

February 10, 2023

By Dennis Garcia
SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - History will definitely be on the line Friday night as the Asheboro High School boys varsity basketball team travels to Montgomery Central to close out the Mid-Piedmont Conference regular season. The Blue Comets, who have already wrapped up the league championship, will be looking for their first undefeated league season in, well, possibly ever.

The Blue Comets enter the contest a perfect 9-0 in MPC play and 18-4 overall. A win Friday night would give the Blue Comets, who are on a 10-game winning streak, an unbeaten 10-0 mark inside league play.

AHS coach Brian Nance thought long and hard and couldn't remember an AHS boys team that finished a conference season undefeated. There may have been one or two unbeaten conference seasons pre-1980, but since that time, Nance said he didn't believe there had been any. Even the great teams that featured Joe Spinks, Jeff Williams and Brad Phillips from 1986-1990 lost at least one conference game each season.



Coach Brian Nance addressing his team. Photo by PJ Ward-Brown Photography.



Blue Comet seniors (L to R) Darius Headen, Hakeeme Butler, Tanner Marsh. All photos by PJ Ward-Brown Photography.

Now, the Blue Comets have the opportunity to achieve something that hasn't been accomplished in at least quite a long time.



*Junior Jerquarius Stanback.
Photo by PJ Ward-Brown
Photography.*

"I really don't think we have had one," Nance said as he prepared his team for the game at Montgomery Central. "That would be special if we can make that happen. We talked about that (Tuesday) night. I gave them (Wednesday) off and we'll come back to practice Thursday and get focused for Friday. We might as well finish it off."

The Blue Comets, who last won an outright league title in 2016, had very little trouble with the Timberwolves the first time the teams played this season. AHS rolled to a 76-30 home win on Jan. 20, but Nance said that's in the past.

"Winning on the road anywhere is tough," Nance said.

The second time through the schedule has certainly been a little tougher for the Blue Comets, who beat Central Davidson 74-63 the first time and 50-47 the second time and beat North Davidson by 37 points the first time and by seven the next.

"I think what happened early on is we caught some people by surprise from the perimeter," Nance said. "Then we had games where we weren't shooting the ball well from outside and on those poor offensive nights, we had to win with defense. The kids have worked very hard on their defense."

When a team is as successful as the Blue Comets have been, it needs contributions from a lot of different players. AHS is getting just that. High-scoring Jerquarius Stanback has been a monster on the boards and the double-double machine has also added some triple-doubles to his resume. His blocking ability is second to none in the conference.

Tanner Marsh, Hakeeme Butler and Darius Headen are solid contributors, but the question was if Cam Walker could provide a boost from the perimeter.

"We thought with what we had coming back this year, if our seniors could step up and play like seniors, we could be in the top two or three in the league," Nance said. "The biggest surprise has been Cam. He didn't come out his Covid year and last year we kept him, but he didn't play very much. We saw this summer he can really shoot the ball and he's become more confident. His defense has come a long way."



*Senior Josh Meadows. Photo by PJ Ward-Brown
Photography.*

Add to those the contributions of Josh Meadows, Amare Godwin and others and the recipe was there for great success.

"We were set up because the conference season didn't start until after the Christmas break," Nance said. "It was a new season and we told them to take things one game at a time. That's what they did."

One of the biggest hurdles the Blue Comets have dealt with is not being able to play in their own gymnasium. Because of renovations to the gym area at AHS, the Blue Comets have played the last two seasons at the Asheboro Recreation Center.

"That's been a grind on everybody," Nance said. "We keep talking about how we can't wait until we just have to go down some steps and go to practice. That's been tiresome, but the kids have done well with it and anytime you're successful it takes away from the negative. The City of Asheboro has been head over heels gracious to us. We'll be excited to get back to normalcy."

With an undefeated conference record, it certainly hasn't been a normal season.



Camden Walker (#12), teammates and fans in the Asheboro Recreation Center. Photo by PJ Ward-Brown Photography.