

District 1 AAAA: No. 9 Chester returns to state playoffs with win over No. 25 Hatboro-Horsham

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By Eugene Rapay

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Chester point guard **Khaleeq Campbell** had his heart broken in half three times last season.

The first was when he went down with an ACL and MCL injury, gluing him to the bench for the rest of the season, as he was limited to just being a spectator.

The second time was when the Clippers went down in the second round of the District 1 tournament, losing at eventual district champion Abington.

With a shot at redemption in the playbacks bracket, his heart broke a final time as he watched

Chester's state playoff hopes dashed by upset-minded Coatesville. The Red Raiders handed the Clippers a two-point loss at home and showed them the door earlier than they would have liked.

"I was hurt, because I went down with an ACL and MCL injury," Campbell said. "The only thing I could do is cheer on my team, and it hurt just watching your team fail, knowing you can't do something to help them out."

Calling it a disappointment would be an understatement. The illustrious Chester program that has seen the state playoffs 43 times in its rich history, saw a number of streaks broken.

Last year marked the first time the Clippers missed the state playoffs since 1992, and their 70-game home court playoff winning streak that dated back to 1980, ended abruptly.

"It was almost unrealistic, like that didn't just happen," Chester head coach **Larry Yarbray Sr.** said. "Guys had to live and learn from it, but from that, a lot of guys put in a lot of work."



Khaleeq Campbell (above) helped Chester get back to the state tournament after watching from the sideline as the Clippers were eliminated last year. (Photo: Mark Jordan/CoBL)



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Campbell returned to the court, joining his teammates and eight other seniors, in their journey to absolve themselves from last year's failure.

On Tuesday night, the Clippers earned a spot in the state playoffs after beating Hatboro-Horsham 56-34 in the second round of the District 1 tournament.

"The team has worked hard," Yarbray Sr. said. "I've got nine returning seniors. It was a bittersweet taste in our mouth last year when we didn't make it, some of the guys didn't forget that. So now, they believe and trust and give a 100 percent. When they do that, good things happen."

Chester took an early lead, with Campbell making his presence felt right away. The 5-foot-7 guard certainly isn't the biggest with five other Clippers standing in at 6-5 or taller, but he was problematic on both ends of the court for the Hatters.

He scored 10 of his 12 points in the first half of the game, doing so in a variety of ways. He knocked down a couple of shots from long range, but also didn't shy away from contact. Campbell attacked the basket and found himself going to the free throw line as a result, where he answered the call every time.

However, Hatboro-Horsham was able to keep up with Campbell and the Clippers early on. Chester held a narrow 12-9 lead at the end of the first.

It wasn't until the second quarter that Chester's high-octane press gave Hatboro-Horsham problems and the Clippers, separation.

Campbell was able to come up with three steals in the first half, spearheading the swarming press that left the Hatters disoriented.

"We're quicker than other teams, and once we play our defense, no team can keep up with us in the open floor," Campbell said. "Our defense leads to our scoring."

Once the Clippers increased the pressure after the first quarter, it allowed them to outscore the Hatters 17-6 in the second quarter. As a result, Chester took a sizeable 29-15 lead going into halftime.

Just because it had a comfortable lead in double figures, Chester wasn't going to feel content just yet. Yarbray Sr. kept the pressure on Hatboro-Horsham all night long, delighted to see the Hatters exhaust all of their time outs.

It was more of the same, using hard-nosed defense to create easy scoring opportunities by finding the open man in transition.

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“They weren’t ready for the full court press, they were shell-shocked,” Clipper forward **Deshawn Hinson** said. “We stayed in it and executed it very well.”

Aside from the press, Chester's obvious size advantage and length helped it dominate the boards for the entire night. The Clippers were able to get a number of second chance points off of offensive rebounds, and hold the Hatters to just one shot by cleaning up on the defensive end.

Hinson went on to chip in a team-high 13 points in the winning effort. Meanwhile, **Stanley Davis** added another 11 points, with eight of them coming from the second half.

As for Hatboro-Horsham, the stingy defense contained its leading scorer **Clifton Moore** to just two points off of a basket early in the game. However, the Hatters saw a glimmer of hope in the play of junior guard **Jay Davis**. Davis finished with a game-high 22 points and was the go-to man for most of the night.

With the weight of last year off of their shoulders, the Clippers know they can't get too complacent with just making it to the state playoffs.

Tuesday night marked the completion of a big goal, but now they're after an even bigger one.

“We're hungry,” Davis said. “We want it more. We're getting back [to states] this year. We're trying to win it, work hard, dedication-- that's all.”

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### **Tuesday's District 1 AAAA Results**

No. 17 CB East 49, No. 1 Coatesville 43

No. 9 Chester 56, No. 25 Hatboro-Horsham 34 ([\*Game story\*](#))

No. 4 Ridley 45, No. 20 Perkiomen Valley 31 ([\*Game story\*](#))

No. 12 Spring-Ford 61, No. 5 Pennridge 58 ([\*Game story\*](#))

No. 2 Plymouth Whitemarsh 60, No. 18 Academy Park 56

No. 7 CB West 42, No. 10 Phoenixville 30 ([\*Game story\*](#))

No. 14 Conestoga 57, No. 3 Downingtown West 51 ([\*Game story\*](#))

No. 11 Lower Merion 64, No. 27 Upper Dublin 48

### **Friday's District 1 AAAA Schedule**

#### *Quarterfinals*

No. 17 CB East @ No. 9 Chester

No. 12 Spring-Ford @ No. 4 Ridley

No. 7 CB West @ No. 2 Plymouth Whitemarsh

No. 14 Conestoga @ No. 11 Lower Merion

#### *Play-Backs*

No. 25. Hatboro-Horsham @ No. 1 Coatesville

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No. 20 Perkiomen Valley @ No. 5 Penridge  
No. 18 Academy Park @ No. 10 Phoenixville  
No. 27 Upper Dublin @ No. 3 Downingtown West

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