

# Jags' success makes team a popular topic

By Bruce Smith  
MatchupUT.com

Coming off their 5A state championship season, West Jordan's seniors knew a lot would be expected from them this year.

The pressure started even before the first day of practice. It didn't come from the team's coaching staff either, but from West Jordan's fellow students.

"They asked us how we were going to win with all of our starters gone," said guard **Jesse Herrin**. "There is always pressure from the fans, but they make it fun to play."

The 2008-09 season was a dream for the players, and ended with them celebrating the title on the E Center floor with a win over heavily favored Lone Peak. Later, the festivities continued as the team bus enjoyed a police escort back to the school.

"That bus ride was great," said **Tyler Kiesel**. "We had all the windows down and were yelling out at people. It was really cold, but it was great."

Twelve police cars – and motorcycles – took the team home with its shiny new trophy. But the Jaguars only had a short break before Herrin, Kiesel, **Andre Ashton**, **Josh Woodruff**, **Adam Hawker** and team manager **Ian Marsh** had to answer a lot of questions and start preparing for another year.

"Basketball made it possible to meet a lot more people (students), that's for sure," said Woodruff.

For a while, they basked in the glory. Even during the 2009-10 season, posters and photographs of last year's tournament win were hung on the school walls. It was the school's first boys basketball title since 2001, and the second in the school's history, which dates back to 1982.

Playing in those off-season tournaments seemed to help. The Jaguars answered their fans by posting a 15-8 overall record, taking second place in Region 3 and reaching the second round



Andre Ashton set the school record for assists, meaning he was always had his eyes open for an open teammate.

of the 5A state tournament. West Jordan opened the year with an impressive 73-48 win over last year's 4A state champion – West – and captured nine of 11 home games.

The season ended with a loss to Davis. Coach **Scott Briggs**, and the team's seniors, felt that if they had won that game, they could have won their next one (against Copper Hills) and played for the title for the second straight year.

"We were coming off a state championship season, and a lot of people didn't expect much out of us," said Herrin, who battled a mid-season

*Continued on next page*

## WEST JORDAN BASKETBALL: Senior memories



The 2008-09 title chase was one of this group's highlights.



Jaxon Knighton, Andre Ashton and Jesse Herrin join teammate D.J. Tialavea in cheering on their team late in West Jordan's 2009 championship game win over Lone Peak.

### Continued from previous page

concussion. "We competed. We surprised a lot of people and bucked the odds."

Let there be no doubt about that. In fact, with Briggs constantly drilling the team on fundamentals, successful teams have been a tradition at West Jordan. This year's club added to the school's streak of 11 straight winning seasons, and the Jaguars have reached the state tourney every year since 1995.

This year, however, was different, and the team had to work harder to develop a synergy on a roster that included the five seniors, but



Andre Ashton stares down a Murray defender while Josh Woodruff waits for a pass.

Continued on next page