

Knights hope to build on last year

Defending region champs will have a new look, but anything can happen if the excitement continues

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

We're in a new era of Northridge basketball.

The Knights won the Region 1 championship in Chad Sims' first season as head coach. They did it by following one of his primary philosophies:

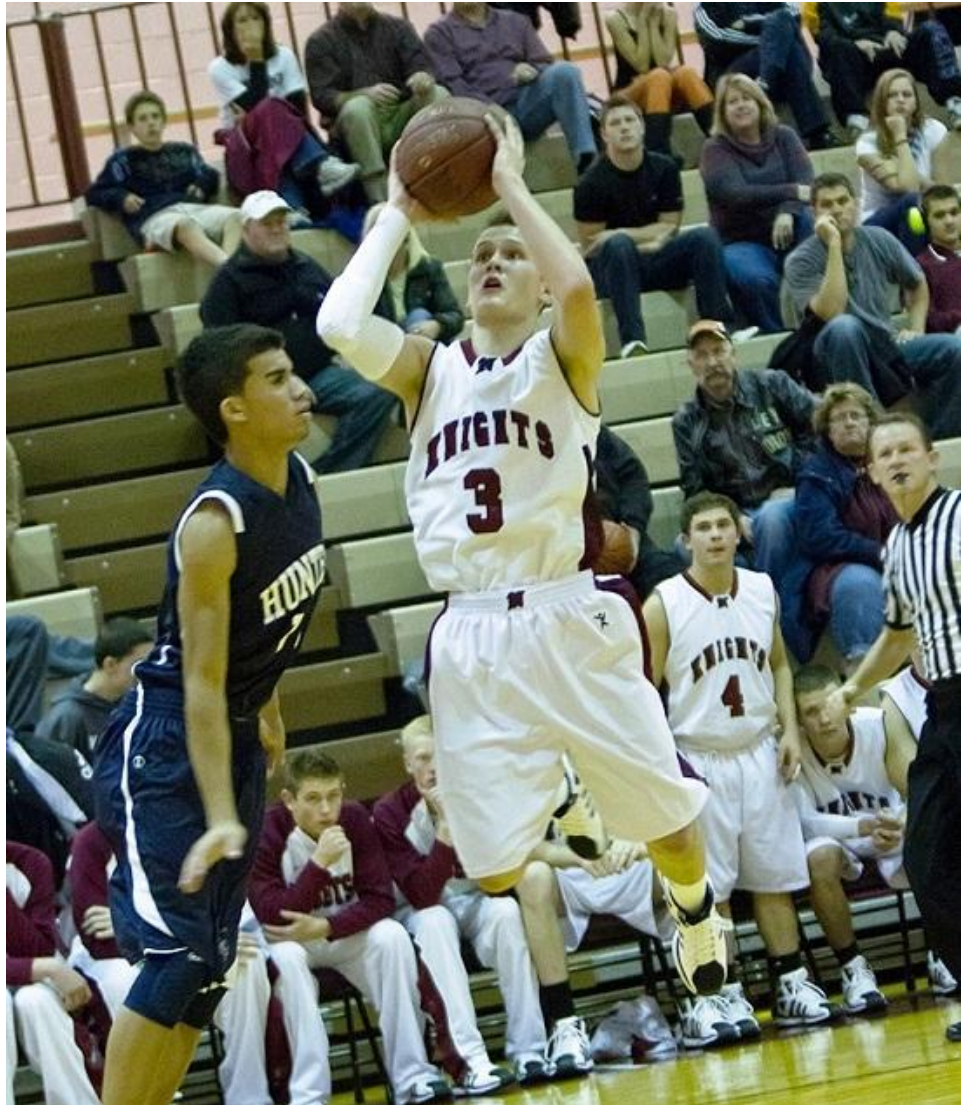
"It is amazing what people can accomplish when nobody cares who gets the credit."

They also did it with defense, holding opponents to just 46.5 points per game. That resulted in a 14-9 overall record, but 8-2 against Region 1 opponents. It was their first-ever region crown and best season since 2005-06.

The Knights started slowly, but learned to win close games. They fell to eventual champion Lone Peak in the second round of the 5A state tournament.

"Last year's team exceeded everyone's expectations," Sims said. "We even got to cut down the nets and had a pep rally."

This excitement around the school should be prevalent during basketball season this year. The "Black Plague" student section should be in full force once again, giving Northridge more of a home-court advantage. Last year, Sims



Preston Christensen was Northridge's second-leading scorer last year and will be a team leader this season, although at a different position.

handed out black T-shirts to any student who requested one and the resulting support was noticeable.

Northridge went from 2-10 at home in 2010-11 to 6-2 last year. More importantly, the Knights won every region home game.

"They are a big part of our success and really added to what we're trying to do here," Sims said.

The Knights will again have a difficult non-region schedule, but it has to be to

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NORTHRIDGE BASKETBALL: 2012-13 season preview



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- Coach Chad Sims



Season schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Opponent</u>
Nov. 20	BOUNTIFUL
Nov. 29-Dec. 1	at Bear River Classic (Tremonton)
Dec. 7-8	at Alta-Jordan Challenge (Sandy)
Dec. 11	HILLCREST
Dec. 13	BONNEVILLE
Dec. 20-22	at Dixie State Tourney (St. George)
Jan. 3	MOUNTAIN CREST
Jan. 11	LAYTON*
Jan. 15	at Syracuse*
Jan. 18	FREMONT*
Jan. 25	WEBER*
Jan. 29	at Davis*
Feb. 1	at Layton*
Feb. 5	SYRACUSE*
Feb. 8	at Fremont*
Feb. 15	at Weber*
Feb. 19	DAVIS*

* - Region 1 games. Home games in CAPS

TOP LEFT: Northridge’s student section – “The Black Plague” – helps give the Knights a great home-court advantage.

LOWER MIDDLE: Dallas Bond

LOWER RIGHT: Jesse Armitstead

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prepare the squad for region. Northridge opens against 4A power Bountiful for the fourth straight year and goes to three different tournaments before region play begins in mid-January.

“Region will always be a battle,” Sims said. “Region 1 has good teams, good traditions and is full of healthy rivalries. At state, the other teams always fear having to play one of us.”

The six-team region earns four bids to state, which will be held at Weber State University in Ogden Feb. 26-March 2.

The Knights will be led by senior Preston Christensen, a second team all-state pick last year who also made the all-region squad. Christensen averaged 10.0 points per game and was the team’s top three-point shooter.

“Preston was often in the right place at the right time,” Sims said. “He made plays for us all year.”

At 6-foot-3, Christensen, however, will be in a different place this year. He is now one of the

Knights’ tallest players, and had to change positions. Sims said Northridge’s lineup will be much smaller, but quicker. The team will still focus on defense, but the offense will move at a faster pace and try to encourage better rebounding techniques.

“We will be competitive if we shoot well,” Sims said.

Northridge lost seven players to graduation, but 14 actually reached the scoring column in 2011-12, which means the cupboard won’t be dry. Besides Christensen, point guard Jesse Armistead and forward Dallas Bond will be counted on heavily.

“All the kids have been working hard in the offseason, so this isn’t a surprise to them,” Sims said. “Every team has to adjust to its players and make do with what they have.”

Sims figures Davis, Layton and Weber will be among the region’s best teams. Northridge?

“Not sure I want to predict,” Sims said. “I might have to edit it too many times as the season goes along.”