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TRINITY - Pete Kilcullen said it was like riding a bike. One year after leaving his position as the Wheatmore High School girls varsity basketball coach, a position he had held for nine years, Kilcullen is back with the Warriors. And everyone is thriving.

Wheatmore will take a 6-2 record into Friday night's Piedmont Athletic Conference opener against Randleman, looking to build off a strong non-league showing.

"It was like waking up and getting back on a bike and riding it," Kilcullen said of taking his old position. "There was no difference. It was like I didn't miss a beat, but it was like starting over with a whole new group. There were only four players who had played for me."

Kilcullen left the head coaching position for the 2022-23 season due to personal reasons. Although he did return to help coach the boys team in the latter part of last season, he said he did his best to stay away from the girls program.

"I needed to spend more time at home and last year was good for me and my family," Kilcullen said. "The plan was never to come back. But an opening occurred in August right before school started and I talked with my family and I thought I could handle both."

The Warriors finished 9-15 last year and 5-7 in PAC action. This year, WHS is off to its solid start with its only two losses coming to North Davidson. The Warriors own wins over West Davidson, South Davidson, Central Davidson, Ledford and two over East Davidson.

"It's probably the leadership and the desire and commitment these kids have shown, wanting to be in the gym every day, wanting to be at practice" Kilcullen said. "They have come out and done what we asked them to do, especially on the defensive end of the floor."

WHS is allowing just 35.7 points per game.

"We're doing exactly what we did for the last nine years," Kilcullen said. "It's two hours and fifteen minutes of hard work every day. I'm so pleased with how quickly the younger ones who have not played for me have picked up what we asked them to do."



Pete Kilcullen is back as the coach of women's basketball at Wheatmore. Photo provided.



Wheatmore junior Brianna Hill.

Photo provided.

A couple of players who have worked under Kilcullen before are junior guard Brianna Hill and junior backcourt mate Kynnedi Routh. Both provide solid scoring. Hill is averaging 11.0 points per game and Routh 10.4 - and leadership.

"They are giving us leadership and scoring ability and great hustle on the defensive end," Kilcullen said. "Really, we go seven deep and everyone is giving us a lot of hustle."

Hill said there's a different vibe on the team this year.

"We definitely have a better team chemistry and we definitely want to win more than we did last year," Hill said.

"We have a lot more opportunities to score this year. We only had a couple of plays last year. This year it's more like 300."

The team also had to adjust to Kilcullen's coaching style.

"It's definitely a big adjustment, but everyone has adjusted to it pretty well." Hill said. "We talked about it in tryouts so everyone knew."

The Warriors have also received stellar play from sophomore Madeline Mullinix, senior Maggie Messner, sophomore Rashiya Raiford, junior Maddie Nichols and sophomore Meredith Partin.

"From three weeks ago until now, the growth has been tremendous," Kilcullen said. "This group does not give up. This is a tough minded group."

They will have the opportunity to prove that beginning Friday night.