

2015-16 ITEMIZER-OBSERVER ALL-REGION PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM



GUARD
Kylie Nash
Central

The 5-foot-6 senior guard and 2014-15 Itemizer-Observer Player of the Year proved once again why she was a force to be reckoned with. Nash did it all for the Panthers. She averaged a team-high 16 points per game, good for more than a third of Central's total points per game (46.7). Nash also passed 1,000 points during her high school career — a testament to just how successful she has been throughout her four years with the Panthers. The senior guard could score from anywhere on the court,

shooting 39 percent from beyond the arc, but Nash was more than just a scorer. She also averaged 3.5 assists, 4.0 rebounds and 3.0 steals per game. Nash, who earned first team all-Mid-



Nash

Willamette Conference honors her performance, played a key role in Central's success, helping the Panthers advance to the first round of the state playoffs.

POST
Tristin Savage
Dallas

The 6-foot-5 sophomore post showed the Dragons could have the beginnings of a dominant inside player for years to come. In a season that saw Dallas deal with a high number of injuries, Savage rose to the occasion and became a leader. She averaged nearly a double-double, scoring 10.3 points and grabbing 9.3 rebounds per game. She was also a defensive force in the paint, making it difficult for opponents to drive to the hoop, averaging 6.7 blocks per game. Savage earned second team all-MWC recognition for her efforts and was a big reason why the Dragons advanced to the first round of the 5A state playoffs. Savage should only get better in the years to come and could become one of the league's best.

GUARD
Elizabeth Chavez
Central

The 5-foot-5 freshman guard didn't have the benefit of easing into varsity basketball, but she thrived and

showed she is one of the Panthers' most promising players. Chavez averaged 8.5 points, two assists and two steals per game — all impressive numbers considering she was coming off the bench. Just because she was a guard didn't mean she was afraid to get physical, as Chavez also grabbed four rebounds per game. Chavez earned all-league honorable mention for her efforts during the 2015-16 season. She will likely see an expanded role as a sophomore. If this season is any indication, she could become one of the Panthers' key players.

FORWARD
Telaney Newton
Perrydale

The 5-foot-11 senior post was critical for Perrydale's success during the 2015-16 season. Without her, it's likely the Pirates would have struggled mightily. The *Itemizer-Observer's* Player of the Year averaged 14 points, 12 rebounds and four blocks per game — all team highs. Her points-per-game average was good for nearly half of the team's total scoring (30.8 points per game) during the season and, as one of only two returning players with any significant experience, she was partly responsible for teaching her teammates along the way. Newton earned first team all-Casco League honors and showed that the Pirates should not be underestimated, helping Perrydale advance to the second round of the 1A state playoffs and a second-place finish in the Casco League.

FORWARD
Krista Omlid
Central

The 5-foot-10 post built on an impressive freshman campaign with a stellar sophomore season. Omlid got her chance to step into a starting role and took advantage of it. Omlid provided a solid offensive option in the paint, averaging 7.5 points per game. She also grabbed five rebounds and had three blocks per game, proving she could be effective on both ends of the court. Omlid averaged two assists per game, showing she's a multi-dimensional player who can hurt opponents in a variety of ways. Omlid earned an all-league honorable mention for her performance during the 2015-16 season and figures to be a bigger part of the Panthers' success over her final two years at Central.

COACH
David Brautigam
Dallas

In perhaps the toughest challenge of his coaching career with the Dragons, Brautigam had to guide his team despite a rash of injuries, including having nine different starting lineups in the first 16 games. Among the players who missed significant time due to injuries included starting point guard Olivia Nelson, starting guard Sarah Zwicker and junior guard Stefani Tallon. But



Omlid

Brautigam didn't let injuries derail Dallas' season. Instead, the Dragons placed fourth in the MWC, defeated Churchill in the play-in round and advanced to the first round of the state playoffs, where Dallas led second-seeded Springfield in the second half. It would have been easy to give up during the Dragons' injury-riddled season. Instead, Brautigam helped Dallas compete in a tough league and advance to the state playoffs.

The 2015-16 *Itemizer-Observer* all-region girls basketball team was selected by Sports Editor Lukas Eggen, along with heavy input from area coaches.



Savage

Captain: Newton to continue playing in college

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Leader

Since she began taking basketball more seriously in middle school, Newton's love of the game has grown from a passing interest to borderline obsession.

"If you ask anyone at Perrydale about me, they'll say 'oh yeah, she's the basketball player,'" Newton said. "I'm

always in the gym or at some tournament on a club team. I can't imagine not being involved in basketball."

Throughout her high school career, Newton has been a key part of the Pirates, but she never had to worry about becoming the team's leader.

"Last year, with the class

ahead of me, there was always someone there to be the leader of the team," Newton said. "It's been like that since I was a freshman."

That all changed this year. As one of only two returning seniors with any significant playing experience, Newton had to step up.

"It was up to me," Newton said. "It was on my shoulders."

Things didn't get off to such a good start. The Pirates dropped their season-opener to 3A school Willamina 75-14.

"That was a bit nerve-racking," Newton said. "It wasn't a pretty game. In the locker room, I sat down with Anna (McGill) and we talked about how it was just the first game. We had freshmen who were terrified and didn't even know a lot of our system yet. It was a little bit of a worry, but I knew that at our level, we would be competitive and progress."

Newton knew she could no longer be passive. She would have to teach and help her teammates grow. That meant showing teammates where to be on the court and giving compliments, even when mistakes were made.

It wasn't an easy transition.

"Sometimes I struggled," Newton said. "I had a hard time finding the words to tell the girls because I'm used to someone else saying it. Having patience (was difficult). We had a lot of young girls. You get frustrated because you go over with them, and



Perrydale's girls basketball team took second in the Casco League and advanced to the second round of the OSAA Class 1A state playoffs.

they do the opposite. I remembered when I was a freshman and I did the opposite when older girls would go over things with me. They never lost patience with me, so I learned how to be calm."

Newton grew into a vocal leader for the Pirates — one who helped her younger teammates feel welcome and helped her team develop from the one that lost by 61 points in its season opener to one that advanced to the state playoffs.

"We started to set our lineup in the middle of the season," Newton said. "Before, our lineup changed almost every game. We started to do well and won more games than we lost."

The Pirates began to settle

on a starting lineup and rotation. One thing remained unchanged — Newton played a central role on offense.

She was not only the team's leading scorer, she was a facilitator and the player opposing coaches had to plan around.

"I don't know another player who was more important to her team's success this year," Pirates coach and father Terry Newton said.

Telaney was a dominant force on the boards, and the key to making Perrydale's offense go.

But she wasn't worried about padding her stats.

"It never really seemed to affect me as a player," Telaney said. "It was just the way the team flowed."

Telaney's basketball career won't end with high school. She plans to continue playing at the collegiate level after graduating this spring, though she hasn't made a final decision on where.

"I just want to keep playing the game I love," Telaney said. "I couldn't imagine not playing basketball for at least a couple more years."

Newton's final season with the Pirates was a memorable one.

"It meant the world," Telaney said. "People assumed we wouldn't make it out of our league or make it as far as we did in the playoffs. To make it to the final 16, it was an incredible experience. It was so much fun to spend time with these girls."



Perrydale senior Telaney Newton averaged 14 points per game, nearly half of the Pirates' total points per game.

Fans: WOU Players took notice of fan support



Western Oregon fans came out in levels not seen before this season on Friday night.

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This felt like what makes college athletics so addicting to see live.

It was electric. And fans weren't the only ones who noticed.

"It was very exciting," guard Janvier Alaby said after Friday's win. "That was huge. (The fans) kept us going throughout the whole game."

Yes, the players heard the fans loud, and clear and it affected them in critical moments.

"It really pushed us in certain parts to get that stop or get that loose ball," guard Julian Nichols said.

The crowd, at its loudest moments, was close to deafening. And it was glorious. It's moments like those

that remind me why I love college athletics. To see a group of players banding together is something special.

Add in the energy of a group of fans taking such pride in their team — it's a rush you can't find anywhere else. Players spark excitement among the fans. The fans' energy wills the players to perform better. It's a relationship that, at its best, is something you'll never forget.

At any university, moments like these don't come along very often. At the Division II level, those moments are even more rare.

Western Oregon may not be an athletic haven for sports fans. But for at least one weekend, it showed how powerful sports can be.