

New coach begins season

By Andy Heintz

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Jerad Johnson began his first year as head of the Colby High Eagles' basketball program this week, the third coach in three years for a boys program that finished 7-14 last year.

The boys began practice on Monday at the high school gymnasium. Johnson is a long-time assistant coach of the Eagles' varsity football team and played football at Kansas State University.

The coach follows Jon McKee, who resigned last spring, saying he wanted to spend more time working on the farm. The new coach was hired in April.

Like McKee, Johnson is a non-teaching coach who works part time. A Colby native, he is a crop consultant for Tubbs Ag.

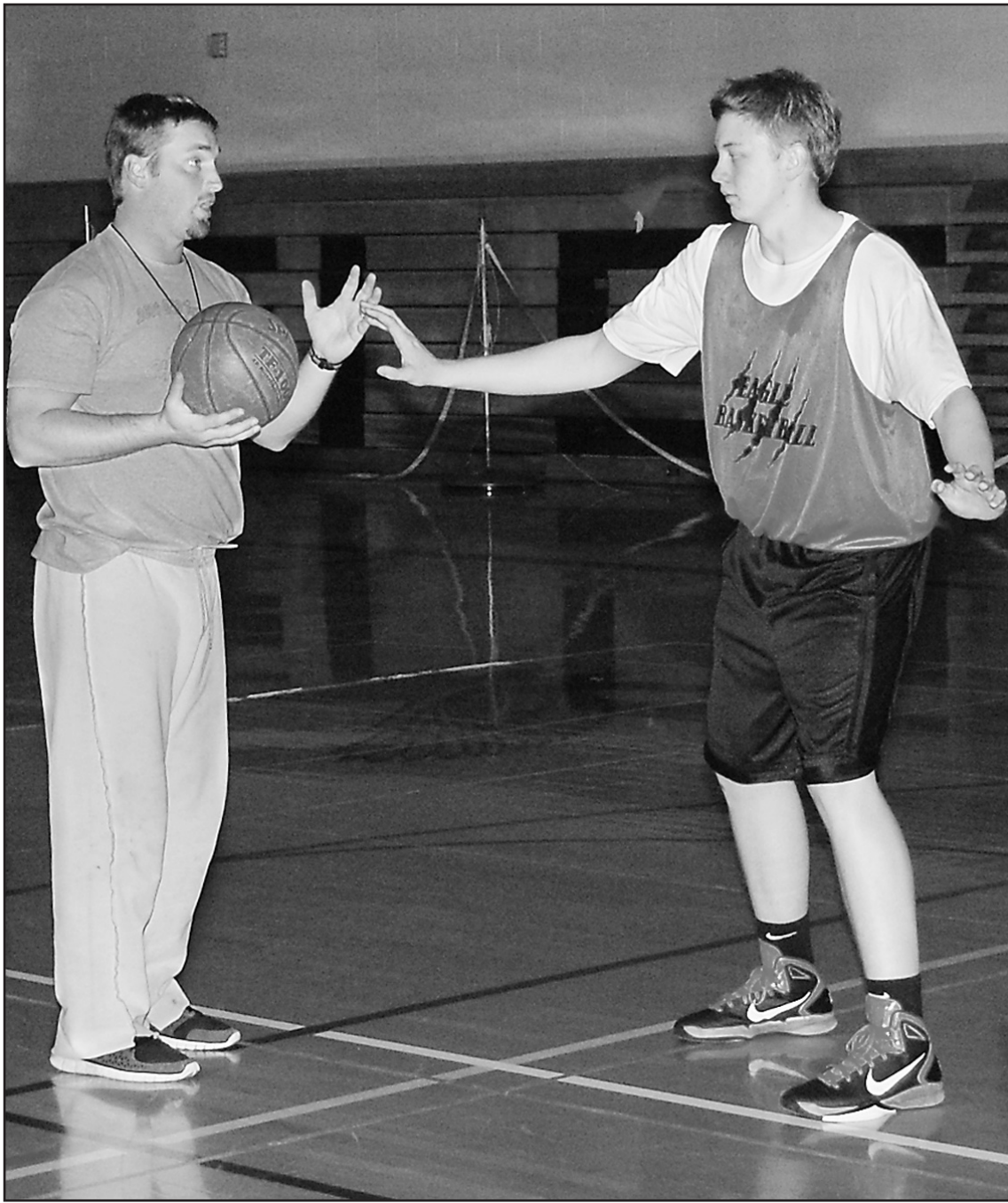
Johnson has a handful of seniors and juniors who saw a lot of varsity time last season, including seniors Corbin Stephens, Spencer Tubbs, Kale Amberger and Andrew Ketchum and junior Braden Sager.

Stephens was the team's leading scorer, averaging over 11 points per game. Some highlights from his junior year include scoring 19 points on six-for-nine shooting in the Eagles' 56-47 victory over Oberlin. The senior hit scored 17 in a 49-42 win over St. Francis and a 68-63 overtime win at Hoxie.

Stephens' multitude of skills on offense make him a headache for opposing defenses. He is capable knocking down three pointers and mid-range jumpers, but he also can score on dribble-drives to the basket and reverse layups. His combination of speed, size and strength allows him to play guard or forward.

Tubbs, a 6-foot-7 post player, started part of the time last year. He was second on the team in blocks and played a large role in Colby's win over Hoxie, scoring 13 points on 6-of-9 shooting and making some critical shots toward the end of the game.

Amberger was an off-and-on starter. The highlight of his season came against St. Francis when he hit three big three-pointers in the fourth quarter that helped propel



Colby High basketball coach Jerad Johnson talked to the Eagles' post players while being guarded by senior Spencer Tubbs on Thursday at the high school gymnasium.

the Eagles to a victory. Ketchum was one of team's best defenders and Sager provided Colby with scoring and rebounding in inside.

Colby will be looking to replace graduates Braden McKee, Jon McKee's son, Ryley Haas and Chaz Winger. McKee led the Eagles in rebounds and blocks. Winger was the second leading scorer, averaging eight a game and Haas was the team leader in three-pointers.

Johnson said practice has been

going well so far, adding that he saw a lot of good things while watching Colby games last year. The coach said he has coached many of his players in football and he knows what they are capable of as athletes.

While watching games last season, the coach said, he saw guys not doing as much as they are capable of and players being asked to do more than they could. Johnson said he likes to push the ball down

floor and wear opponents out. He added that the Eagles' offensive strategy will depend on what kind of team they're facing. The coach said he wanted his team to set the pace that is right for them in each game.

Johnson said his team's defensive style will depend on the opposing offense, but he said he prefers man-to-man defense over zone. He said players tend to stand around when playing zone.

Lady Eagles' coach has veteran players

By Andy Heintz

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Colby High girls basketball coach Parker McKee will finally have a veteran team this season.

Many of the green freshman and sophomores he coached two years ago are now juniors and seniors with two years of experience at the varsity level. The Lady Eagles finished 16-7 last season, fighting their way to the finals of the Class 4A substate last season, only to lose to undefeated Cheney 56-35.

McKee said practice has gone well, adding that his seniors have played a leading role in making sure his team has good practices.

"They know what's expected of them," he said.

Defense was the trademark of last year's team. The Colby squad's stifling defense often caused their opponents to turn over the ball, leading to a lot of transition baskets.

Seniors Kayla Hockersmith and Katrina Kaus were among the team's most prominent defenders.

Hockersmith showed a knack for stealing the ball all year. She had 12 steals in Colby's 44-27 win over Kingman in the first round of the substate tournament.

The coach said he always has Kaus guard the best offensive player on the other team.

"She's a smart defensive player," McKee said. "Playing defense is hard work. She likes the challenge."

Senior Katherine Kaus, Katrina's twin, was the team's most consistent offensive player last season, averaging about 10 points per game. Kaus posed an inside-outside threat to defenses. She could post up on smaller players and she could take other players outside where she could beat them off the dribble.

One of Kaus' best performances came against St. Fran-

cis, where she posted a double-double, scoring 18 points and grabbing 10 rebounds. Her performance helped ensure a victory for the Lady Eagles.

Junior Morgan Bell really came on near the end of the season. A three-year varsity player, she scored 19 points on eight-for-10 shooting against arch rival Goodland last season. She scored a team-high 14 in Colby's 42-30 victory over Clearwater in the second round of substate. Parker said Bell's late-season performances came from hard work in practice.

Hockersmith played a key role on offense. The Lady Eagles' point guard averaged about eight points per game last season. Sophomore Lauren Bell, Morgan's younger sister, and senior Kelsey Shields cracked the starting five at different times during the season. Shields is a solid passer who occasionally provides her team with some points, the coach said.

McKee said Lauren is one of the hardest workers on the team.

Alexa Haas saw a lot of time on court as a freshman. A lightning-quick point guard, she could run the offense when Hockersmith was on the bench. Haas moved away earlier this year, however, leaving a spot open at backup point guard. The coach said Morgan Bell can play the position and junior Brenna McKee is also capable of running the offense.

The coach said sophomore Carly Kriss provides a strong body inside, presenting a tough matchup for defenders.

Seniors Caitlyn Wark and Amy Schroeder decided to come out for basketball. Wark played her freshman and sophomore seasons and Schroeder her freshman year. The coach said Wark, who signed to play tennis at Fort Hays State on Tuesday, has a lot of raw talent and Schroeder has looked good in practice.

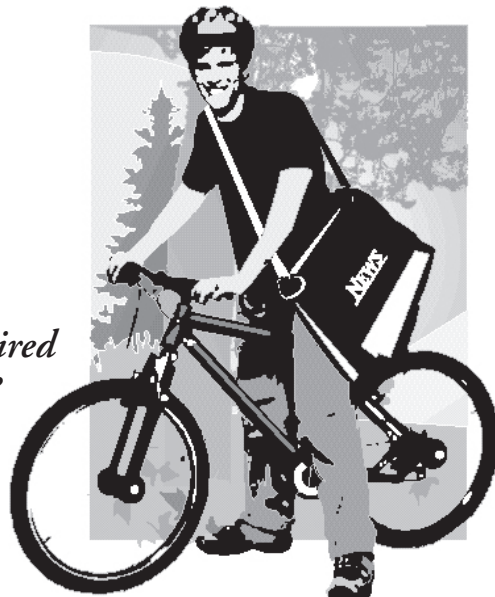
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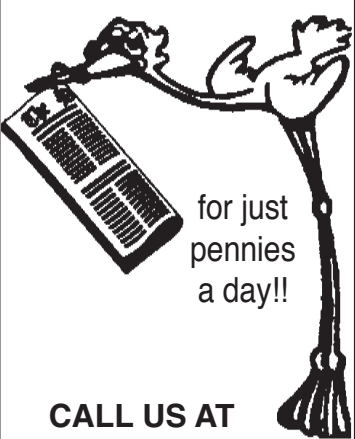
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