

# Trauma turns to dream for new Colby coach

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One of Colby High's finest state tournament wins haunted Ryan Becker for more than six years.

"As a coach, it was just one of those games that never sit well with me," Becker said after his Columbus High girls team dropped a double-overtime 4A state semifinal to Colby that ended his 2007-08 basketball season. "I couldn't even watch the video of that game until a couple of months ago. But I decided it was time to excise those memories."

Becker also decided if he couldn't erase this nightmare, then why not pursue a dream. His coaching path from Columbus to 6A Wichita South to Colby has taken some unusual turns, including a four-month journey into Alaska that only ended in October.

"I have family up there, so I spent four months doing nothing but manual labor," he explained. "Building cabins, digging for gold, things like that. I didn't have as much digging for gold as I would have liked, but it did help me remember what hard work really is. And my feeling is if you're willing to work as hard as you can, eventually you will get what you

want." Becker always wanted a return to western Kansas, where he's spent some of his 17-year basketball coaching career. He's also always admired the Colby High girls' basketball success which included that 2007-08 4A state championship.

"In many ways, Colby is a dream job for me," the new Eagle girls' head coach said. "I've watched Colby girls basketball for years and seen numerous successful coaches come from there. They have a tradition of good, quality basketball."

Indeed. Since their state title, the Eagles' ensuing six seasons feature 97 victories and only 28 defeats. They posted a 24-2 record in 2008-09, 20-3 three years ago and 26-11 during these past two campaigns.

All five starters graduated from last year's 13-6 Eagle squad. Yet Colby's girls have still earned a Class 4A Division II No. 7 state ranking from the Kansas Basketball Coaches Association.

The pressure of high expectations are just fine with Becker, who enjoys rival crowds directing their jealousy at his basketball team.

This North Dakota native still recalls making long journeys to



New Colby High girls basketball head coach Ryan Becker, right, instructs some of his players during a pre-season practice. The Eagles make their varsity season debut on Thursday at Hays.

one of pro sports' noisiest venues — the Minneapolis Metrodome — where he watched World Series champion Minnesota Twins teams in 1987 and 1991.

as a coach, I've always loved going into hostile environments," he said. "Let's go in someone's house

and make it as quiet as possible. Figuring out how to persevere through this and other adversity are good life lessons. As far as I'm concerned, those lessons are as important as whether we put a ball in the hoop."

However, Becker sees plenty of talented Eagles who can put a basketball through the hoop. His season-opening varsity roster will feature seniors Abby Friesen (5'11") and Haileigh Shull (5'9"), juniors Hannah Strange (5'10"), Hailey Schindler (5'11"), Darby Sager (5'11"), Kelly Sloan (5'7"), Shaila Giebler (5'6") and Brooklyn Bange (5'4"); sophomores Brenly Terrell (5'8"), Lara Stephens (5'8") and Brielle McKee (5'4").

Becker believes his Eagles will be versatile enough to win a defensive skirmish or "outscore someone 70-65."

"Our bench will be deep. We have a lot of girls who can play," he concluded. "But I'm not sure what style we will be playing. The style will be what the girls play best, not something that's worked for someone in the past."

Colby tips off its season on Thursday (4:45 p.m.) against Great Bend in the 31st annual Gerald Mitchell Hays Shootout. The tourney concludes Saturday.

## Eagles join rated teams in tourney

The Colby High girls will be one of four state Top 10-rated teams entering this weekend's 31st annual Gerald Mitchell Hays City Shootout.

Colby (13-6 last season) has earned a Class 4A Division II No. 7 ranking from the Kansas Basketball Coaches Association. The Eagles make their season debut on Thursday (4:45 p.m.) against Great Bend, unrated but returning eight experienced players who posted a 12-7 record last season.

Win or lose, both teams would advance into Friday 6:30 p.m.

showdowns with 6A No. 6 Garden City (17-4 last season) or Thomas More Prep-Marian.

The other side of this eight-team, three-day tourney matches 3A No. 2 Riley County (17-6) against tourney host Hays (8-10) and 4A Division I No. 8 DeSoto (12-8) challenging a Newton team that finished 20-5 in 2012-13.

These teams would play 3 p.m. semifinals on Friday.

Saturday's schedule features seventh place (10 a.m.), fifth place (1:30 p.m.), third place (1:30 p.m.) and championship (5 p.m.) games.



A Colby Middle School eighth-grader drove past four Hays defenders to the basket during Colby's 30-23 "A" game victory.

## Eagle girls soar past visiting Hays

The Colby Middle School eighth-grade girls took charge before halftime and never let go of a 30-23 "A" basketball win over Hays Thursday afternoon in Colby.

No other results were available before press time today, but hopefully will be included later this week.

Thursday's sports action:  
Wrestling: Dodge City at Colby, 6 p.m. Girls-boys basketball: Colby at Hays Shootout, 3 and 4:30 pm. Junior high basketball: Oakley at Colby (eighth), 4 p.m. Junior high basketball: Cheylin at Triplains-Brewster, 4 p.m. Junior high basketball: Golden Plains at Palco in Damar, 4 p.m.

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**Dr. Sukchan Lee**  
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**Dr. Vivek Sharma**  
Monthly

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

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