



Courtesy of Carol Guentherman

Layton Gerhart dribbles around a defender in Wylie Prep's 43-37 home victory over Paris Homeschool. Gerhart was third in the team in scoring with 7.3 points per game.



Courtesy of Carol Guentherman

Jackson Rye goes up from a layup in Wylie Prep's 84-35 victory over Cornerstone Christian Academy on Nov. 15.

Wylie Prep basketball finishes memorable season

By **Seth Dowdle**
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Since the impetus of the Wylie Prep basketball program, the team were gym nomads.

They practiced and played their home games wherever they could find a place. Starting in 2022, however, that reality was over. With the construction of Building 22, the school's brand-new home gym, the traveling across the Metroplex just to play a "home" game was over.

On top of the new gym, the school entered their first season as a member of the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS). The outlook on the 2022-23 basketball season was promising. The result: a rewarding season filled with memorable moments that won't be forgotten at Wylie Prep for a long time.

Prep finished the year 14-3, winning a share of the TAPPS 2A District 3 championship. They were crowned Area cham-

pions after winning their first-round playoff game and finished the year as regional finalists.

Patriots' head basketball coach Adam Gerhart attributes time and talent to the achievements of the season. While winning isn't the primary purpose of the program, being competitive is the target, he said.

Three games stood out to Gerhart along the way.

The Patriots beat Paris Homeschool, a team that was 5-1 entering the contest, 43-37 on Nov. 29, a win that Gerhart said was a key game in the team's development.

"[We] knew they were going to play physical, tough ... that didn't faze [our players]," he said. "But the part that they had to deal with is that one of our district opponents was in the stands watching, cheering for our opponents. That was a whole other battle they had to do—mental—besides the one on the court. That was defining to us to find out if we could fight through that. And they did. Paris

mentally prepared us."

The Patriots' toughest tests of the year came against district foe Garland Christian Academy (GCA). They won their first battle against GCA 43-41 on Jan. 13 at home and then fell 50-47 on Jan. 23.

"We knew that [GCA] was going to be our primary competition for a district title," Gerhart said. "No disrespect to the other people, but we anticipated playing them ... and then to know that it came down to the last seconds of the first game. We knew what that meant for the second time going over there. They just made some shots, and we didn't."

Despite the loss, Gerhart said that he thinks that the defeat prepared his team for their first-round playoff matchup.

Both GCA and Wylie Prep finished with identical records at the end of district play, causing a tie-breaking coin toss to determine playoff seeding. The Patriots lost that coin toss, meaning they'd have to face

Christian Life Preparatory School (CLPS).

Wylie Prep faced CLPS in the first game of the year and fell in a tightly contested battle. The sequel was no different, with the game coming down to the wire all the way to the end. Down three, CLPS had possession in the final seconds but was unable to get the tying three-pointer to fall, giving the Patriots the playoff victory, their first since 2018.

On top of that, the Patriots and CLPS had been district opponents in the Texas Christian

Athletic Fellowship for the last four years. Prior to their playoff victory, Wylie Prep was 0-4 at CLPS.

Following that win, the Patriots faced number one ranked Abilene Christian School. Unfortunately for the Patriots, their wild and memorable season ended there, as they fell 66-48.

"Hats off to their tremendous team," Gerhart said. "It was a fun game to watch. Obviously a little more fun for them at the end, but I was so proud of our boys."

Senior Kyle Hayes led the Pa-

triot's in scoring with 15.6 points per game, shooting 48.9% from the field. Juniors Riley Peterson and Layton Gerhart put up 12.6 and 7.3 points, respectively. Peterson led the team in field goal percentage at 51%.

Prep had a short rotation of players that featured Hayes, Layton Gerhart, Peterson, Jackson Rye and senior Chase Dowdle as starters and senior Luke Wheeler and sophomore Aidan Steward off the bench.

Wylie Prep graduates four seniors: Dowdle, Hayes, Micah Jones and Wheeler.



Courtesy of Carol Guentherman

Senior Luke Wheeler shoots a fadeaway jump shot in Wylie Prep's first-round playoff win over CLPS on Feb. 14. Wheeler averaged 5.5 points off the bench for the Patriots.



Courtesy of Carol Guentherman

Kyle Hayes takes a three-pointer in the Patriots' 51-25 win over Highlands on Feb. 3. Hayes averaged 15.6 points per game, shooting 48.9% from the field and 36.1% from three.



Courtesy of Carol Guentherman

Riley Peterson, left, and **Chase Dowdle** guard a player from Heritage Christian Academy on Dec. 9. Peterson averaged 12.6 points while Dowdle was one of the Patriots top defenders, getting 19 steals and drawing three charges.

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