

Senior trio leading historic West playoff run



When Kevin Rankin, Omar Posada and La'Trell Barfield walked off the court following Saturday's Class 5A regional quarterfinal win over McAllen Nikki Rowe, there wasn't much celebrating from the three.

Despite this being the furthest any of the trio has gone in their playoff careers, they expected to have success.

"It feels great, what we've done, what we've accomplished," said Rankin, a senior guard. "But at the end of the day we all know the job's not done. We've made it so far, we might as well try and go all the way

(to the state tournament)."

Just two years ago, a state tournament appearance would have been a pipe dream for a West team that featured three sophomore starters and went 1-15 in district play and 3-24 overall.

Those three sophomores have turned into the backbone of the program, leading West (19-4) to the furthest it's been in the playoffs in school history.

"We've matured a lot since our sophomore year and we've learned a lot," Posada said. "The three of us really have a bond and we learned to play with each other and how to win games. I wouldn't trade those two for anything."

But while the turnaround may be surprising to some, it was never a surprise to the Victoria West coaching staff.

"Even as sophomores you could see the talent," said West assistant coach Cody McDonald. "Every head coach we would play against would comment about how talented Kevin, Omar and La'Trell were, and how high their ceiling could be. You've seen that over these last three years, not just their talent level growing on the court, but where they have grown the most is as young men.

"They trust each other, they don't back down from adversity and they love being around each other. We struggled facing adversity two year's go when they were sophomores but they went through lows and learned from experience. They've had this opportunity and they don't take it for granted."

The leader of the bunch is Rankin. The team could see his talent right away as a sophomore and he has grown into a player that can be counted on to score consistently for the Warriors. Rankin has put in 30 points or more in each of the team's last two playoff games while also being a playmaker for the team.

"He's just a fun player to watch," said West head coach Pat Erskine after the team's win over Roma in the bi-district round. "He scores, he facilitates and he's become that guy that can make other players around him better. The team rises when he gets them involved and then when he needs to, he can also put the load on his shoulders and carry them. We are really fortunate to have a player like Kevin."

Posada provides a steady 3-point punch while also being able to take some of the scoring load off of Rankin and is a very good defender.

The quick-footed Barfield runs the point, getting the team out on fast-breaks, facilitating and provides endless energy on both offense and defense while also being able to get his own bucket when needed.

As juniors, the three helped lead West to the playoffs but lost to Laredo Martin in the first round. But this year has been a season of first's for the Warriors.

West won its first district title this season and Rankin, Posada and Barfield earned their first playoff basketball victories as well. The Warriors also notched wins in the area and regional quarterfinal rounds for the first time in school history.

"The wins, losses, the seasons, over the years it becomes a blur," said assistant coach DeAndre Holmes earlier this season. "But these three

have put the program in a better place than where it was when they started and that's an important thing, and they've done that better than anyone."

The Warriors will take on Leander Glenn 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at Seguin High School in the regional semifinal round. West is ready for the challenge.

The coaching staff knows how special it has been to coach the trio of guards and hopes that they are able to continue their historic run.

"It's the most joy I have experienced as a coach," McDonald said earlier this season. "We do this not only because we want to win championships, which we do. But the most important thing for any of the coaches here is developing young men. The reason they've been able to accomplish this is how they've matured and grown off the court as well as on."