

# An amazing experience

Riverton girls win its first state basketball title with several standouts rising when it counted

*"It's a championship season none of us will forget. And why not us? They earned it."*

- Coach Ron Ence

By Bruce Smith  
Matchup

At the time the Riverton girls basketball team won its first-ever state championship, they all agreed: "It was unreal."

After an hour, a day, a week, even a month, it was difficult to comprehend. After a while, however, it wasn't so surprising. After all, Riverton came in to the 5A state tournament one of several teams that could possibly win it all. In the end, enough went its way for it to happen.

"Very few teams get to enjoy that amazing experience," said coach Ron Ence. "During the season, as I would visit with coaches at games or scouting, the same comment was heard: 'The title was up for grabs.'

"That was mostly because 5A didn't have a dominant player or a team ... just a lot of good teams."

There was no doubt Riverton was one, but the Silverwolves were in the background because their Region 4 rival – Bingham – had gone through the regular season undefeated.

Riverton's 22-3 overall record was second best of all 5A schools and success at the tournament was keyed by the fact it didn't have a standout player, but several good ones.



**TOP:** Riverton players gather together prior to a 5A state tournament game.

**LOWER LEFT:** Mallory Bostic dribbles downcourt.

**LOWER MIDDLE:** Shelby Richards points to a teammate.

The Silverwolves attracted individual attention by winning the title. They led all of 5A in scoring, and Ence said the roster included players with a "terrific mix of basketball skills, athleticism, heart and hustle."

Riverton opened the year with 13 consecutive wins and, even though the Silverwolves

finished second in region, they came back at state and earned their first championship trophy. The clincher was a 41-37 win over Layton in a front of a raucous crowd at Salt Lake Community College.

"It was intense," said

*Continued on next page*

# RIVERTON BASKETBALL: 2012-13 season recap



Jamie Smith, Whitney Saunders, Pume Currie, Gerika Ballard, Morgan Littlewood and others celebrate the title.

*Continued from previous page*

## 2012-13 results (22-3, 7-3)

Date	Opponent	W/L	Score
Nov. 20	DAVIS	W	41-36
Nov. 27	MTN. CREST	W	56-38
Nov. 29	at Fremont	W	54-36
Dec. 4	at Bountiful	W	47-45
Dec. 6	JORDAN	W	58-29
Dec. 14	at Roy	W	60-48
Dec. 15	vs. Murray	W	53-27
Dec. 18	at Alta	W	46-38
Dec. 20	VIEWMONT	W	52-43
Dec. 29	at Herriman	W	58-39
Jan. 3	TAYLORSVILLE	W	68-23
Jan. 8	LEHI*	W	77-44
Jan. 10	LONE PEAK*	W	53-37
Jan. 15	at American Fork*	L	49-59
Jan. 17	BINGHAM*	L	39-49
Jan. 22	at Lehi*	W	65-35
Jan. 24	at Pleasant Grove*	W	65-39
Jan. 31	at Lone Peak*	W	51-35
Feb. 5	AMERICAN FORK*	W	48-34
Feb. 7	at Bingham*	L	35-42
Feb. 12	PLEASANT GROVE*	W	62-25
Feb. 18	vs. Brighton#	W	54-50
Feb. 20	vs. Davis#	W	58-31
Feb. 22	vs. Fremont#	W	54-47
Feb. 23	vs. Layton#	W	41-37

\* - Region 4 games. # - 5A state tournament  
Home games in CAPS

senior Whitney Saunders, the team's leading scorer during the season who also made the all-state team. "We couldn't say we can save something for the next game. We had to play out hearts out."

"This is huge for our school," said Gerika Ballard, who overcame food poisoning the night before the title contest to lead Riverton with 13 points. "This was my senior year, my last game that I get to play with all my friends. I left with no regrets.

"We've always dreamed, and wanted to go on and take the next step," Ballard added. "This is the next step for our school to go on and do bigger and better things."

The trophy was the first for any Riverton sport outside of track and field. After a slew of summer tournaments and countless workouts, it all proved to be worthwhile.

"The team worked very hard in practice, particularly on 4-on-4 defensive drills, learning to take charges, ball handling and half-court trapping," Ence said. "It's a championship season none of us will forget. And why not us? They earned it."

The non-region schedule included victories over eventual regions champions Davis, Viewmont, Alta, and Bountiful. The Silverwolves also came back to beat American Fork after losing to the Cavemen

earlier. When the dust had cleared, Riverton and AF were tied for second place. The Silverwolves lost the coin flip (to get a No. 3 seed) but got through the tougher route anyway.

Saunders led the team in scoring, averaging 12.3 points per game. She was helped by Shelby Richards, who transferred from Bingham and played a huge role. Mallory Bostic, Jamie Smith, Ballard, Tiena Afu and Pume Currie also had their moments.

Smith hit a shot from near midcourt during the state tournament, which was one of the team's most-memorable moments. Another occurred late in the title game. With Riverton ahead 38-37 with less than 30 seconds to play, Saunders drew a charge on a Layton player. On the ensuing possession, a quick ball reversal against the Layton press allowed Currie to race up the sideline, feed Richards, who drove the lane and dished to Ballard for the go-ahead layup. A few seconds later, Richards picked up a loose ball and clinched the victory with a free throw.

"Each possession was so critical," said Ence. "It has been replayed in my mind a thousand times."

Those memories will continue until the players, or perhaps Ence, win something else as important. In the meantime, the school will relish what the team accomplished here.