

## Character counts

Written by Deb Egenberger

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### **Swede boys set new records in season of ups and downs.**

“Sports do not build character. They reveal it.”

—Heywood Hale Broun

Through a season of highs and lows for the Gothenburg boys basketball team, one element held true for all players each time they stepped on the court.

“The highlight of the year had to be playing our best basketball at the end of the season and making it to the district final,” said Swede coach Roger Koehler. “But what I’m most proud of with this team is the character of the kids. Even when we were struggling, they still came to practice every day with a positive attitude and they represented themselves well everywhere we went.”

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It's the life lessons, Koehler said, that will matter most in the long run.

"Don't get me wrong, we went into every game with the desire to win," the coach said. "The fact that they're learning valuable life lessons along the way is the real purpose of extra curricular activities, though."

Lessons such as continuing to battle even when things aren't going your way, accepting your individual role, never giving up and winning or losing with dignity will be the parts of Swede basketball that last long into adulthood.

The wins were fun too, Koehler said, especially in the post-season.



Gothenburg finished the year with a 9-14 record, a C1-11 sub-district title and an appearance in the district final.

"Except for three or four, we were in every game," Koehler said. "We just needed a little more luck, a few more things to go our way."

Still, the Swedes set three team records, three individual records and notched two spots on the all-time scoring list.

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The most surprising team record, Koehler said, was best two-point field goal percentage for the season.

Making 439-of-819 as a team for 53.6% takes over the record from the 51.7% recorded in the 2005-06 season.

“It’s surprising,” Koehler said, “because with a shooting percentage like that, you’d think we would have won more games.”

Part of that high percentage, he said, came from a team-conscious offense that worked for the best possible shots.

Another part is thanks to high-percentage attempts taken inside the paint by the team’s leading scorers.

The other two team records came in the block category.

The Swedes had 14 blocks against Chase County in the sub-district for most blocks in a game and totaled 138 for the season.

“That’s bound to happen when you’ve got 6-foot-8 and 6-foot-7 guys in the middle,” Koehler said. “We could pressure the outside because we knew we had size inside to stop penetration.”

Those two players, sophomore Tanner Borchardt and senior Logan Koehler, now also have the individual block records.

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Borchardt tied the school record for blocks in a game with eight against Chase County.

Logan Koehler swatted 58 shots this year to improve his own record for most blocks in a season and his career total of 153 is also a school best.

Logan also slips into the Top 10 in scoring for both a season and a career.

The three-year starter is now No. 6 for points in a season with 334 and No. 8 in career points with 761.

“Logan has led us in most stat categories the past two years,” the coach said. “He’s become a good all-around player and this year developed a good sense of seeing the court. That just seemed to enhance his unselfish play.”

In addition to being the scoring leader, Logan also had the most rebounds, most assists and most steals.



“He’s definitely a player who will be difficult to replace,” the coach said.

Two fellow seniors have made strong contributions to the team as well.

Despite spending eight games on the bench with a knee injury, Aaron Collins was a strong leader.

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“He didn’t miss a practice through his injury and he was always a valuable leader from the bench,” Koehler said. “It helped us to get him back because he aggressively took the ball to the hole and he was tough to stop because of his length and body control.”

And although he was not a scoring threat, Logan Sheets offered a tenacity on the court that was contagious for other players.

“Logan turned out to be a decent basketball player for a kid who never thought of himself as a basketball player,” Koehler said. “And he was a strong leader, especially through the post season.”

Two other seniors made their presence known off the court. Jake Matthies wasn’t able to play because of an injury from football season but Koehler said he showed up all year to help out when he could and Chase Ostergard kept the team’s stats and served as a manager.

“You don’t often find a high school kid who is willing to be a manager,” Koehler said, “but he was just as much a part of our team as anyone else.”

All of those seniors will be missed as Koehler starts fresh next year with new players stepping into leadership roles.

But he’s not starting from scratch.

Borchardt and Blake Ristine return as starters with Connor Schwanz and Ross Ostendorf logging valuable minutes on the court along with Roy Slack and Nathan Graham.

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Said "People often view college as a series of steps to new roles," Koehler