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Playing big

Despite lack of height, Rochester Adams boys basketball in title hunt

By Christian Davis
 C & G Sports Writer

ROCHESTER — Last year, Rochester Adams’ boys basketball team talked a lot about 1993, the last time the program won a league title. Though the Highlanders made a good run at breaking through for a title of their own, they came up a little short.

This year, they find themselves in position again, but instead of talking about a league title, the players are taking a different approach.

“I think last year after practices and stuff we’d talk about our goal of winning a league championship, and we stressed it a lot more,” senior Joey Dillon said Feb. 4.

“This year, we haven’t even really talked about it as much. I mean, it would be great to win a league championship, but we’re also looking to improve each day.”

Adams has actually finished second in the Oakland Activities Association White Division the last two seasons. At press time, they were 9-3 overall and 5-2 in the division — a game back of Birmingham Seaholm.

Last season, Adams held a lead in the division late in the year, but was eventually overtaken by Auburn Hills Avondale.

Coach John Hall said he may have put too much pressure on the squad to finish first, and he won’t be making that mistake again.

“I just try to keep it low key and just stress to the guys, ‘Let’s play our best basketball every night,’” he said. “I think if we play a certain way, we have a chance to win every game that we play. If we don’t, we can be beat by any team we play.”

The Highlanders’ approach to their last meeting against Seaholm is a good example that their new philosophy might be working.

The Highlanders entered the game on a two-game losing streak, while Seaholm was undefeated. A loss to the Maples would have put Adams three games behind them, which would virtually end its title hopes.

Instead of rallying the troops with talk of how desperately they needed to beat Seaholm, instead, Hall said they talked about what they needed to do to improve overall.

“All we talked about (before the game) was that we lost two in a row, and we lost because we didn’t follow the template of how we needed to play,” Hall said.



Photo by Tracy Dreslinski
 Rochester Adams guard Connor Boyle drives past a Rochester High defender earlier this season. At press time, the Highlanders were second in the OAA White.

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The result of the game was a 48-42 victory for Adams.

The Highlanders' recipe for success is putting relentless pressure on opponents and taking advantage of their speed.

"We start five guys under 6 foot 2. So in a league where everybody is pretty big, our style has to match our personality and has to hide some of our deficiencies," Hall said. "We have to play very aggressive defense ... because if they get the ball inside to their big people, we're in trouble."

But senior captains Connor Boyle, Austin McClelland and Joey Dillon believe their lack of height also presents trouble for opponents. The guards agreed that they're often able to exploit bigger, slower teams.

"We always have fun playing bigger teams, because we know there's going to be a mismatch somewhere on the court," Boyle said.

Hall said Dillon — a three-year starter at point guard — leads the charge defensively and offensively.

"He's one of the smarter basketball players that I've ever coached. His basketball IQ is off the charts. He just gets the game," Hall said.

"He's the only kid that I have ever coached in my life that can completely dominate a game without scoring a basket."

Dillon believes it's the team's work ethic that has it again in position to make a title run.

"We bring it every practice with energy, and work together offensively and defensively," he said. "I think that makes up for our size."

Catch the Highlanders when they take on Rochester Hills Stoney Creek at 7 p.m. Feb. 12 at home.

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