

Coaching Spotlight: Nick Finley

An interview with Cottage Grove's new boys basketball coach

By Zach Silva
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Cottage Grove Sentinel: What is the key to developing a program?

Nick Finley: I think culture is important. I think culture of your program is very important. And I think it leads to success in many ways whether it is on or off the court. Kids that are good, solid kids. Kids that you can take them to the mall on an away trip and you're not worried about them stealing stuff or running around cussing. Good kids. Culture is huge. When I was up in Ninilchik, I built a basketball culture there that was fun to be a part of and that's what I'm hoping to do here.

CGS: What makes a good player to you?

NF: When you are evaluating kids, everybody looks at different things. One coach may be looking at some, they might be really impressed with someone who can score a lot. Where the other coach might look at something like rebounds or how he hustles or if he takes charges, if he hits the floor, things like that. So every coach is different.

The first thing is, it's just like when you meet someone, their attitude. You know, when you meet somebody and they look you in the face and you have good, I don't know, connection with them. It's the same thing in basketball, as in any sport, you know, the way a kid carries himself is huge for me.

I mean they need to be confident not cocky. You don't want that at all. A kid that is going to push himself, but, I'm doing some of our practice schedules right now, some of the things we start off with is the classic suicide, you know free throw line back, half court back, you know everybody runs those. I want to see how hard kids will push themselves. Because I know a lot of these kids are athletes and they can probably just jog and make the time but I want to see how hard they can push themselves. And so I look at that and then being coachable.

So when I tell a kid something and say maybe we're just scrimmaging or something and I say hey, you know look for this option and he goes out and looks for that option, okay, this kid gets it. He sees or he understands what he needs to do and that's, a kid understanding their roles is important.

CGS: What's the difference between high school basketball in Alaska and Oregon?

NF: The thing about Alaskan basketball, there's nothing else to do up there. It's cold in the winter and people want to be inside so basketball is huge. The gym, I don't think there were any gyms that we went and played at that weren't packed. It didn't matter if there were 400 people in the village or you know, you're playing in Anchorage, the gym is going to be packed.

And it's fun. It was a fun atmosphere. You can look at the level, we played at the lowest level up there, it didn't matter. It was competitive no matter what. And it was exciting and people from all over came out to watch it because, I don't know, I don't know why but because basketball is the thing to do in Alaska. And I think like I said those two ingredients: it's cold and people want to be inside, that's huge. But yeah, we will see. After the season we can revisit that question. How I feel, what the difference is. I haven't been back here in awhile.

To learn more about Finley and the team, check out this week's winter sports preview insert

Let the games begin; winter sports underway



From left: Elkton's Aspyn Luzier, North Douglas' Koldan Frieze, Elkton's Brad Doudna and North Douglas' Abby Whipple all playing in games during the first week of the season. To read more about these teams and all the teams in the area look for the winter sports preview insert in today's paper.

Second-half lull dooms Lowell

North Douglas girls basketball team outscores Lowell 22-2 in second half

By Zach Silva
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With 37 seconds left in the fourth quarter, two made free throws from Lowell marked their first points of the entire half. What had been a four-point game in the final minute of the second quarter had ballooned into a 42-17 North Douglas runaway victory on the road.

"We were, in the old John Wooden-ism we were in a hurry rather than just being quick. And the kids, give them credit, they really ratcheted up on defense. They believe that they can stop people defensively and obviously they did," said North Douglas head coach Jeff Davis. "And this is a good Lowell team. And this is a tough home team to play on so that's a hard-earned victory right there."

In the first quarter the Warriors were getting open shots but were simply missing. From layups at the rim to short jumpers, North Douglas was leaving more on the table despite taking an 11-3 lead at the end of the

first quarter.

In the second quarter it was the Devils who capitalized on the Warriors missed chances. After a Devils steal and a fast break bucket that brought the game within six, the Warriors showed a flash of what's to come in the second half as Nicki Derrick got the inbound and sped past the Lowell defense that had temporarily dropped their guard and got an easy layup for North Douglas to give her team a five point advantage at halftime.

"From what we talked about on the bench, we might be able to be up 15, right here. And so, through a little bit of calm I think those shots started to go. But really it happened on the defensive end. I thought we frustrated them," said Davis.

With a steady diet of defensive pressure and fast break points, the Warriors became unstoppable. After a defensive stop the Warriors feed the ball to Abby Whipple who, with pinpoint precision, finds a teammate sprinting down court for an easy score.

"I think what Abby does is she knows who she's passing to and she knows where she's passing. She's not just throwing to the first cardinal color," said Davis. Primarily through their transition offense Derrick, Payton Black and Rilie-Jo Olds each finished the game with 10 points.

After holding Lowell scoreless in the third quarter, the Warriors were able to play their entire team in the fourth quarter. North Douglas outscores Lowell 22-2 in the second half of play.



North Douglas' Nicki Derrick drives past the Devils defense. After defeating Siletz Valley 55-24 last Wednesday and defeating Perrydale 41-39 on Saturday, the Warriors improved to 3-0 on the season.

Elks out-matched by Reedsport

Elkton boys basketball team can't get offense going, loses home opener

By Zach Silva
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The shots weren't falling, the defense was at times shaky but Elkton's head coach Gary Trout was pleased with his team's effort on Thursday night at home when the Elks lost their season opener to Reedsport 58-36.

"You know, we're about where I thought we were execution wise. And skill wise. I like the effort. Everything that I saw is correctable and the attitude

that the kids have is something that is definitely coachable and we can build on it. And I'm really pleased with that part of it," said Trout.

It was a slow start for both teams as the Braves slogged their way to a 10-6 advantage at the end of the first quarter. Reedsport was trying to push the tempo but the Elks were able to get back and force them into bad shots that kept the game close.

The Elks were able to hang around at the start of the second quarter, and even cut the lead to three, but Reedsport's offense began clicking and they extended their lead to 11 before the half. The third quarter was a continued outpouring of buckets and by the start of the fourth quarter, the Elks found themselves down 21.

After three quarters of seeing their offense stall, the Elks came alive in the game's final stanza as Brad Doudna, who finished second-team all-league last year and averaged a double-double in points and rebounds, inserted himself into the offense and scored 10 of his 17 points in the quarter. Spencer Moore



was the second leading scorer for the Elks with seven points.

A 9-0 run brought the Elks within 14 points, but it was too little too late. The Braves answered with a 13-5 run of their own to seal the victory.

"I saw improvement in how we executed the offense throughout the game.

And that's a big thing because we weren't even approaching it to start off," said Trout. "You saw us starting to get some good looks and we were tentative in how we were finishing them but you started seeing us get some good looks out of it and that's just going to be a process."

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the 102 runners and walkers who participated in the Jingle Rush 5K this weekend. Cottage Grove sophomore Jimmy Talley was first on the men's side and Miriam Udosenata was first on the women's side.

