

STORIED CJ POWER PROGRAM

Chaminade-Julienne's girls basketball team has produced pro players and state titles

BY HALEY JENA

A tradition of excellence is eager to find resurgence under a new coach for the Chaminade-Julienne varsity girls basketball team.

Randy Duff, who recently left his post as head coach for the varsity girls basketball team at the Miami Valley School after 15 successful years, says the team is already in the gym preparing for the upcoming season. "We continue to train year-round in hopes to get our athletes stronger with skill building and with all the valuable building blocks that will help us have a successful, different style of play," Duff says.

The team is working to bring back its reputation of athletic superiority in Ohio that has produced three excellent women basketball players in the past: Tamika Williams, Megan Duffy and Samarie Walker. All three are CJ graduates who went on to play collegiate and professional basketball. Today, Williams is the assistant women's basketball coach at the University of Kentucky; Duffy is the head women's basketball coach at Miami University; Walker is assistant coach to Duff at CJ. The school has also produced three girls basketball state titles in 18 years, including Division II championships in 1999 and 2003



and a Division I title in 2005.

Duff says the reason the school has had so much success in the past with championships and producing professional athletes comes from a multitude of factors, varying from skill development to talent and more. "If you're gonna win a state title you have to have a good coach, a good system, good players—and you've gotta have some luck," Duff says.

Mandy Myers, the preceding head coach, initially led CJ to success and sustained the tradition of excellence that the Eagles were accustomed to, but the team hasn't had a winning record since the 2012-2013 season. This struggle experienced by a team with the potential for greatness is what attracted Duff to leave Miami Valley and pursue the head coach position at CJ. During his tenure at Miami Valley Duff was named Southwest Ohio Coach of the Year twice, conference Coach of the Year and district Coach of the Year seven times and was inducted into Miami Valley's Athletic Hall of Fame in 2014. "I made up my mind that I didn't have any challenges left for me at Miami Valley," Duff says. "We accomplished everything we could at that point. I didn't know if I was gonna come back to coach or not, but when I saw the job posting at CJ I knew I wanted to go

The Chaminade-Julienne girls basketball program has a tradition of excellence.

for it. I grew up in parochial school so the ability to coach at a Catholic-based school was one I wanted to pursue for personal and professional reasons," Duff says.

"There's a tradition of excellence at CJ—they have been down the last few years, but the opportunity to get in here with a program that had been so storied was incredible," he says. "I'm a goal-setting type of personality who's intrigued by challenges."

Through this team's challenge Duff is hoping to vault the Eagles to success this winter.

"I'm cautiously optimistic for this upcoming season," Duff says. "Yesterday our athletic director gave me the season schedule. It's a good but brutal schedule that will bring challenges to surface, but will do well to prepare us for the postseason tournament. But we definitely have the talent here to win championships—there's no doubt in my mind."

Duff expects long-term success for the team. "All of my players who walk through that gym door every day of practice are having a lot of fun and they all love to compete," Duff says. "As long as I have kids coming in that love to compete then CJ womens basketball will do just fine." ■