

Building the Pipeline: Muirlands School Spirit Shines Through New JV Basketball Program

Muirlands Middle School has officially launched its brand-new JV sports program, debuting with **Boys JV Basketball** as the first offering. The team practices once a week and competes every Thursday, marking an exciting new chapter for school athletics.

The boys are led by **Paul Baranowski** — “Coach Paul” — current La Jolla High School basketball coach and former middle school science teacher. “It’s been really fun so far,” he shares. When asked about the difference between coaching high school and middle school athletes, Coach Paul smiles: “The players on this team are incredibly enthusiastic.” While their skill level naturally differs from high school players, he notes that “they can pick up on concepts and apply them. Generally, the players are not selfish, they take joy in team accomplishments.”

Although the immediate focus is player development, Coach Paul sees a clear long-term vision: **building a developmental pipeline** for the boys varsity basketball team at La Jolla High and preparing athletes for the next level of competition.

Voices from the Court

The players themselves are thrilled to be part of the new program, proud to represent their school and excited to grow as athletes.

- **Lincoln Duffin:** A five-year basketball veteran who also plays baseball, Lincoln loves the school connection. “*It’s fun to play for the school because Muirlands doesn’t have baseball,*” he explains. As one of the team’s strongest rebounders, he notes that Coach Paul emphasizes moving the ball deep into the paint. Lincoln’s older brother, Lawrence, plays for Coach Paul at La Jolla High, a connection Lincoln enjoys: “*The difference between club and school sports is you get to represent your school. Pretty cool that my brother and I have the same coach.*”
- **James Braverman:** A well-rounded player, James reflects on his performance with a grin: “*I played overall good, I got some assists.*” He highlights what the league provides for young athletes: “*It gives opportunities, conditioning and exercise, friendships, representing the school, and having a great coach.*”
- **Emery Marquardt:** Basketball has been Emery’s primary sport for four years, and he’s energized by the increased intensity of school competition. “*It’s a lot more fast-paced than rec basketball. I was excited to make the team.*” On the tactical side, Emery explains the strategy they are learning: “*We do a man-to-man defense and a 2-3 offense.*”

Thrilling Finish on a Thursday Afternoon

The boys' growing skills and teamwork helped the boys achieve an exciting win during their October 1st matchup.

With just 3:21 left in the fourth quarter, Muirlands found themselves locked in a tight battle, holding a slim two-point lead at 28-26. Needing a spark, Coach Paul sent in the next group off the bench—and they delivered!

Drew Dykhuis and Everett Leek combined for a textbook sequence of teamwork. Dykhuis powered through for a crucial basket, then followed with a flawless pass to assist Leek. Moments later, another basket from Dykhuis stretched the lead to six.

By the time the clock hit 1:27, Muirlands led 36-26. Securing a crowd-energizing victory!

A Growing Program with Community Support

Expanding middle school sports is a new initiative led by Principal Brendan Simon and funded by the Muirlands Foundation. This year, the Foundation is investing in academic, social, and sports programs, and JV Boys Basketball is just the beginning.

Parents who contribute to **Muirlands Gives** are helping build something meaningful: a stronger school community, more opportunities for students, and a true pipeline for future high school athletes.

Support Sports – Donate Today

Your generosity helps fuel programs like JV Basketball and ensures Muirlands students have access to enriching, confidence-building experiences. Thank you for supporting our school community.