

Sam Williams:

Coaches, teammates and opponents knew he was at his best in the clutch

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

How do you describe a player like Sam Williams?

Olympus coach Matt Barnes knew enough that he made Williams his starting point guard last year, when two senior guards were injured. While the difference was noticeable, he felt it was more of a chemistry thing than talent.

He chose this year to have Williams control the offense. The result was a 16-7 season and, a chance to play for the Region 6 championship and, even though the Titans lost in the 4A quarterfinals, they probably were the closest to a state title in several years.

"I was expected to be the leader," said Williams, a 6-foot senior. "Last year was a lot of fun. I got thrown into the fire. It was a lot easier to come in this year and know what it would be like."

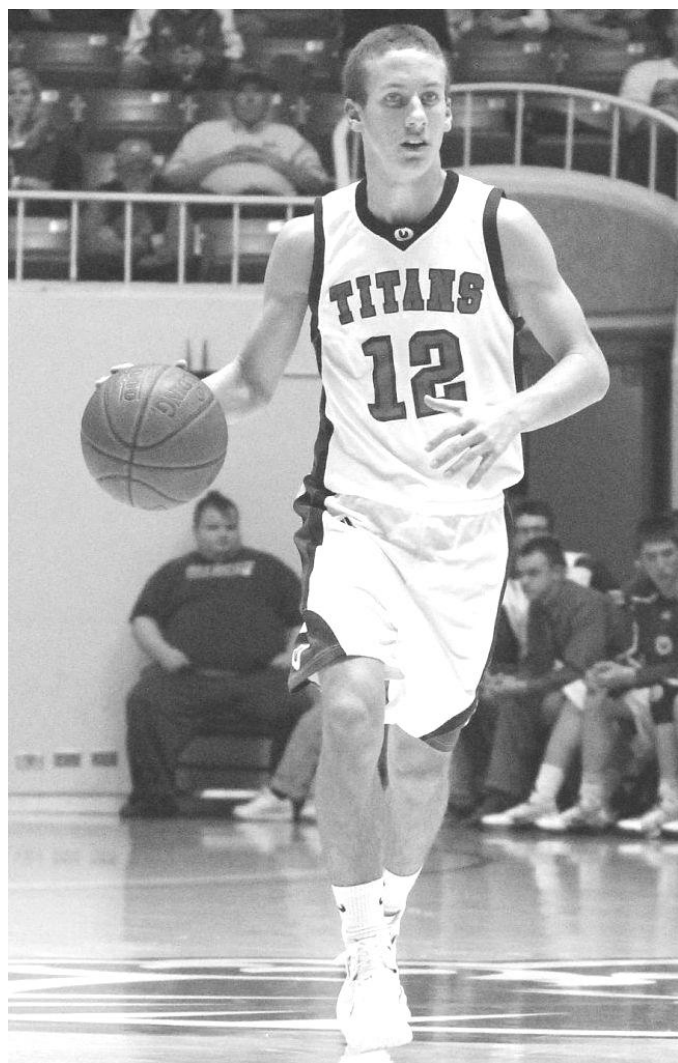
Being the team leader was nothing new, however. During the football season, Williams was a two-year starter at safety. His senior season, he intercepted eight passes as Olympus finished with a 7-3 record. He had 14 picks overall, which reportedly tied the school record.

In Oly's coaching circles, Williams' efforts were noticed.

"I want the ball in Sam's hands most of the time in pressure situations," said Barnes. "Sam hit the Box Elder game-winner and he hit big shots for us all year."

His teammates felt the same way.

"Usually, Sam hits the big shots," said Colton Stewart, a fellow senior who was also the team's leading scorer. "He's the ballhandler and he can do a lot with the ball."



The Olympus offense was run through guard **Sam Williams**, and the statistics spoke for themselves.

Stewart played with Williams since sixth grade and that led to a lot of success. Williams said their Olympus Junior High team was undefeated and they won most of their games by "about 30 points." As a sophomore, they were 18-2 and last year's JV team finished 20-0.

As a senior, Williams was again the catalyst. He shot 48.3 percent from the field and an amazing 44.4 percent from three-point range. He was the team's top free-throw shooter (79.2 percent) and was among the state leaders in assists. At the end of the year, he was named first team all-region and was an all-state selection.

In April, he was asked to join an all-star team and helped quarterback the best 4A players

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Sam Williams (center) sits with his teammates as they await pre-game introductions.

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to victory over their 5A counterparts. The win helped reduce the disappointment he felt after Oly lost to Woods Cross at the state tournament.

“I expected us to win the whole thing,” Williams said. “With the team we had, I thought we could. I didn’t expect us to lose to Woods Cross.”

Williams had a chance to win that game, but missed a rare free throw with 30 seconds left and the Wildcats converted. Williams also missed a three-pointer as the buzzer sounded.

Afterward, Woods Cross center Austin Bankowski knew he was lucky.

“Williams is such a great shooter, so I was nervous,” Bankowski told the Deseret News. “When I saw him with the ball, I thought we might be in trouble.”

While that was a tough way to end his high-school career, Williams will be best remembered for all that he did.

Barnes said Oly’s season of success really started when Williams led the Titans to a 66-54 win at Davis, then followed it with a big home victory over Murray. Williams provided Barnes and his teammates a lot of relief because they didn’t have to worry so much about reacting during pressure situations.

“I’d rather be the one to take the big shot,” he said.

Nobody argued. Win or lose, Oly knew that Williams was the best candidate. Opponents knew, too, but it didn’t change anything.

That fact will likely continue. Williams will always be tough under pressure, regardless of the situation.



Sam Williams

Favorite memory of the

season: Going to practice every day. I loved just knowing I’d be with my teammates and coaches and I would have fun. My teammates and coaches made the season what it was and I loved coming every day and playing the game.

Most exciting part of the

season: The Box Elder game, when we won in OT after coming back from nine points with two minutes left.

Biggest disappointment:

Losing to Woods Cross in the second round of the 4A state tourney.

Favorite personal sports

memory growing up: Winning the championship in football my seventh-grade year.

Future plans:

I will be going to college at either Utah or BYU and then I’ll be going on an LDS Church mission.