



PHOTOS BY MOLLY J. SMITH/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Kennedy's Brett Traeger (12) pushes past Colton's defense in a game on Saturday at Kennedy High School in Mount Angel.

Kennedy hopeful for return to state

Trojans will try to go 'a little further' again

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MOUNT ANGEL - Last season, the Trojans got a taste of the state quarterfinals for the first time since 2008, when they finished fifth. They ended up going two and out, but the message across the state had been set as they proved they could compete with the top programs in the state at the 2A level.

"We finished last season on a high note as we made it to Pendleton, which we were pretty excited about," head coach Karl Schmidtman said. "I think our goal is try to be in a position to get to that point again. Each year we've gone a little further and last year was the furthest we've gone in my tenure."

Last season, the Kennedy football team made it to the state championship, which coincided with the start of basketball season. Several players from that football team were key cogs on the basketball team so it took them awhile for them to make the switch between the two sports as they started the year 1-7.

"We got off to a slow start because we have that same situation as last year where our football team is successful and that cuts into the first couple weeks of practice," Schmidtman said. "I think we're still getting our legs under us. I'm not real sure what we are just yet."

This year the football team made another deep run through the playoffs and once again the Trojans started the season slowly. They seem to be making a quicker recovery, however, as they currently sit at 2-3.

"We're getting into more of a groove so I think we're transitioning into basketball a little bit quicker than last year," senior guard Brett Traeger said. "One of the biggest differences now is players



Kennedy head coach Karl Schmidtman talks to the team after the first quarter on Saturday.

care a lot more about winning. I think we've gotten better and people have been putting a lot more effort and a lot more work."

After a busy December in which they are playing in three tournaments, they will begin league play with the likes of Regis, Western Mennonite and Santiam all boasting top-level teams.

"Our league is pretty tough and I think Regis and Western Mennonite have shown traditionally that they're always going to be two of the top teams in the state," Schmidtman said. "I think that Santiam is poised to compete for that role this season as well and I hope we're in that same conversation, but that remains to be seen."

After losing four seniors from last season's squad, the Trojans are led this year by four-year starter Brett Traeger, First Team All-Tri-River Conference

player Bishop Mitchell and multiple year starter Jack Suing.

"We're trying to take it one game at a time and everyday we're just focusing on getting better," Schmidtman said. If we're getting better each day we think it puts us in the position to get back to Pendleton."

With a strong core of upperclassmen in place, Kennedy hopes to make it back to the state quarterfinals in Pendleton. It won't be an easy road, but this group of players has done it once before.

"It would be nice to compete for a league championship and after that I hope we can make a run in the playoffs and get back to Pendleton, which is a really big goal of ours this year," Traeger said. "We just want to win and show people what being a Trojan is all about."

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Kennedy's Brett Traeger (12) goes up for a basket.



Kennedy's Jack Suing (30) goes up for a basket.



Kennedy's Mason Boen (20) drives toward the basket.



Kennedy's Bishop Mitchell (15) makes a break for the basket.