

A combined effort

Youthful new coach merges with talented team to give Wildcats high hopes for a great season

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

When Woods Cross High School was looking for a new basketball coach last spring, they were impressed with Kasey Walkenhurst's enthusiasm and knowledge.

Walkenhurst respected what the program had already accomplished.

The 27 year-old coach welcomed a chance to lead a team in the basketball hotbed of Davis County. It has been since 1983 since the Wildcats won their only state championship, but they frequently have been competitive. This year appears it could be an interesting season combining the best of both worlds.

"They've had good success here and have been to the state tournament every year since 2004," Walkenhurst said. "There's a good natural rivalry with Bountiful that keeps the team moving forward."

Walkenhurst replaced Todd Street, who had led the program for the last 11 years. The Wildcats made it to the 4A tournament semifinals two years ago and lost to eventual champion Orem last March with just two seniors.

This year's squad already carried a lot of respect by local coaches because of its five

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- Coach Kasey Walkenhurst



Brady Cowley is one of five returning seniors for the Wildcats and has already shown a talent for shooting from the perimeter, where he made 48 three-pointers last year.

returning starters.

Walkenhurst, who played at West Jordan High School about 10 years ago and was a coach on one state championship team (2009) and another near-miss, brings all that he has learned in that program.

He has plenty of ideas, but the most important is

emphasizing defense to see if that will help the Wildcats take the next step.

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WOODS CROSS BASKETBALL: Season preview



TOP LEFT: Mikey Jacobsen dribbles by a defender.



TOP MIDDLE: Luke Jowers gets ready to make a move.



TOP RIGHT: Skyler Farnes

LOWER MIDDLE: Xequille Harry



A look ahead

The UHSAA recently announced its realignment plans for 2013-2015. Woods Cross will be a 4A team in Region 6 again. Here are its members:

Bountiful	Highland
Clearfield	Kearns
Cyprus	WOODS CROSS
East	Judge Memorial

2012-13 schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Opponent</u>
Nov. 20	at Skyline
Nov. 28	SYRACUSE
Dec. 4	BONNEVILLE
Dec. 6	at Viewmont
Dec. 7	ROY
Dec. 14	at Layton
Dec. 18	at Olympus
Dec. 21	BOX ELDER
Dec. 29	MOUNTAIN CREST
Jan. 4	WEST
Jan. 8	COPPER HILLS
Jan. 11	EAST*
Jan. 15	CYPRUS*
Jan. 18	at Highland*
Jan. 25	at Bountiful*
Jan. 29	CLEARFIELD*
Feb. 1	at East*
Feb. 5	at Cyprus*
Feb. 8	HIGHLAND*
Feb. 14	BOUNTIFUL*
Feb. 19	at Clearfield*

* - Region 6 games. Home games in CAPS

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shots.”

The Wildcats’ emphasis may be defense, but there’s no doubting their offensive capability, too, and from different sources.

Brady Cowley and Skyler Farnes each averaged almost 11 points per game last season, Hayden Grant was at 9.5 ppg, Filipo Mokofisi 7.7 and Mike Jacobsen 5.6. Cowley and Grant also showed impressive three-point shooting ability. Mokofisi, listed at 6-foot-5, and Farnes had impressive seasons with the Wildcats’ football team.

The team’s bench also has some talent, and includes Luke Jowers, Xequille Harry, Garrett Grant, Jackson Pohlman and 6-foot-8 Travis Howey.

“The best part of this team is its work ethic,” said Walkenhurst. “We pass well and shoot well. Our post players are really good passers.”

The difference in this year’s team might best be noticed in other ways that Walkenhurst saw clearly at West Jordan.

Before the season, Walkenhurst found old Woods Cross uniforms, handed them out to students and asked them to wear them at games. That should help create a more boisterous crowd and an atmosphere that could lead to more home wins.

They’ll be asked to cheer the defense.

Walkenhurst is a firm believer that success in that area leads to championships and that fact will need to be learned – and implemented – quickly before the team opens Region 6 play Jan. 11.

Bountiful is a perennial power and is expected to have another talented group again this year. East returns all-state pick Parker Van Dyke, Highland has won three 4A titles in the last 10 years and is always tough because of its defensive posture and, so far, it appears Cyprus is showing improvement.

At state, Orem has a lot of players back, including former Woods Cross player Zach Hunsaker, and has a chance to repeat. Sky View, Logan and Springville have looked good early.

Keep in mind, though, that those teams have an eye on Woods Cross. While new coaches rarely win state titles in their first year, the cupboard is not bare here and the Wildcats’ administration saw something in Walkenhurst that made them to feel comfortable about the coaching change.

Call this a season where Woods Cross talent mixes with West Jordan success and tradition. We’ll see how it plays out.