

Tanner Curtis:

Starting the season on the bench, he proved to be a valuable asset

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

As the Olympus boys basketball team began practice in October, coach Matt Barnes was looking for someone to step up.

Barnes knew he had a special team. They had won 38 games the previous two years on the junior varsity and sophomore squads. Guard Sam Williams would be the leader, and forward Colton Stewart had size and a deadly three-point shot.

Once the season started, it didn't take long for another player to move up.

"Tanner Curtis improved the most," Barnes said. "He started out as a role player and moved up to a starter and a big-time contributor. He gave us two point guards at a time."

He had to earn it, though.

For the first seven games, he played less than half the game on average. His big opportunity came at Box Elder, when Stewart left the game with a knee injury and the Titans found themselves 15 points behind.

"That was my best game," Curtis recalled. "We had Colton go out and we needed some type of scoring, and it happened to be my night."

Curtis scored a career-high 24 points, including five three-pointers, as Olympus rallied and beat the Bees in what many players remember as the Titans' best game of the season.

"It was a hostile environment, and that's what made it fun," Curtis said.

Shortly afterward, Barnes moved him into the starting lineup. Curtis ended up averaging 8.6 points and 3.8 rebounds per game. He led the team in steals and shot an amazing 55.1 percent from the field. In addition, he also forced opponents not



Tanner Curtis grew up an Oly basketball fan, and took advantage of the chance to play a big role when it was his turn.

to focus all of their attention on Williams.

Curtis replaced fellow senior Jordan Marsh as a starter, and both players blossomed. While Curtis liked being on the court from the beginning, Marsh turned out to be Oly's "sixth man."

Those two players made key contributions and both ended up being players Barnes could count on.

But then, Curtis had actually been doing it for a long time, even though he broke his back in ninth grade and the injury still nagged him at times, even this year.

Curtis actually began playing basketball a long time ago, and attended Oly's summer camps beginning in the seventh grade. In junior high, he joined several players on this year's varsity team and eventually became part of a local "super league" club.

Continued on next page



Tanner Curtis leaves his Ogden defender behind and goes for a layup.

Continued from previous page

After the success continued on the sophomore and JV teams, he was part of Oly's summer league team that traveled to Reno and San Francisco and won tournaments against teams he felt were much more talented.

"In Reno, we played these athletic teams, but played a lot of 1-on-1 basketball," he said. "We played as a team and won."

After losing 12 seniors from last year's team, Oly wasn't expected to be as big of a factor in Region 6 this year. However, Curtis helped change that.

"I love having a chance to play for a championship, and we always have that here at Olympus," he said. "I remember coach Barnes telling us 'we were going to fly under the radar.' I'm happy with the way the season went. Everyone



Tanner Curtis

Favorite memory of this season: Every day at practice, just being with the boys. Dance parties in the locker room. Everyone would come to work.

Most exciting part of the season: Beating Bountiful the second time to give us a chance at the region title.

Biggest disappointment: Not beating Highland, but had the chance to do it (twice).

Favorite personal sports memory growing up: Winning the junior high school basketball and volleyball championships.

Future plans: I would like to go play college basketball someplace.

worked hard and there was a lot of camaraderie."

Curtis called Box Elder his best game, obviously. He said the team's best game was its 63-52 win over Bountiful on "Senior Night."

"If we hadn't won, we wouldn't have had a chance at the region title," he said. "There was a (school) dance afterward and everyone was in a good mood."

Curtis said his favorite play came against Skyline.

"A guy came up and tried to steal the ball," he said. "I crossed him and he fell down. Then I went up and hit a three (pointer)."

Curtis added to his high-school sports memories as soon as basketball ended. He joined the Olympus baseball team and became one of its top hitters.