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One of the goals a high school coach has when his team's season winds down is to have its destiny in its own hands. So many times at the end of a season, teams are needing to not only win games, but have certain teams lose so its standing improves.

The Providence Grove High School varsity boys basketball team doesn't need any help to capture a Piedmont Athletic Conference championship this year. Because of hard work, the ability to come up big in crucial situations and tremendous team chemistry, the Patriots hold their destiny in their own hands as a win Thursday night over Wheatmore will earn the Patriots a league crown. A victory would give PG it's first outright PAC title in school history. The Patriots shared a conference title back in 2010.

PG enters the PAC finale with a record of 9-2 and overall mark of 16-7. PG captured at least a share of the league title with a win over Eastern Randolph Tuesday night and now the Patriots are looking for that outright title Thursday. Both Trinity and Uwharrie Charter Academy are nipping at the Patriots' heels. Trinity is 8-3 with a game against Eastern Randolph remaining, while the Eagles are 7-3 with games against Southwestern Randolph and Wheatmore still to be played.



*Men's basketball coach Wes Luther of Providence Grove High School. Photo by PJ Ward-Brown Photography.*

"It's stressful, but it's a good feeling knowing we don't have to depend on anyone to win or anyone to lose," third-year head coach Wes Luther said. "We have just one thing to do Thursday night and that's to win."

Not all the Patriots' wins have been easy, hence the stressful remark by Luther. The Pats have had to rally from big deficits on numerous occasions, including trailing Eastern Randolph by 14 points in each of their two games before rallying, and erasing an 18-point deficit against Trinity.

"We don't make anything easy," Luther said. "It seems every game we find ourselves down. We just find ways to win. We joke around and tell the guys they evidently like to sell tickets. It does make things stressful."

The ability to come back time and time again is because of team chemistry, Luther said.

"It's one cohesive group," Luther said. "It's a tight-knit group. The adversity this team has faced - we have had some stuff go on off the court and on the court, but the togetherness of this group and how tight-knit they are. ... There are absolutely no egos and they enjoy playing together."

Luther has a veteran group led by seniors Michael Fee, Luke Thomas and Zane Caudle.

"They have been through the good and the bad, so it's nice to see this," Luther said.

The Patriots were 7-18 overall in Luther's first year and 8-6 in the Covid-shortened last season.

This season, the Patriots have split conference games with Uwharrie Charter Academy and Trinity, which are currently fighting for second in the league, while sweeping ER, Southwestern Randolph and Randleman. PG captured a 68-62 win over Wheatmore the first time the teams met back on Jan. 14.



*PGHS senior Michael Fee (#0). Photo by PJ Ward-Brown Photography.*



*PGHS senior Zane Caudle (#3). Photo by PJ Ward-Brown Photography.*

"This conference is amazing how tough it is from top to bottom," Luther said. "UCA has a great team and Trinity has some great young talent. You go to ER and they are supposed to be the bottom team in the league and they give you everything you want. There is not a game in this conference where you can say you are going on the court and will win."

The Patriots won't take anything for granted Thursday night, but one more win will mean school history.