

K SPORTS



McNary guard Nate Meithof drives to the bucket in a game against West Salem. Meithof will be playing college basketball at Westmont University next year. Photo by MATT RAWLINGS of Keizertimes

Meithof signs to play at Westmont

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Nate Meithof has been one of the top prep players in the state for the last two years. This fall, he will be taking his skills to the next level.

Last month, the senior shooting guard signed his letter of intent to play college basketball for Westmont University in Santa Barbara, Calif.

"I am really excited to be able to get the opportunity to show what I can do," Meithof said. "I am going to work as hard as I can. It is going to be fun."

As a junior, Meithof averaged over 23 points and nine rebounds per game and was named the Mountain Valley Conference co-Player of the Year. So far in the COVID-19 shortened season, Meithof is averaging 25 points per contest.

"I think it's important that Nate goes to a place where he can unpack his bags for the next four years of his life. It's a great fit basketball wise. It's a level where he will have a ton of success and he will play for a very good coaching staff," McNary head coach Ryan Kirch said. "Academics are incredibly high there and he will be set for his life from that standpoint."

Meithof's basketball accolades speak for themselves, but what he is most proud of is being the first person in his biological family to have the opportunity to attend college.

"It really feels like my first major accomplishment," Meithof said.

Meithof was one of the most sought after juniors in the area in the winter of 2020. But when the pandemic hit, his recruiting slowed down significantly. However, there was one coach in particular that never took his eyes off Meithof.

After being an assistant at the school for two years, Keizer-native Landon Boucher took over the Westmont basketball program in the spring of 2020. The first player that he recruited was Meithof.

"My first phone call was to Kirch. I knew Nate was a big-time player and I knew that he could be a high-level player for us," Boucher said.

Nearly a year later, Meithof took his official visit to Westmont with his grandpa.

"It was a fun trip. I felt like I was stepping into a very welcoming environment,"

Meithof said. "A couple players showed me around the campus, which was a lot bigger than I realized."

During the visit, Meithof got the opportunity to play one-on-one with some of the Westmont upperclassmen, which was when Boucher realized the type of potential Meithof has.

"I only was able to see what he could do against high schoolers. But when I saw him play against some of our seniors, we all found out how gifted he is both offensively and defensively," Boucher said. "I knew he was good, I just didn't realize how good he was."

One week after the visit, Meithof committed to play at Westmont. With Boucher, and assistant coach Josh Erickson being from Keizer, it was clear that the local ties played a role in Meithof's decision — Erickson graduated from McNary in 2003 and was a part of the basketball team that took fourth place in the '03 state tournament.

"I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that me and Josh are both Keizer guys. All three of us went to the same schools when we were growing up. I just feel like it was meant to be," Boucher said.

"I felt like I had a real connection with the coaches because we grew up in the same area. They were easy to bond with," Meithof added.

Before his senior year, Meithof was planning to transfer to

Coronado High School in Henderson, Nev., due to uncertainty around the prep basketball situation in Oregon due to COVID-19. But when the Nevada high school season was canceled, Meithof attended the R.O.N. Institute in Inglewood, Calif. where he got the chance to further hone his skills — the R.O.N. Institute is a college prep school with an elite-level basketball program for student-athletes looking to play at the next level.

"I got a lot better by going out there. It was a great experience," Meithof said.

When the OSAA announced that there would be a basketball season this summer, Meithof was able to transfer back to McNary to finish out his senior year with the Celtics.

With the collegiate season set to begin in November, Meithof is already setting individual and team goals for when he gets to campus.

"I want to win the league and I want to earn a starting spot. I think I can compete with those guys really well," Meithof said.

Meithof will be joining an elite offensive team that scored more than 100 points in nearly half their contests last season, and according to his new coach, he is going to fit right in.

"Nate is an elite shot-maker and the way he is able to create for himself is unbelievable. He is going to have an instant impact and be a part of a really good team. We are thrilled to have him," Boucher said.

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— NATE MEITHOF
MCNARY GUARD