Del Norte Triplicate

SPORTS

Strong defense lifts Del Norte freshmen to Big 5 championship

March 2, 2024







The future is bright for Del Norte boys basketball, and a long-held tradition within the program remains as strong as ever.

Earlier this month the Del Norte freshmen boys basketball team clinched a Big 5 championship in a title race that went down to the last day of the season.

In their final game, the young Del Norte players edged McKinleyville 47-45 in what was a true championship game to decide what had been a competitive and balanced conference this season.

They achieved it thanks in large part to some good offense and some outstanding defense, something that Del Norte basketball has always prioritized.

“We had a little bit of everything. We could score and we played good defense,” said head coach Gabe Lopez, who added with a chuckle, “to play at Del Norte, you have to play defense.”

The young players responded to the challenge and stepped up when they needed to the most, closing out the season strong to secure the championship and offer plenty of hope for the future of the program.

They had plenty of fun along the way too, something that impressed the coaching staff, as did the players' collective approach to the season.

"They were really fun to be around," Lopez said. "They had a really good attitude."

Most of the players began preparation for the season last summer while playing travel ball with Lopez, and that gave the head coach a head start in familiarizing himself with the roster.

"Most of them played basketball for me over the summer, so I knew them and I knew their strengths and weaknesses and knew what we needed to work on," Lopez said.

Team leader Marcus Parras played a pivotal role in the team's success and his versatility as a player helped pave the way to success.

"He played everywhere," the coach said. "He could play point for me, he could play wing, and he was our No. 1 scorer. If I needed a bucket, I went to him."

He wasn't the only standout on a deep roster of 11.

Rek-woi Alamdea also played a key role and he helped set the tone on the defensive side of the ball.

Alamdea was tasked with guarding the opposing team's point guard every game and he responded well.

"He did a good job at that. He got after it defensively," Lopez said. "And he made it hard for the other team to get into their offense."

Landan Williams and Rumaldo Salcedo Jr. each also played some outstanding defense along the way, with Williams named to the all-tournament team at the Eureka tournament because of his standout defense.

"They played really good defense all year for me," Lopez said of the talented duo. "They were consistent."

The team also included Evan Restad, Sebastian Alcala, Max Borges, Trent Conk, Ethan Vue, Ian Stanley and Allen Stanshaw Jr., and, according to the head coach, all of the players contributed to the team's success.

So too did assistant coach Chris Davidson, a former Del Norte player.