

# Big efforts the key to Titans' successful season

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MatchupUT.com

On the first day of practice for the Olympus girls basketball team, coach **Kael Ashton** liked what he saw.

On the other hand, he didn't like what he didn't see.

Ashton had a lot of talented players, but not a lot of height. There were a couple of 5-foot-11 players (**Arielle Meredith**, **Crystal Faletoi**), but too many Utah schools these days have more than that.

It would take a special effort for Olympus to be among the state's elite.

"We were smaller than everyone we played," Ashton said. "We knew we had to play hard."

And they did. When the season was over, Olympus had finished with a 13-9 overall record and earned third place in Region 6 with a 7-5 mark. The Titans made the 4A state tournament, beating Logan in a play-in game before falling to Timpanogos, which finished second overall.

"The region was better than I thought it would be, and it showed in the state tournament," Ashton said.

Woods Cross and Highland automatically qualified for the tournament by finishing 1-2 in the region standings. The Titans and Bountiful earned wins in their play-in games. Woods Cross stayed around the longest, reaching the quarterfinals before losing to Mountain Crest.

Woods Cross was easily



Coach Kael Ashton speaks to his team during a timeout. The Titans' crew learned quickly they had to work harder than opponents to be successful.

### Season highlights

- \* - Came together as a team
- \* - Seven-game winning streak
- \* - Furious rally against Woods Cross
- \* - Qualified for 4A state tournament

the elite team in Region 6, led by Xochian Harry. The Wildcats were unbeaten in region games, but got their worst scare by Olympus on the Titans' "Senior Night."

Olympus trailed 30-9 at halftime, but rallied in the second half before falling, 49-46. Every player had fond memories of that contest.

"We talked about cutting the lead to 10 points by the start of the fourth quarter," Ashton recalled.

Meredith scored nine of her 10 points in the third period, but Woods Cross still led, 35-23.

"At the quarter, I just told the kids to come out of the gates and go on a 6-0 run," he said.

And they did. The last minutes of the game were the most exciting of the season.

"That was the most unbelievable comeback I've ever been part of," said Ashton.

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## OLYMPUS BASKETBALL: 2009-10 season recap

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Oly's players agreed. Ashton thought the Murray game, a 44-40 win, was also impressive. The Titans grabbed a commanding 32-17 lead at halftime before hanging on for the win.

"If we could have put that first half (Murray) with the Woods Cross second half, that would have been fantastic."

Clearly, the best part of the season was Oly's seven-game winning streak midway through the year. The Titans averaged 42.7 points per game for the season, but in that stretch they reached 60 once and narrowly missed two other times.

The Titans started the season slowly. Ashton said he had just two returning starters – **Amanda Dibblee** and **Carly Duckworth** – and the team took a while to start working together. The Titans dropped three straight in early December, but whipped Copper Hills just before Christmas and didn't lose again for over a month.

"Some of the girls got more confidence," Ashton said. "They started trusting each other more and they got tough mentally."

Dibblee was the team's leading scorer, averaging 9.4 points per game. But she got plenty of help from sharpshooter **Shannah Bass** and Meredith, who provided some scoring punch inside. Meredith was also the team's top rebounder.

Duckworth, **Karla Brown** and **Hailey Parkin** each discovered their roles, and Duckworth became the team's inspirational leader. She also had a habit of hustling after rebounds and was the team leader in steals.

Ashton said Faletoi was the "most improved."

"There was no drama on this team," said Ashton. "They were a great group and they worked their tails off. They wanted to be here."

Oly obviously had trouble with teams who were bigger – or more physical – and that led to losses to Woods Cross and Highland. Their only other region loss was to Stansbury, a first-year school which ended up doing far better than expected.

"We played really good games in region," Ashton said. "I felt it prepared us pretty well for state."

The Titans edged Logan in their first state game, but had matchup problems in their next game at



**TOP: Karla Brown drives to the basket.**

**LEFT: Hailey Parkin and Amanda Dibblee.**



**Arielle Meredith**

Timpanogos, which featured 6-2 Morgan Bailey. Oly played good defense, but their shots didn't drop and that led to their exit.

Overall, though, Ashton called it a successful season. The team's 13-9 record was the same as the previous two seasons and it was the fifth straight year the Titans finished above .500.

The table is also set for next year, when Meredith and Faletoi are expected to return and the team has several talented underclassmen who will join them. Girls like **Sterling Bo**, **Janie Egan**, **Lilly Besler**, **Jennifer Nichols**, **Kelly Larsen** and **Kenzie Droubay** received various amounts of playing time this year.