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Bentley Basketball Starts Strong

Submitted by Clay Kallam



Nate Ellis Photo provided

The Phoenix is on the rise: the Bentley men's basketball team is coming off its best year ever, and started the 2012-13 season with 10 straight victories, two tournament titles, and a signature win.

The Phoenix faced a perennial Division V power in the finals of the Redwood Classic in Boonville, and stared down the Branson Bulls in a 54-51 thriller.

Senior guard Nate Ellis was MVP of the tournament, and Rob Rafeh was named the top coach, but Bentley got solid performances up and down the lineup.

"We're much deeper than last year," said Rafeh about his group, which lost just one starter to graduation.

Ellis, a senior guard, is joined on the perimeter by sophomore Blake Kami, who steadily improved as a freshman starter last season. Sophomore Josh Ross has "really improved defensively," said Rafeh, "especially when it comes to team defense."

Malcolm DeFrantz started last year but the senior has yet to play this season due to a knee injury; he is expected back in January.

A trio of juniors, Ian Kirby, Vaughn Arterberry and Jack Coburn, will assume bigger roles this season.

DeFrantz, who played on the varsity team as a freshman, has seen the changes in the program since Rafeh took over last year. "Before, basketball was not taken too seriously," he said.

Now, however, Bentley is looking to build on success. "We set a precedent for Bentley basketball," said DeFrantz, "and we've established that even though we may not be the most talented, we work the hardest."

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