

# A year of change smiles on Skyline

New coach brings an old attitude of winning in breakthrough season

*"The chemistry really developed and I don't know if that would have been possible before." – Coach Derek Bunting*

By Bruce Smith  
Matchup

The 2011-12 season was one of change for the Skyline High School boys basketball program.

Coach Derek Bunting was back, but leading scorer Jaden Jackson left. As excited as Skyline fans were to see Bunting again, they were disheartened when Jackson, who led the state at 25 points per game the previous year, moved to West Jordan to create a 5A juggernaut there.

"It was good for the team," said senior guard DeSean Miller. "We became more of a team, not a one-man show. Everyone stepped up. I liked it. For the overall team, it was better."

Skyline finished with a 16-7 record and was 7-3 in Region 7. The Eagles reached the 4A state tournament and advanced to the quarterfinals, where they were beaten by eventual champion Orem.

"We were fairly consistent, but that's because we had a lot (five) of seniors," Bunting said.

Bunting had already proven he could win at Skyline – and that was when the Eagles were a 5A (larger division) school. In three previous seasons (2006-09), he sported a



Clint Berhow's fiery attitude was just one part of Skyline's successful team chemistry.

39-24 record. The high point came in 2008-09, when the Eagles won their first 11 games en route to an 18-4 mark. Bunting, however, resigned shortly afterward for personal reasons and moved out of the area, but he made it clear that he wanted to eventually return.

When Bernie Graziano

resigned, everything fell into place. However, the players had to quickly learn his "Princeton-style" offense and adjust to playing without their most-talented individual.

There was a lot of work to do.

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# SKYLINE BASKETBALL: 2011-12 season recap



Scott Anderson

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“Everyone on the team had to step up,” Bunting said. “We couldn’t rely on any single individual. The chemistry really developed and I don’t know if that would have been possible before.”

Adjustments had to be made quickly. During summer league, the Eagles routinely lost. The players learned the new system quickly using a seven-man rotation. Skyline also benefited from a drop to the 4A ranks (due to the school’s reduced enrollment) and the non-region schedule had included more smaller, but competitive schools.

Then there was a little bit of good fortune. Early, it came in the name of Garrett England.

A 6-foot-4 junior, England made a name for himself with several timely baskets that allowed Skyline to win close games. The Eagles had three separate four-game win streaks during the season, finished undefeated at the Steve Hodson Cancer Classic in Cedar City during the Christmas break, and also won a pair of overtime games.

Until the regular season finale at Herriman, Skyline didn’t lose a game decided by five points or less.

“Those games went our way and gave the kids confidence,” Bunting said. “We had a lot of experience and that paid dividends.”

While England got most of the headlines,

## 2011-12 results (16-7, 7-3)

Date	Opponent	W/L	Score	Date	Opponent	W/L	Score
Nov. 22	at Syracuse	W	46-44	Jan. 24	WESTLAKE*	W	69-58
Nov. 29	at Park City	W	55-53	Jan. 27	at Olympus*	W	59-52
Dec. 2	BONNEVILLE	W	49-43	Jan. 31	HERRIMAN*	L	41-48
Dec. 13	HUNTER	W	57-53	Feb. 3	at Murray*	W	51-34
Dec. 16	at Highland	L	42-50	Feb. 7	HILLCREST*	W	46-33
Dec. 20	LONE PEAK	L	20-64	Feb. 10	at Westlake*	W	55-43
Dec. 28	at Canyon View	W	58-45	Feb. 17	OLYMPUS*	L	45-54
Dec. 29	vs. Dixie	W	59-47	Feb. 21	at Herriman*	L	37-38
Dec. 30	at Cedar	W (OT)	49-46	Feb. 27	vs. Sky View#	W	38-31
Jan. 3	at Wasatch	W (OT)	69-65	Feb. 29	vs. Orem#	L	35-54
Jan. 6	EAST	L	42-43				
Jan. 13	MURRAY*	W	55-48				
Jan. 20	at Hillcrest*	W	53-39				

\* - Region 7 games. # - 4A state tourney games  
Home games in CAPS

## Team awards

Awards given at Skyline’s post-season banquet:

**MVP** – DeSean Miller  
**Most Inspirational** – Michael Staes, Clint Berhow



Nielson, Staes, Berhow and Miller

Miller became the team leader. He averaged 13.2 points per game, but his quickness and shifty ballhandling allowed him to drive from the perimeter, shoot or find teammates open for easy baskets.

Miller was named first team all-state by the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and was one of the top players in Region 7. By virtue of a 59-52 win at Olympus in late January, Skyline became one of the top 4A teams to watch.

“At Olympus, that was about as good as an environment as I’ve ever been in,” Bunting said. “For us to win there was a significant accomplishment. After that, teams were really prepared to play us.”

The Eagles went from the underdog to the favorite. Even Jackson, whose West Jordan team attracted the most attention of any school, came to Skyline games to see what was happening.

A two-game letdown, including a 54-45 home loss to Olympus (when the Titans shot the ball unlike any game all season), put a damper on the season. But it also served as a momentum boost at state, where the Eagles surprised Sky View in the opener.

“We gave ourselves a tougher road, but our win over Sky View was one of the biggest wins of the tournament.”

And it may also fuel the Eagles’ future. This time, with fewer changes.