does not return any starters from a team that finished 4-15.
- **Poland** junior Jordan LaSalle averaged 10.5 points per game and was an honorable mention all-star last season. The Tornadoes also return 6-foot-5 center Franklin Szarek and 6-2 forward Joe Grimaldi.
- **Remsen** returns senior guard Jake Rowlands, a first team all-star who averaged 14.5 points last season.

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