

Experience, skills help Copelin dominate

By Steve Oliver - Progress Sports Writer

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Beginning her fourth varsity season, senior OTHS basketball player Stephanie Copelin is no stranger to the hardwoods. Those years of experience at the varsity level have paid major dividends for the Panthers already as the squad recently completed a sweep of four games in the Taylorville Thanksgiving tournament to take the tourney title.

During the run to the championship, Copelin was in the center of the action, scoring in double figures in four of the five contests and dominating on the boards. Her excellent play during the holiday hoopfest landed her on the All-Tournament team, joining teammates Ally Fore and Taylor Klingelhoefler on the elite squad.

Copelin's height and athleticism first attracted the attention of OTHS coach Ryan Massey when he took over the OTHS girls' program in Copelin's freshman year. She has been a mainstay for the Panthers — and Massey — ever since.

"Stephanie is the only four year starter that I have had," Massey said. "She is a great teammate and a great leader on and off the court. If we continue to get the number that she put up in the Taylorville tournament, we will be tough. She has great versatility — something that is a special commodity in girls' basketball. She can score in the post effectively but can also step out on the perimeter and be equally effective.

"Her rebounding numbers through the first two weeks of the season have been outstanding. She had a career high in one game and was consistently our best rebounder throughout the tourney. So far, she has nearly averaged a double-double — pretty impressive no matter at what level you are playing. We look for her to continue to provide solid leadership and scoring for us in the paint."

"I participate because I love basketball. It has always been interesting to me, and I love the competition," Copelin explained. "I began playing when I was in grade school. I started because my brother (now a member of the McKendree University team) played, and I always looked up to him. Hard work and dedication have contributed to my success the most. Competing in basketball has influenced the way I look at everything. I can see now that I relate most things back to sports. In most cases, this gives me an advantage and a little bit of a different perspective than other people."

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