

Starting from scratch

Young Eagles know Bunting's system, but lack of varsity experience will be a difficult hurdle

"We'll be young and inexperienced, but we have smart kids who work hard and it will be fun to watch how much they improve."

Coach Derek Bunting

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

It's a good time to start being a Skyline boys basketball fan. It's an all-new squad this year. The players, and coach Derek Bunting, may know all of their names. Few others will.

The Eagles open the 2012-13 season as an unknown entity. About the only thing opponents will be able to assume about this team is that it will be "Buntingball" once again, focusing on team play, passing and defense.

"We have zero returning starters, so we're starting from scratch," said Bunting.

Last year Bunting could have said the same thing. He led the Eagles' program from 2006-09, but moved to Portland, Ore., when his wife-to-be accepted a pediatric emergency medicine fellowship there. He returned in 2011, but had to re-teach the players his Princeton-style offense. However, he had five senior starters and almost won the Region 7 title.

The Eagles finished with a 16-7 record and a No. 3 ranking in 4A before losing to eventual champion Orem in the quarterfinals of the 4A state tournament.

"Everyone knew their role last year," Bunting said. "This year, we'll be young and



Senior **Dylan Paulus** earned a lot of experience playing on Skyline's JV team last year and will be the anchor on a young squad that looks to improve during the season.

inexperienced, but we have smart kids who work hard and it will be fun to watch how much they improve over the course of the season."

Skyline will have a tough opponent when the season begins Nov. 20 vs. Woods Cross, which should have all of its starters returning. The non-region season also includes battles against traditional

basketball powers like Judge Memorial, Highland, Brighton and a four-day tournament at Jordan High during the Christmas holidays.

"The schedule won't be easy. We'll have to play some good teams, but that should only make us better," Bunting said. "And you know the region

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Season schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Opponent</u>
Nov. 20	WOODS CROSS
Nov. 28	WEST
Nov. 30	at Judge Memorial
Dec. 4	HIGHLAND
Dec. 7	at Brighton
Dec. 12	at Cottonwood
Dec. 18	WASATCH
Dec. 20	at Hunter
Dec. 27-31	at Jordan Tournament
Jan. 8	ROY
Jan. 11	at Murray*
Jan. 15	HILLCREST*
Jan. 18	at Westlake*
Jan. 25	OLYMPUS*
Jan. 29	at Herriman*
Feb. 1	MURRAY*
Feb. 5	at Hillcrest*
Feb. 8	WESTLAKE*
Feb. 15	at Olympus*
Feb. 19	HERRIMAN*

* - Region 7 games. Home games in CAPS

LEFT: Jake Anderson

TOP MIDDLE: Michael Binford

LOWER MIDDLE: Alek Johnson

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season is always tough.”

Bunting figured Murray and Herriman have standout players that will make them the region favorites and Olympus is always tough. The Titans - Skyline’s biggest rival - will also be playing their final season in their unique gym and their Feb. 15 game should draw media attention and a huge crowd.

Skyline, however, has battled tough odds before. In 2008-09, the Eagles won their first 11 games and earned a No. 1 ranking in 5A for over a month by the Salt Lake Tribune. Last year, the team was forced to adapt to the loss of leading scorer Jaden Jackson and learn Bunting’s style again. They still spent much of the region season in first place on their way to a 15-6 season.

This year’s squad may have new players, but Bunting’s style is a proven winner.

“We’ll have five interchangeable parts,” he said. “We’re going to eventually be pretty good. With continued discipline and hard work, they can’t help but improve.”

Skyline began preparing for this year shortly after last season. Bunting led the team through

countless workouts, practices and tournaments.

“They know the system, but we don’t have true game experience yet,” Bunting said. “There’s a difference between the summer and the winter season. In the winter, teams are better prepared and the ‘lights’ are a lot brighter.”

Prior to the start of the season, Bunting could only guess at his starting lineup. However, he planned to use a seven-man system and figured junior Yanni Cayias and sophomore Braxton Chipman would compete for the point guard position after an injury to sophomore Michael Binford will keep him sidelined most of the year.

Senior captain Dylan Paulus and Alek Johnson will vie for playing time on the wings with Taylor Garrett and Spencer Page. Junior John Boyden and sophomores John Cronin and Jake Anderson will man the post positions.

The Eagles are building for the future, but Bunting will try to get a lot out of his young players. It could be an example of how the Princeton-style offense can be the great equalizer against teams that may have more size and experience.