

Crittenden Press Rocket Basketball Preview with Coach Denis Hodge

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CRITTENDEN COUNTY BOYS

The Rocket basketball team gets started in early January. Pictured are (front from left) manager Lance Kayse, Trace Derrington, Hayden Adamson, Ben Dobyys, Tyler Boone, Gabe Mott, Braxton Winders, Preston Turley, Preston Morgeson, Maddox Carlson, videographer Eli Hankins, (back) head coach Denis Hodge, coach Ethan Hill, Tucker Atchison, Jacob Hutchison, Turner Sharp, Gabe Keller, Tanner Beverly, Travis Champion, Tristan Davidson, Seth Guess, Jace Adams, Austin Hankins, Jaxon Hatfield, coach Gaige Courtney and coach Devin Belt.

Crittenden County has finished either first or second in the Fifth District in five of the last seven seasons. The Rockets will put on the floor one of its best teams of the previous decade and will expect nothing less in this COVID-altered season.

Basketball season officially begins in Crittenden County on Tuesday, Jan. 5, the first day students are scheduled to return to class from the holiday break. The KHSAA postponed the start of season for more than a month because of a spike in virus cases in November and early December.

While Rocket basketball coach Denis Hodge concedes that the virus may indeed shape the whole season, he's ready to talk about things more athletic in nature, and that's his boys.

Toughness is a word that perhaps most accurately characterizes his ball team. A veteran club with plenty of skill gives Coach Hodge reason to be optimistic. The longtime skipper is quite confident that a simple approach can help this team have a winning season.

"For veteran teams the common denominator is that if they don't turn the ball over and don't foul on defense, they're successful," Hodge says.

Seniors Gabe Mott and Preston Turley will be the centerpieces to a club that went 16-17 last season. Both are double-digit scorers who have already scored more than 1,000 points in their careers. Turley is a big time rebounder, too, and is almost unstoppable one-on-one.

"He does so much for our team," Hodge said, describing what the hulking figure of almost 6-foot-6 and 275 pounds will mean for the Rockets.

Mott is equally important to the team's persona. The point guard already has a number of collegiate offers.

"I said when he was a freshman that I was going to put him in the game at point guard and take him out when he graduated," Hodge recalls.

Good news for Mott is that there's some help behind him. Freshman Travis Champion is an emerging heir apparent to the position and Hodge is confident enough in the ninth grader that he can give Mott a break from time to time.

Sophomore Preston Morgeson is one of the best defenders in the region, the coach explains, and he's a good shooter. Morgeson along with seniors Tyler Boone, Braxton Winders and Hayden Adamson are among those who will be starting or in the regular rotation.

Adamson handles the ball and shoots well. His offseason development has put the 11th grader in contention for a starting nod. Boone and Winders have been key cogs in the lineup for three years and their roles will be much the same.

Boone is healthy for perhaps the first time to start basketball season and Winders is a versatile player who can go in at any position.

Senior Ben Dobyns will also be a key contributor as one of the team's best pure shooters.

Junior Maddox Carlson is what Hodge calls a classic post player who moves very well up and down the floor. Classmate Trace Derrington has brought a great deal of confidence onto the floor, the coach said, and will be counted on as a contributor this season.

The Rockets finished runnerup last season to Lyon County in the Fifth District, but beat the Lyons at Rocket Arena during the regular season. The Lyons are among the top two or three teams in the region, according to some polls, and Hodge said Trigg and Livingston will also field competitive teams.

Rockets Roster

No.	Name	Ht	Wt	Pos	Gr		
1	Preston Morgeson	5-6	121	50	G	10	
2	Travis Champion	6-0	144	G	9		
3	Braxton Winders	5-10	219	G/F	12		
4	Gabe Mott	6-1	174	G	12		
10	Tanner Beverly	5-10	154	F	11		
11	Tristan Davidson	5-9	146	G/F	11		
12	Tyler Boone	6-2	218	F	12		
14	Hayden Adamson	6-0	162	G	11		
15	Ben Dobyns	5-10	196	G/F	12		
20	Maddox Carlson	6-3	204	F	11		
22	Trace Derrington	5-11	150	G	11		
23	Seth Guess	5-7	152	G	10		
31	Preston Turley	6-5	122	73	C/F	12	

Rocket Results

UNDER COACH HODGE

2011-12	11-20
2012-13	15-16
2013-14	9-21
2014-15	16-12
2015-16	5-24
2016-17	7-24
2017-18	7-20
2018-19	11-19
2019-20	16-17

CAREER TOTAL 97-173