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Reloaded

Boys basketball aims for repeat

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Ryan Kirch's list of things for the boys varsity basketball team to improve upon in the coming weeks is a short one.

"We've got to defend better on the perimeter and we've got a couple of guys who are still a little banged up and waiting to return, but we've got a strong group of players," said Kirch, Celtic head coach. It's an enviable position to be in.

The Keizer boys shared the Greater Valley Conference title last season. This time around, the Celtics are looking to stand alone at the top and they've got a roster full of seasoned players to help them get there.

"The biggest thing we have is a lot of depth, we have the most depth we've had in the five years I've been here," said Kirch. "We're very versatile and very long with a lot of guys who can do a lot of things on the floor. As a team, we have guys that can shoot, guys that can defend, guys that can rebound and guys who can pass."

McNary lost two stars in Tregg Peterson, the GVC Player of the Year, and Devon Dunagan, but the team has reloaded to return with a squad of up-and-comers.

"We've really picked up where we left off," said McNary junior Cade Goff. "For everyone who is returning our goal is to be GVC champs again."

Kirch said Goff is one of the budding leaders on the team and achieved that role because of his off-season work

ethic.

"Cade has improved as much as anybody from the end of last year to this year. He was a varsity player last year, but he wasn't as consistent as we needed him to be. Now, he's put on almost 20 pounds and really stepped up his game," Kirch said.

The team also returns seniors Harrison Cavell, Trent Van Cleave, Jason Sperle and Wyatt Grine to the court alongside Hayden Sader making the leap up from the junior varsity ranks. Cavell was a first team all-league selection as a junior.

The Celtics will also benefit from the return of junior Mathew Ismay, the GVC's Defensive Player of the Year as a sophomore.

Kirch is also excited about the additions of Adam Harvey and Easton Neitzel to the varsity roster.

"Adam is a junior that will likely see a lot of minutes for us and he plays a lot like Mathew Ismay on defense and rebounding," Kirch said. "Easton grew up playing with our guys and transferred to West Salem, but now he's back playing in Keizer."

Chandler Cavell, Harrison's younger brother, is also joining the ranks.

The elder Cavell said the team is better prepared to spread out the pressure opposing teams focused on Peterson last season.

"We've added a lot more shooters so we can spread the floor more, and we've also just gotten a lot stronger which is going to make a difference on both sides of the ball," Harri-

son said.

Goff said the team's depth is going to pay off in taking the heat off H. Cavell and Ismay.

"If we have a big guy in on Ismay or Harrison, we can switch out and post up to anyone," Goff said. "A big thing we're working on is deflections and defensive assists. That is looking like a way for us to get a ton of easy buckets and not have to worry so much about beating people at half-court."

While Kirch and the players have their sights on South Salem again this year, they have a tough row to hoe leading up to those main events. The Celts travel to Spokane, Wash., for their first games of the season and will pit their skills against two of the top teams in Washington state there. They'll host Tualatin High School in their first home game Tuesday, Dec. 8, and travel to meet last year's OSAA fifth-place team, Central Catholic High School, almost two weeks later.

"We've got about as tough a schedule as we could get and that was by design," Kirch said. "The idea behind all of it is that we won the title last year and that's over, but we need to maintain the expectation of competing at that high level."

As far as what the future holds for the Celts, Ismay said it's best not to get caught up in the hype.

"It's hard to tell. Two years ago, we were average and we won a league title last year so it's a bit too early to tell how good any of the other teams are going to be," Ismay said.



Top: McNary's Ryan Schneider puts up a shot during practice Thursday, Nov. 19. Above: Celt Cade Goff defends against teammate Easton Neitzel.

schedule

Dec. 4-5 Fitz Touney	TBD
Dec. 8 vs. Tualatin	6:45 p.m.
Dec. 11 at West Albany	7:15 p.m.
Dec. 15 at North Salem	6:45 p.m.
Dec. 18 vs. Forest Grove	7:15 p.m.
Dec. 21 vs. Sherwood	7 p.m.
Dec. 22 at Central Catholic	7 p.m.
Dec. 28-30 Summit Touney	TBD
Jan. 5 vs. South Salem	6:45 p.m.
Jan. 8 at Sprague	7:15 p.m.
Jan. 12 at West Salem	6:45 p.m.
Jan. 15 vs. McKay	7:15 p.m.
Jan. 22 vs. McMinnville	7:15 p.m.
Jan. 26 vs. North Salem	6:45 p.m.
Jan. 29 at Forest Grove	7:15 p.m.
Feb. 2 at South Salem	6:45 p.m.
Feb. 5 vs. West Albany	7:15 p.m.
Feb. 9 vs. West Salem	6:45 p.m.
Feb. 12 at McMinnville	7:15 p.m.
Feb. 19 vs. Sprague	7:15 p.m.
Feb. 23 at McKay	7:15 p.m.

Lady Celts have sights on title



McNary's Paige Downer pushes the ball up the court after making a steal during practice.

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Derick Handley is ready for the Keizer community to get excited about Lady Celt varsity basketball.

"If we perform to the level we're capable of, and take care of the things we need to take care of, we could have two league champion teams at this school. That doesn't happen too often. Our girls are working hard and they deserve the support," said Handley, the second-year head coach of the team.

The McNary girls return to the hardwood with a home game vs. Sheldon High School Wednesday, Dec. 2 at 6:45 p.m.

Leading the team this season are a trio of seniors, Kaelie Flores, Madi Hingston and Reina Strand. Flores and Hingston have already signed letters of intent to play for Central Washington University and Seattle Pacific University, respectively. Strand, who sat out her junior year due to injury, expects to find a home by next spring.

Returning junior Sydney Hunter said the seniors are a big part of the team's overall look this season.

"This year is a big one for us and I feel like we're going to play for them," said Hunter.

Last year, the Lady Celts finished third in the Greater Valley Conference and lost to Clackamas High School in the first round of the playoffs. This

time around, Handley said the team stacks up well against last year's league champs, West Albany High School, and the South Salem High School Saxons, who took second in the conference.

"We are just so athletic, we have a lot of length, a lot of speed, and a lot of size. In all five positions, we have someone who can outrun the opponent up and down the court," Handley said.

The team spent the first two days of practice working solely on defensive techniques and strategies and, three days later, it was already paying dividends.

"We have a much more aggressive mindset at this point in the season than we did at the same time last season," Handley said. "Our scrimmages are much tougher with a lot more pressure on the ball."

"Our defense is going to be hard to stop. Once we master it, we'll be really good," Hunter added.

On offense, Strand said the team is coming along equally well.

"We're running similar stuff to last year, which means we're reviewing, but it's coming along really quickly," Strand said. "Everyone is picking up the new plays, too."

Handley said the team was still a bit "sloppy," but credited the players for not hesitating when it came to shooting. His marching orders for the team's three seniors is to help clean up the finer points of execution.

schedule

Dec. 2 vs. Sheldon	6:45 p.m.
Dec. 5 vs. Kamehameha	7 p.m.
Dec. 8 at Tualatin	5:45 p.m.
Dec. 11 at West Albany	5:45 p.m.
Dec. 15 vs. North Salem	6:45 p.m.
Dec. 18 vs. Forest Grove	5:45 p.m.
Dec. 22 vs. North Medford	5 p.m.
Dec. 28-30 Nike Shootout	TBD
Jan. 5 at South Salem	6:45 p.m.
Jan. 8 at Sprague	5:45 p.m.
Jan. 12 vs. West Salem	6:45 p.m.
Jan. 15 vs. McKay	5:45 p.m.
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