

# Tyler achieves milestone, wins 500th game as coach

By Grace Logan

sports writer

The Charger basketball team reached a milestone with head coach Drew Tyler's 500th win against Tupelo High School on Jan. 5.

The first regional game for the Chargers was not only one of the first games in the 6A division for the team, but also a win for the Chargers.

"There was so much attention of the fact that Oxford was in 6A sports, so I was just trying to be 1-0 in our 6A basketball, Region II," Tyler said. "I was at 499 [wins] and if we could win on the road it would be 500. But those are more of my players' wins rather than Drew Tyler's wins. I do think we answered a lot of doubt because I don't think many people thought we could beat Tupelo so it was a great feeling to beat Tupelo, be 1-0 in the region and that being the 500th win it does draw more

attention to it, so it was a real good feeling."

Because the win was not on their own turf the Oxford community came together to celebrate Tyler's success at Oxford during the game against Coffeeville. The gym was full of several past players from Tyler's coaching career.

"We got a number [of players] back in a short amount of time and I think that means that those times we spent as a coach, as a player, and now as a friend," Tyler said. "I think there is a bond there, and I think I can call on any one of them on anything and vice versa. It was great seeing them. It meant a lot to me."

Tyler made an impact, not only on the basketball program, but also in the lives of his players, including Oxford basketball alumni Stantavious Ivy.

"He inspired me to stay in the gym and stay off the streets," Ivy said. "I want to thank Coach Tyler for being a great person and inspiring me to do my best."

Ivy went on to play football at East Mississippi Community College and is now an Oxford police officer. Along with Ivy, fellow alumni Jeremy Barr's life was impacted by Tyler's words and lessons throughout Barr's high school career.

"He is, first off, a great father, great coach, was a role model and led by example," Barr said. "He also played the game, so he showed us the correct way to do a lot of things."

The celebration of the 500th win was not only special to Tyler, but also to his past players.

"[Tyler's 500th win] represents all the years of his success, and I am just glad to be a part of it," Barr said.

The emotional night included a presentation of a signed basketball from Tyler's players, the game winning ball

from Tupelo and a plaque in honor of the record. For Tyler, the recognition and appearance by the previous players showed one of his goals had been achieved.

"There are some [players] I don't keep in contact with, so I had a surprise look to see some of them," Tyler said. "I think [500 wins] validates what we are doing within our basketball program, teaching life lessons through basketball."

Despite this milestone, the team has to continue to focus on this season's goal: state playoffs.

"Region tournament is at Tupelo, and for us to get back at the state playoffs, then that would be the twentieth year in a row if we can do that this year," Tyler said. "We want to be one of the better teams in 6A basketball, if not the best. We went on the road. Now we have to prove it at home and win at our own turf in these region games. We want to stack wins on top of wins, and I think that will validate what we are doing."

Tyler's 500th win was a symbol for not only wins and basketball skill level but also the personalities that have come through Oxford High School under Tyler.

"You think back about players, see their faces, think about the highs and lows and different times you had with them," Tyler said. "I think teaching and coaching is about building relationships."

According to Tyler, the number "500" humbled him, and he wants to show his gratitude to OHS and Oxford School District for the opportunity to have that many victories.

"I appreciate the loyalty Oxford has shown me. There is a bond between Drew Tyler and Oxford School District," Tyler said. "The longevity here at the school district means, I think, we are doing things the right way here at Oxford."



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