

January 3, 2022

By Dennis Garcia

SportsTone.net

Winning any type of a tournament championship during the course of a season can certainly spark a team for the remainder of the campaign. Not that the Randleman High School girls varsity basketball team needed anything to motivate them as they continue their trek through the Piedmont Athletic Conference.

Although the conference may look a little different this year due to the realignment that took effect this season, not much has changed so far for the RHS girls. They continue to shine.

The Tigers, under the direction of fourth-year head coach Brandon Varner, captured the championship of the Davidson-Randolph Christmas Classic last week, keeping them undefeated at 10-0 heading into Tuesday night's game against Uwharrie Charter Academy.

At the Christmas tournament held at Providence Grove High School, the Tigers roared past Lexington 61-23, Central Davidson 54-33 and Providence Grove in the title game by a score of 69-53.



*The Tigers with the Davidson-Randolph Christmas Classic championship trophy. (Photo provided)*



*Elizabeth York. (Photo by PJ Ward-Brown Photography)*

"It was one of our goals we had when we started our season," Varner said of the Christmas tournament title. "We wanted to win the Christmas tournament and hold some momentum carrying over to 2022. It's a new year. You could probably go all the way back to Coach (Brian) Nance the last time the Randleman girls have won a Christmas tournament. We wanted to go to the tournament, play well and leave 2021 on the right note."

The Tigers have been singing a sweet tune all season long. RHS opened the campaign with a 61-26 win over rebuilding Asheboro, then defeated Oak Grove 61-38 and 51-42, the same Oak Grove team that defeated Southwestern Randolph High School for the championship on the Ledford side of the Davidson-

Randolph Christmas Classic last week. An easy win over Ledford (56-35) preceded the Piedmont Athletic Conference opener, a 61-52 win over Wheatmore. League wins over Eastern Randolph (57-21) and SWR (62-32) gave the Tigers a 7-0 record heading into the tournament.



*Gracyn Hall (#25) and Jordan Booker (#3).  
(Photo by PJ Ward-Brown Photography)*

"The week before the tournament, we played ER and Southwest and we played pretty good," Varner said. "Our energy and effort has been much better. We have a lot of girls who have played a lot of minutes and played in a lot of big games. They played in Christmas championship games, they have played in state playoff games and they played in conference tournament championship games. They respond. They are so much more mature now and know how to handle things."

Led by Gracyn Hall, Hannah Hinshaw, Veronica Marlow, Elizabeth York and Audra Petty, the Tigers also feature a number of players who have stepped into their roles very successfully. It's been that way since Varner took over.

In Varner's three-plus seasons with the Tigers, the girls are 61-17 overall and 35-4 in league play. In the previous eight seasons before Varner took the

program over, RHS was 27-162 and had won more than five games in any one season just once, that coming in 2016-17 when the Tigers won eight games.

Having a team that is more experienced and has tasted success means another type of challenge.

"It's great to have the experience back, but I tell them all the time, I am having to push them harder and harder about things," Varner said. "But the drills we do in practice, we do a lot of repetition. We can do a lot of stuff in practice in 30 or 45 minutes that two years ago would have taken two hours. I want to continue to push them and get better, keep improving."

The Tigers are doing just that once again this season. But they certainly have another different kind of a challenge Tuesday night against UCA. The two teams have never



*Hannah Hinshaw. (Photo by PJ Ward-Brown  
Photography)*

played and the Eagles are off to a great start as well, bringing a 2-0 conference record and 190-2 overall mark into the contest, which will be held at UCA.

"UCA is a brand new team for us and I have to learn their players, their style of play and see what they like to do," Varner said. "They certainly have played well and this will be a challenge."

Sportstone will be there to broadcast the girls and boys games at UCA starting at 5:45 p.m.