

WINTER SPORTS SPOTLIGHT

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT GIRLS' AND BOYS' BASKETBALL IN GREENE COUNTY

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Lady Wildcats have big expectations

Talented, experienced and deep GCHS team appears capable of big things in 2019-2020

By **RUSSELL TURNER**
Herald Staff

For the past four seasons, Greene County High School's women's basketball program has been the model of consistency. Coach Dale Kimble's teams have won 70 percent of their games since the 2015-2016 season and competed in postseason play in each of those years.

But, the Lady Cats have not finished atop the region standings since 2016 and have been a couple of key pieces short of having a team that could make a deep run toward an appearance in the state tournament. This season could be the year that changes that.

Despite losing three top producers from last year's 23-8 squad to graduation, the veteran coach has started the 2019-2020 campaign with one of the deepest and most talented lineups he's had during his time at GCHS. And, along with that, some lofty expectations.

"We have very high expectations for this season," Kimble said. "We have a great deal of experience returning and good depth at every position."

"This team has the potential to be one of the best teams GCHS has had in girls basketball. We will be able to score, but must play excellent defense to be successful. As a team, we have improved on all aspects of the game and our players should expect nothing but excellence this year."

Kimble says he is very pleased with the way his players worked in the offseason. They attended a team camp at Copiah-Lincoln Community College over the summer and competed well against very good competition. The Lady Cats were successful in the summer shootouts they competed in and that momentum seems to have carried over into the season as they are off to a 2-0 start with wins over Forest and Gulfport thus far.

"I have been pleased with the way our players have worked and feel good about the way we've played thus far," Kimble said. "Team chemistry has been strong and we want to continue to build on that."

See LADY CATS HOOPS
Page 2B



Photos by Russell Turner / Herald Editor

Shown (Above) is the 2019-2020 GCHS Lady Wildcats basketball team.



Senior Destiny Eubanks is shown defending against junior Gen Walley (30) during a practice session at the school last week. Eubanks is one of three seniors on the Lady Wildcats' roster this year.

Cats looking for third straight playoff berth



Photos by Russell Turner / Herald Editor

Shown (Above) is the Greene County High School men's basketball team for the 2019/20 basketball campaign.

Shown (Right) is head coach Phillip Ricks during a recent practice going over positioning for inbound the basketball along the baseline. Ricks is in his third season at the helm of the Greene County men's basketball program.



Ricks has holes to fill, but is optimistic going into third season

By **RUSSELL TURNER**
Herald Staff

The Greene County Wildcats have tasted moderate success in Coach Phillip Ricks' first two seasons at the helm. Ricks' first two teams combined for a 30-30 overall record and 10-10 in region play, making the playoffs both seasons and just missing advancing to the second round a year ago with a 2-point loss to the Rock-a-chaws of St. Stanislaus.

Improving on that success in 2019-2020 could be a challenge, however, as the Cats lost nearly 80 percent of their offensive production to graduation last May. As if that isn't a big enough obstacle to overcome, the Cats also have to deal with the fact several seniors projected to make a big impact for the team are leaving school early to pursue collegiate football opportunities, or in the case of projected returning starter Jacob Thurman, a career in the military.

You would think that scenario would put a huge damper on Ricks' plans for this year's team, but the third-year coach is still showing a lot of optimism. "Replacing the production of

Jared Nicholson and Darrell Johnson (who combined for 33.5 points per game last year) is going to be tough," Ricks said. "But, we've got guys who have been working hard and are looking forward to the challenge."

The early departures leave the Wildcats with just three seniors on the roster as they prepare to kick off the season in the Perry Central Tournament this week. One of those seniors is in his first season in Wildcat blue while another hopes to miss a few more weeks of the season as the GCHS football team looks to make its own deep run in the playoffs. Still, Ricks has a lot of confidence in the trio and his team's chances once the full lineup is on the court together.

"Clearly, those were some players that could have made a big impact for us this year," Ricks said. "But, despite that, the expectations I have for this season are that we will be very competitive and hold our own."

"I expect us to play really well as a team and have great chemistry. If we play good defense

See GCHS BASKETBALL
Page 6B