

# College Sport

in association with the Massey University Journalism School

## St Pat's back 'brotherhood'

SEAN NUGENT

St Pat's Town is not getting carried away with expectations heading into the upcoming season of premier boys' college basketball.

The 2016 Wellington champions started strongly in their opening game against Hutt Valley High School, winning 99-70, and are favourites to retain the Pohlen Cup again.

But coach Brendon Polyblank said the team is not purely focused on winning.

"I just want them to come out hard and give it their best. If we keep our brotherhood tight the results will come."

While he hoped his side could make a strong run at the title, Polyblank believed there would be tough challenges from Wellington College, Scots College, and Rongotai College. Despite almost going unbeaten in pre-season, Polyblank said it did not go as well as he had hoped.

"It was not the pre-season that I wanted, due to commitment from the boys. Many of them were busy with other sports, so it made it difficult to get the right training in."

He also noted Town had lost a number of key players, including Junior Tall Blacks Corey Le'aupepe and Kaeleb Tyner-Wenman, but had recruited well to maintain a strong squad.

"[Corey and Kaeleb] were some of our smartest players but we've got some good pieces added to the puzzle to strengthen the roster."

One of those recruits was 18-year-old Matt Brien, from St Kevin's College in Oamaru.

*"If we keep our brotherhood tight the results will come."*

St Pat's coach Brendon Polyblank

The talented forward was part of the St Kevin's teams that won the national A titles in 2013 and 2016, at the latter of which he was named the tournament's most valuable player.

Brien showed his ability in Town's victory against HVHS, where he hit multiple three-pointers and led the team in scoring.

Town's defence smothered HVHS right from tipoff - something Polyblank said was one of the team's strengths. "We get up and pressure teams and force them into making mistakes. I feel the game is played at 94 feet, not just in the half-court."

Town suffered ankle injuries to guard Jonny Joyce, who Polyblank said had been "unreal" in pre-season, and 2.03m forward Chenfei Xie. Both players could be in doubt for Town's next game against Onslow College on June 9.

In other round one results, Onslow beat Aotea College 94-75, St Pat's Silverstream were 61-57 winners over Scots and Wellington beat Rongotai 91-75.

In the girls' Sharp Cup, St Mary's College started their title defence with an 85-52 win over Queen Margaret College. HVHS beat Wellington Girls' College 89-73, Wellington East Girls' College were 91-64 winners over Aotea, while Tawa College beat Naenae College 97-85.



The St Patrick's College, Wellington, senior basketball team.

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