

# LUBBOCK CHRISTIAN EAGLES

## THRIVE USING NOAH

*"IF DON MEYER SIGNS OFF ON IT, I'M SOLD"*

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It was last spring when Brad Crow browsed the different booths and demonstrations at an all-state basketball conference. Suddenly, he stopped when he heard a booming but familiar voice. He moved his way to get a better look. There stood legendary coach Don Meyer.

"I've always been a big Don Meyer fan," said Crow, who coaches the Lubbock Christian High School boys' varsity team in Texas. "When he speaks, I definitely listen."

Meyer talked about the Noah system and how it had helped countless teams and players improve their shooting. He also gave a demonstration.

As Crow listened, his mind relived two recent games that wouldn't leave him alone. The games seemed to appear whenever there was talk of shooting or loss opportunities.

The first game was in 2008 when the Eagles advanced to the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS) Class 3A state semifinals and lost on a last-second shot. But it isn't the buzzer beater that haunts Crow. It's the missed free throws. Lubbock Christian was just 4 of 11.

The second game was a bit fresher, occurring only weeks prior to

the conference. The Eagles lost in the TAPPS Class 3A regionals by one point. Again, poor free throw shooting doomed Lubbock Christian as the team had a repeat 4-of-11 performance.

While these games swirled in Crow's mind, he listened to Coach Meyer explain how with Noah, players learn the correct shooting arc and repeat it over and over until it becomes second nature.

"First of all, if Don Meyer signs off on it, I'm sold," Crow said. "But I kept thinking if we had made a few more foul shots... we really thought we had a shot to win it all with those teams."

Crow signed up for a free clinic and soon Rick Turk, a Noah representative, visited Lubbock Christian.

"Noah sold itself," Crow said. "Once we saw the kids shoot on it and how much they loved it, we wanted one. Parents chipped in. Coaches chipped in."

Aaron Stephenson, a 6-1 senior guard, admits he's a typical kid who loves electronics and gadgets. Stephenson leads the team with a 19.5 points per game average.

But when he first experienced Noah, "I couldn't believe the technology.



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Then I got really excited because I knew Noah would give me the opportunity to correct and improve my shooting."

The Eagles have thrived using Noah. As a team, they have increased their foul shooting by more than 10 percent and hit at a clip of just over 70 percent. Their three-point shooting also has improved from 28 percent to 32 percent.

The Eagles score a solid 68 points per game as oppose to 63 from last year.

Those positive adjustments have translated to a 27-4 record (as of Feb. 17). Lubbock Christian defeated Dallas Shelton, 53-51, in the TAPPS Class 3A bi-district playoffs on Feb. 13. Stephenson led the way with 22 points and Hunter Haley added 16.

"Actually, I was talking to one of our starters from last year, and we were comparing our teams," said Stephenson, who played on those heartbreak teams of the past two seasons. "He said we would beat any of the teams from the past four years because we can shoot the ball better."

Crow said this year's team does not have the size or depth of the squads from the past two seasons. "But we definitely are more explosive offensively

this year. Everyone on the court is a threat to score."

And since the Eagles have improved their foul shooting, they have emphasized getting to the free throw line more. That means attacking the basket and pushing the pace. Lubbock Christian averages about 20 free throws per game and had 32 against Dallas Shelton.

"It's a stat we don't keep, but I would guess our fourth quarter foul shooting percentage is better than the rest of the game," Crow said. "We have shot the ball real well down the stretch. I think that comes from confidence and working with Noah."

Coach Crow has also found a unique way to use Noah. When Turk visited for a free shooting clinic, he told the coach about the photo option. Crow has applied the photo option to give players and coaches a look at their spacing and reactions to certain plays.

It's a lot like when a quarterback comes off the field during games and looks at photos of defensive formations.

"It's a great tool to see where your guys are on the court when the shot goes up," Crow said.

As for Stephenson, he along with Haley and Tucker Mack remember the tough playoff losses.



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"I'll never forget those games," he said. "They really stung. But there's not much you can do about it now. You just try to use them to motivate yourself."

That drive has pushed him to use Noah more than 130 sessions and earn a Master I level. He shot 89.2 percent from the line during district play and just under 40 percent on three-pointers in all games. From last season, Stephenson has raised his field goal percentage from 44 percent to 49.2 percent.

"I'd like to play at the next level, but it will have to be self initiated," Stephenson said. "I'm a 6-1 kid, not real tall, not real fast. But I can shoot and score."

Stephenson might soon discover that there are many teams in need of hungry and determined basketball players who can shoot the ball.

