

[print](#)

## Cumberland Christian carving a niche in south Cobb

by Carlton D. White  
 cwhite@mdjonline.com  
 12.20.15 - 11:31 pm



AUSTELL — Cumberland Christian Academy's boys' basketball team has already experienced success. During the 2012-13 season, the Patriots embarked on a 12-0 start and went on to win the Independent Christian Schools of Georgia state championship.

This season, however, Cumberland expects to do a whole lot more.

The Patriots are off to a 12-0 start again with aspirations not only for a state title, but a national championship.

“This team has a will that cannot be broken,” said coach Alan Taylor, who is in his fourth season at the helm. “We believe that we can (win a national championship).

“Along with the hard work, these guys fundamentally have a trust in each other. They play with pride and are absolutely not afraid or intimidated by any team they face. They play for each other, and at any point, one guy can take over offensively. More importantly, this team has the ability to stop other teams defensively. This is what will get this team to where it wants to go.”

Leading the Patriots' charge is 6-foot-6 senior forward Robert Kelly, who is averaging 18 points, 12 rebounds and five assists per game, and whom Taylor describes as “the motor” of the team. Kelly is being recruited by Georgia State, Kentucky Wesleyan, North Carolina Wesleyan, Reinhardt and Averitt University, among others.

“Everything we do on offense goes through him,” he said. “He runs the floor and attacks the glass un-like a lot of big men. He is a tremendous defender, natural scorer and his motor never stops.”

Sophomore point guard Roscoe Spruill (19 ppg, 5 apg), junior forward Odera Unigwe (8 ppg, 12 rpg) and senior guards Cornell Fail (15 ppg) and Jaydon Smith (16 ppg.) round out the starting lineup. Christian Gomez, a win player, and centers Caleb Crumli and Isaac Tartel are the main players off the bench.

“Roscoe brings a sense of purpose on the court and is lightning quick,” Taylor said. “Jaydon and Cornell seem to hit 3s at very timely situations and we give them the green light at any time.

“Unigwe has an unbelievable ability to rebound the ball. He had never played basketball before ninth grade, and he's made more strides than anyone in that

time.”

A fully accredited K3 through 12th grade school nestled among McEachern, Osborne, Campbell, South Cobb and Pebblebrook high schools, Cumberland nearly 500 enrolled students and is in its 28th season of varsity boys’ basketball.

Many of the Patriots’ players, at one point or another, spent time in the junior programs of the surrounding schools. Others have been home-schooled while some have grown up at Cumberland Christian.

“We have 100 percent college acceptance in the last six years for our graduates,” Taylor said. “I believe through prayer and the school’s great ability to get kids into college is why we get kids to our program. We’ve always gotten great athletes and great families and we’ve also had great teams.”

Injuries plagued the Patriots who finished 18-7 last year and lost in the quarterfinals of their Region IIAA tournament.

Kelly is enjoying the team’s success this year, and believes it will continue for a while.

“To come out like we have and compete and win shows how good we are,” he said. “I think the key to our success has been our chemistry and how hard we work on and off the court. I love these guys. I feel like we can go all the way and do more at the national championship. We have a lot of talent here.”

Spruill and Fair are new additions to the team. Spruill came from South Cobb, while Fair was at McEachern.

“A lot of the guys have improved from last year to this year,” Kelly said. “All of the pieces just fit together.”

Cumberland’s success was evident during the fall when the Patriots beat Class AAAA and Class AAAAA schools during the preseason.

“They’re typical kids off the court, but when the whistle blows, they turn it on,” Taylor said. “They’re very close off the court and they’re one of the hardest working teams I have had the pleasure of being a part of. They come from a small school, but they play like a Class AAAAA team does. You just know that when you’re watching, you’re going to see something great at any given moment.”

”

**sponsored from around the web**