One question comes to mind when you think of the University of Southern Indiana men’s basketball program: How do you define “success?”

In the case of the Screaming Eagles, success can be described in different ways.

One way to define success is victories. The Eagles have averaged more than 25 victories a year since 1992-93 and have won 25 or more games nine times since 1993-94. USI ranks eighth among all Division I, II, and III institutions in wins per season since 1992-93.

The program also has won 20 or more games for 12 straight seasons and 13 times in 15 years.

A second way to define success is championships. Since 1992-93, the Eagles have won three GLVC crowns in a conference that has had a team in the NCAA II Tournament Championship game each of the last 11 years (three featuring USI); three NCAA II Great Lakes Regional titles; and the 1994-95 National Championship.

The key to the continued success is leadership. Head Coach Rick Herdes has led the Eagles to a 75-22 record, a .773 winning percentage, in three seasons.

Although Herdes has a strong base of five returning players, he faces a tough job of replacing seven seniors, including three starters. The departing players from last year’s squad represented 57 percent of the offensive output on the 2003-04 team.

Leading the way for the returning Eagles are a pair of seniors—guard Cris Brunson and forward/center Randy Holbrook. Brunson, a Street & Smith preseason honorable mention All-American, was the NCAA II Great Lakes Regional Most Outstanding Player and was named to the Elite Eight All-Tournament team after leading the Eagles in the post-season with 16.1 points per game (ppg).

For the season, Brunson was fourth on the team with 10.8 ppg and set a USI single-season record for free-throw shooting by hitting 90.6 percent from the line (58-64).

Holbrook, who was USI’s CBS/Chevrolet Player of the Game in the national championship contest, was third on the team in scoring with 11.1 ppg and rebounding with 5.2 rebounds per game (rpg). During the Elite Eight, he led the team on the boards with 6.0 rpg and posted 10 ppg.

Returning for his second season for the Eagles is sophomore forward Geoff Van Winkle. Van Winkle, the GLVC Freshman of the Year in 2003-04, ranked first on the team and seventh in the GLVC with 72 three-point field goals made, just seven short of the USI single-season record.

Van Winkle averaged 8.7 ppg (10.1 ppg during the conference schedule) and 2.7 rpg as a freshman.

USI also is looking forward to the return of senior center Reque Newsome. Newsome, who missed last season due to a broken foot, averaged 6.5 ppg and 4.0 rpg as a junior in 2002-03.

A key for the Eagles will be to replace starting point guard Avery Queen and back-up point guard Mike Arnold. To fill the holes, USI welcomes junior...
guards David Bryant, and Danny Gibson, as well as freshman guard Carl Richburg.

Bryant is a transfer from Mineral Area Community College where he recorded 12.8 ppg and 4.7 assists per game (apg) as a sophomore, while Gibson posted 10.8 ppg and 4.8 apg last year at Olney Community College.

Richburg, a first team All-Cincinnati performer, averaged 19.9 ppg and 5.1 apg as a senior at Mason High School.

To add depth to the two-guard position with the graduation of Joe Gordon, the Eagles have added junior guard/forward Stacy Pearson. Pearson averaged 21.6 ppg and 9.4 rpg at Brevard Community College in 2002-03.

Along the frontcourt, the Eagles have added three newcomers—junior forwards Chris Thompson and Eric Washington as well as freshman forward John Hoover—to the arsenal for 2004-05.

Hoover travels across Evansville from Central High School where he helped the Bears to a 20-5 overall record, the Evansville Sectional Championship, and the SIAC Tournament Championship.

The Academic All-State selection was honorable mention All-State and was named to the All-Metro first team after averaging a team-high 15.2 ppg and was second on the team with 7.0 rpg.

Hoover, who was Hoosier Basketball preseason third team All-State, shot 50 percent from the field (113-225) and 42.0 percent from long range (14-33) in 2003-04. He also was invited to the IHSAA Top 100 Showcase.

Thompson and Washington join the USI squad after sitting out last season.

Thompson recorded 22.0 ppg and 11.0 rpg at Pasco-Hernando Community College two years ago. He was the first PHCC player ever to be named NJCAA preseason All-American and first team All-State, and set the PHCC all-time records for scoring with 1,248 points and 654 rebounds.

Thompson played his high school basketball at Bradford High School in Starke, Florida, and was second team All-State as a senior, averaging 24.2 ppg.

Washington, who left San Jose State University after playing eight games in 2001-02, returns to his Indiana roots where he won two state championships at Lafayette Catholic in 1999 and 2000.