



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-ObsERVER

Central junior Trent Nash hasn't let autism hold him back.

**PREP SWIMMING**

# Defying expectations

By **Lukas Eggen**  
The Itemizer-ObsERVER

INDEPENDENCE — If there's one thing that has driven Trent Nash throughout his life it's this: He's not going to back away from a challenge.

"I like to push myself every day," he said.

Trent, a junior, joined Central's swim team for the first time this winter.

A student participating in a sport may not seem like a momentous occasion, but for Trent, it was the latest example that he won't be defined by setbacks.

When Trent was born, everything seemed to go according to plan.

"Trent was born an almost perfect baby according to his nurse of more than 30 years," Tammy Nash, Trent's mother, said. "She stated that she gave him the highest APGAR score of her career."

But Tammy began noticing things — including differences in his demeanor and strength compared to his four older siblings.

"At 6 months of age, I knew for certain there was something just not right," Tammy said.

Getting Trent evaluated proved difficult.

The family communicated with specialists nationwide, but was told Trent was too young to be evaluated.

When he was 3, Trent was seen by a behavioral specialist in Portland who diagnosed him with being on the Autistic Spectrum. He also developed a seizure disorder, Complex Partial Seizures.

Trent attended preschool, but was behind the developmental skills other students had.

"We were working with speech therapists and a developmental and behavioral specialist at Easter

Seals," Tammy said. "He couldn't push his tongue against a tongue depressor, move his tongue in the proper placement to make the correct sounds to pronounce the simplest of words. He couldn't suck up on a straw or even blow a cotton ball a mere inch."

Physical activity was also difficult.

"Trent was unable to do any cross-body movements," Tammy said. "For example, when writing, he would switch hands mid paper, unable to continue across the body. He could not get both sides of his body to move in a fluid

motion together. ... Until he was in double digits, he couldn't sit up on his own. He'd roll to his side and push himself up."

Among the other challenges included taking everything literally and assuming accidents, such as bumping into him, were done on purpose.

Trent was taken out of school after his second attempt at kindergarten due to having multiple seizures during the day and a lack of advancement. Tammy taught Trent through fourth grade, reducing by about half the years he was behind, she said.

After fourth grade, Trent was placed on an Individualized Education Plan. Despite significant progress being made both socially and academically, even some of those who interacted with Trent doubted what he could do.

"One of his teachers said Trent would never get a regular high school degree, let alone be able to attend college," Tammy said. "I demanded, 'Don't you dare count my son out.'"

Trent, one of six children, watched his older siblings find success in the classroom and athletically.

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**SCHEDULE**

**WEDNESDAY, DEC. 27**  
**Girls basketball:** Alesia at Falls City, 5:30 p.m.

**THURSDAY, DEC. 28**  
**Wrestling:** Central, Dallas at Northwest Duals (at Linn County Expo Center), TBA.

**FRIDAY, DEC. 29**  
**Boys basketball:** Central vs. Ashland (at Crescent Valley), 5:45 p.m. Falls City at Reedsport, 5:30 p.m. St. Paul at Perrydale, 4 p.m.

**Girls basketball:** Central at Churchill, 7 p.m. Dallas at Sprague, 6:45 p.m. St. Paul at Perrydale, 2:30 p.m.

**Wrestling:** Central, Dallas at Northwest Duals (at Linn County Expo Center), TBA.

**SATURDAY, DEC. 30**  
**Boys basketball:** Central vs. Hermiston (at Crescent Valley), 2:30 p.m. Perrydale at Regis, 5:30 p.m.

**Girls basketball:** Perrydale at Regis, 4 p.m.

**Women's basketball:** Western Oregon at Northwest Nazarene, 1 p.m.

**TUESDAY, JAN. 2**  
**Boys basketball:** Dallas at Pendleton, 5 p.m. Falls City at Jewell, 7 p.m. Perrydale at Crosshill Christian, 7 p.m.

**Girls basketball:** Dallas at Pendleton, 6:30 p.m. Falls City at Jewell, 5:30 p.m. Perrydale at Crosshill Christian, 5:30 p.m.

**Men's basketball:** Western Oregon at Concordia, 7 p.m.

**WEDNESDAY, JAN. 3**  
**Girls basketball:** West Albany at Central, 7 p.m.

**Wrestling:** Dallas at MWC 4-Way meet (at Silverton), 4 p.m.

Schedules Subject to Change

**PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL**

# Dippel, Dragons off to fast start

By **Lukas Eggen**  
The Itemizer-ObsERVER

DALLAS — There's something thrilling about senior Jordan Dippel when she steps onto a basketball court for Dallas' girls basketball team.

"I love the freedom you have with the ball," Dippel said. "I love how you can be creative with your moves; how you can define a game with a shot right below the hoop. I love playing in front of however many people are in the crowd. I love everything about basketball."

Dippel has established herself as one of the Dragons' leaders, but that wasn't always the case.

Dippel began playing sports in elementary school.

"I was a socially awkward kid," Dippel said. "My confidence was at an all-time low when I first started."

As time went by, something began to change. She began getting close to her teammates — many of whom became some of her closest friends off the court.

With each new friend made and each skill learn, she became more and more confident.

Now, she can't wait for practices to begin.

"It's amazing to see how much I've grown," Dippel said. "I love going to the gym and hanging out. I love going to practice. If I'm in a



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Jordan Dippel scored 18 points against Roosevelt on Dec. 11.

bad mood, I know my teammates will bring me out of it."

Dippel has emerged as a leading scoring threat for the Dragons. She scored 18 points against Roosevelt on

Dec. 11 and a team-high 11 points against Hillsboro on Dec. 15.

"I think early on, her confidence in her shooting wasn't there," coach Tim Ehlers said. "The last three games,

she's gotten more confident and it's showed."

She's also shown a knack for knowing when to shoot, drive or pass.

"We know each other's strengths and weaknesses,"

Dippel said. "I'm not afraid to take the open shot. I'm not afraid to pass the ball or to drive in and kick it out to someone."

But Dippel has also been asked to do things she hasn't been asked to before — play more in the paint.

"She had not been an inside player her first three years," Ehlers said. "Sometimes it can be hard because they get into a mindset of 'this is how I play.' We're not a tall team though, so we need to learn to play multiple positions. We ask them to play uncomfortable."

It's taken some getting used to, but Dippel, along with her teammates, are buying in.

"We're not the tallest team, but we work hard," Dippel said. "That sounds really cliched, but it's 100 percent true. We don't take anything lightly. We take pride in our defense and our rebounding."

The result has been a 6-1 start to the season.

"We are taking care of the ball," Dippel said. "There are things to work on, but they are easy things to fix."

The Dragons close out their nonleague season at Sprague Friday at 6:45 p.m. and at Pendleton Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

Dallas opens Mid-Willamette Conference play by hosting Corvallis on Jan. 9.

"We're ready to kick some butt, honestly," Dippel said.