

LEO FEBRUARY NEWS



The family and friends of Darius Branch show their support for him on Senior Night, February 2.



Steven Capers

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES

SOPHOMORE CATHOLIC LEAGUE TOURNAMENT
February 12

JUNIOR RING CEREMONY
February 17

PARENT CLUB MEETING
February 17 at 6 p.m.

Dear Leo Family,

The post-holiday blahs are a common occurrence at many schools, but we seem to have staved them off here at Leo High School.

January kept us all busy with intensified recruiting efforts for the Class of 2020. College acceptance letters have been rolling in for our seniors, most accompanied by offers of generous financial assistance. The chess, bowling and wrestling teams continued to put together strong seasons. We held an assembly to recognize first-semester honor roll students on Jan. 26, and more than 30 percent of the student body heard their names called.

Not that basketball is more important than anything else we do here, but the team's performance under first-year coach and Leo grad **Shawn Frison** has been a season-long source of pride for all of us. On Jan. 15 we ended a five-year losing streak against Hales Franciscan, winning at Hales in a game that was as exciting as most of us can remember.

Two weeks later we packed the Leo gym for an Alumni Night game against St. Lawrence. The Vikings spoiled the script by using a barrage of three-point shots to beat us, but a loss couldn't diminish the special feeling created by having so many alums from several generations in the house to cheer on their team and support their school.

Any lingering effects from the loss had dissipated by the following Tuesday, when we played one of our best games of the season while taking care of Bishop McNamara, 72-60. It was Senior Night, and it was appropriate that all five senior starters scored in double figures as we achieved our best balance of the season.

Before the game, we saluted the parents of **Darius Branch, Jamil Green, Mykel Hampton, Terrence Lee Jr., Harvey Moss, Darias Oliver, Corielle Robinson** and **Chris Winters**, and hosted them at a reception afterwards.

I wish we had saved some of that scoring for the following Friday, when we traveled to Brother Rice to close out the regular season and lost 48-45 on a three-pointer with four seconds left. It was a

pleasant evening nonetheless. The Brother Rice alums invited Leo's alums to join them at a pizza-and-drinks reception after the game, and it was nice to see such good fellowship among traditional rivals.

So it's on to the Catholic League playoffs and the IHSA state tournament with a 17-6 record and a 5-4 showing in the Catholic League. We open with a game at Loyola on Friday, Feb. 12. I'm hoping for a deep run into March because it would be good for our school, obviously—we all have great memories of our football team's advance to the IHSA state playoff semifinals in 2013. Just as important, I want these seniors to close out their high school careers with a season to remember.

Six of them have been with us for all four years, and we could not have asked for better representatives of Leo High School. They're good basketball players, all right, but they're even better young men who have done us proud every day they have been at Leo.



Darius Branch goes up to score against St. Rita in December.

Steven Capers

Darius Branch merits special mention. A four-year starter, Darius was our freshman point guard during the disaster that was 2012-13, when Public League powerhouse Simeon blatantly stole our two best players the week school started and absolutely ruined our season. It would have been easy for a freshman to feel overwhelmed in those circumstances, but Darius kept his head, held his own and began demonstrating the qualities that will make him one of the most decorated players in Leo history before he is finished.

Darius has started more than 100 games at Leo, and he surpassed the 1,500-point mark in career scoring while collecting 18 against Bishop Mac. He is a two-time All-Catholic League selection, a two-time member of the all-tournament team at the Big Dipper holiday tournament and a two-time recipient of All-State honorable mention recognition.

Just as important, he is an honor-roll student with near-perfect attendance and a spotless disciplinary record.

***In other words, Darius Branch is a true Leo Man.
And we're proud of him.***

Sincerely,

Dan McGrath '68

Leo High School President