

BLAZERS REMARKABLE SEASON ENDS SHORT OF A CHAMPIONSHIP

Story by Samuel Sanchez



After a 10-6 start and a three-game losing streak against Smoky Hill, Cherry Creek, and Mullen, the Blazers were on a hot nine-game winning streak, beating powerhouse teams such as Grandview and Eaglecrest until their championship dreams came to an end in the Great 8 to the Thunderridge Grizzlies; 73-49 Grizzlies.

The Blazers rankings in the 5A class were moved from #6 in the preseason to #4 mid season to finally #3 in the playoffs.

Seniors Jalon'e Rice, Alex Peña and Micah Hankins lead the Blazers into what they had hoped to be another championship year. The Blazers have not won a championship since the 2015-2016 season with players like De'ron Davis, Reggie Gibson, and Tyler Stevenson. Jalon'e Rice was part of that team and has had dreams of going back there ever since.

Throughout the season the Blazers averaged 65.4 points per game and had a field goal percentage of 47%, both higher than the national average. They scored an outstanding 1634 points this season.

"At the beginning of the season, there was barely any chemistry between us, but going through the season we started to click and understand each other, and it just brought us together," said Peña.

The Blazers also won the the Tarkanian Classic 2018 this year against the Rangeview Raiders 64-57, and junior Graham Ike was the winning division MVP.

Their biggest win of the season was against Cherokee Trail, winning 64-31. In that game, Ike scored a total of 17 points, and Rice had a field goal percentage of 67% with 6 attempts and 4 made.

Through the season, Ike had the most points scored at 440 out of the Blazer's total 1,634. Meanwhile junior Hezekiah Swanson had total points of 290 and led with 116 assists. Peña had 8 blocks this season and 18 steals.

Their playoff run, though deep, did not end the way they had hoped for. The first week of 5A playoffs the Blazers had a Bye Week or resting week. The following week they played 29th ranked Horizon in the second round of the playoffs, winning 66-53 against the Hawks.

They then played 13th ranked Eaglecrest in the Sweet 16. Eaglecrest came in with a hot start only trailing by three points by the end of the first. But the Blazers potent offense tied down the Raptors, ending their season 72-56 in a packed home court.

Then came the Great 8 at the Denver Coliseum. The Blazers got off to a slow start scoring only 5 points in the first quarter while Thunderridge scored 20 points and kept a steady pace.

After the Blazers had brushed off their dust, the deficit was just too large for them to overcome with Thunderridge leading 39-17 by halftime. Eventually by the end of the game the score ended at 73-49 Grizzlies.

This year was the second time since their last championship three years ago that the Blazers have been defeated in the Great 8.

Though they have been defeated many times each year, they still have hopes that another championship may come sooner rather than later. With a junior class that looks to be bright next season, next year could be the year that the championship thirst will be fulfilled.

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