



Cottage Grove Boys Basketball



Team Rundown:

After winning back-to-back league titles, the Lions are facing a pair of new things this season: a new coach and four new starters.

“I’m excited. It’s just new. The whole atmosphere of the gym, the program, everything is new to me,” said first year coach Nick Finley. Finley won a state title while playing at Creswell in 2003-04 and most recently won back-to-back state titles as head coach at Ninilchik High School in Ninilchik, Alaska.

Cottage Grove’s lone returning starter this season is 6’2 junior DeJean Alonzo.

“The first time I met DeJean, great kid by the way, and he was like, ‘Yeah I’m the only returning starter’ and I was like, ‘Yeah that doesn’t mean anything to me,’” said Finley.

Finley is committed to giving every

kid a chance to succeed in his system. A system based on being in peak shape. Last year’s Ninilchik team used traps and speed to consistently blow teams out to the point the starters rarely played in the second half. Except on senior night.

“I told the other coach, I’m going to play my seniors the whole game... I told him the situation that they’ve had to sit out like half the games. They just want to play and it’s senior night, their last game at home,” said Finley. “And we beat them 130-40.”

This year the Cottage Grove players have felt the uptick in focus on being in game shape.

“A lot more cardio and a lot more conditioning. Like we’re working on a lot more fast break stuff. We’re going to have a fast-paced offense,” said returning player Jesse Ellingsworth. “It’s a lot more fun to play that style.”

Team Perspective with DeJean Alonzo:

On the changes to the team:

It’s going to be interesting. Haven’t played with the guys for awhile. New coach, new players. And then next year, the new league.

We condition more. We’re going to be running teams pretty fast. We plan to be the in the best shape of a team in state. Everyone wants to reach their goal of being the fastest and the best they can be early. I think it is going to translate into a lot of points. Quick points. We’re going to score a lot. Very exciting.

On being a successful team:

Successful season like short-term goal is to win the league championship for the third time

in a row. And then the long term goal is holding another blue trophy up.

On how football translates to basketball:

The success for football we had to put in a lot of work: early in the summer, all the way up during and before practices, practices. And that’s what needs to happen on the basketball court, too. People coming early and doing everything.

On a teammate he is excited about:

The first person that comes to mind is Jordan Hagewood. He came in, he played his freshman year on varsity and then he was playing in the morning and tore his ACL and his MCL playing with some teachers and took two years off and now he’s back which makes me really excited.

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