

# Wildcats Star Exits the COURT

By Kevin Fritz

After a stunning basketball career at Winter Park High School, **Kyle McClanahan** has retired his number 24 jersey and will be moving on to create a college legacy now.

If you ask 17-year-old **Kyle McClanahan** what he considers to be his proudest accomplishment in his stellar basketball career at Winter Park High School (WPHS), he won't mention his record setting point total or his remarkable .750-plus winning percentage. He'll tell you it's about his team reaching the Final Four 6A championship series in Lakeland for two out of four seasons.

"He is a very unselfish player," says **Dave Bailey**, WPHS's basketball coach. "He is a tremendous leader and is going to be tough to replace."

### A Record Career

McClanahan, who stands at 6 feet 2 inches and flashes a charismatic smile, is the epitome of a local success story—but not just for his accomplishments on the hardwood floor. "McClanahan is the perfect example of a student athlete," adds Bailey. "He worked hard on and off the court."

Carrying a 3.8 GPA, the Winter Park Wildcats senior entered what would be his final game needing 19 points to tie the school record. He ended the night with 26, as he tried to bring his team back against Winter Springs in the 6A boy's basketball regional semi-final. But it was not to be. McClanahan would finish his career with a record 1,503 points, breaking the old mark set by his friend **Jordan Bolton**, who now plays for Florida State.

Yet McClanahan did not go into that game to set a scoring title; he went into it to win a championship. "I didn't



Winter Park native Kyle McClanahan was known as a selfless team player at Winter Park High and for being hard working on and off the court.

sophomore, and McClanahan played his first two seasons with **Jeremiah**, who is now a sophomore at Georgetown. "You knew the point record would be in jeopardy," says Rivers. "Kyle's a terrific player, and he has a great feel for the game."

Rivers thinks McClanahan will go on to a successful college basketball career and understands why so many scouts came to see him play. "He is underrated," Rivers says. "I think he is under the radar on how good he is."

### The Freedom to Play

A four-year starter, McClanahan compiled a record of 100-26, reached the championship his sophomore year, the final four in his junior year and regionals as a senior. Among other accolades, he was named to the All-Metro Conference Boy's Basketball Team, receiving the most votes of any player. He also was selected to play in the Florida Athletic Coaches Association (FACA) North-South All Star game, and for Team Florida in the 10th Annual Senior Showcase. In addition, he was named to the first-team All-Orange County Boys Basketball Team and, in 2008, to second-team All-State.

Born and raised in Winter Park, McClanahan is humbled by his success and speaks more of the team and others when asked about his accomplishments. Besides the support of his family, he attributes a lot of his success to his coach.

Indeed, when Coach Bailey came into the picture at the start of McClanahan's junior year, McClanahan had scored just 300 points. In his next two seasons, he would add an astounding 1,203 to that total. "He gave us our freedom," McClanahan says.

With a seemingly bright outlook ahead, McClanahan will soon leave behind his family, his friends and the town he has known all his life. He also leaves behind his old number 24 jersey and a legacy all his own.

"It was sad at first," he admits, thinking about the end of his high school basketball career as well as his impending yet uncertain future. "But," he says smiling, "it's also pretty exciting." ■

even know I was getting close to the record until I read it in the paper the day before the Winter Springs game," he says.

McClanahan recently selected to attend the University of Florida as a preferred walk-on player. He had been recruited by several other schools as well, including Columbia, Lynn, Eckerd and Florida Atlantic.

Winter Park resident **Doc Rivers**, coach of the NBA Boston Celtics and former coach

of the Orlando Magic, says he watched McClanahan play throughout his high school career and was impressed with his abilities. Rivers is the father of two of McClanahan's teammates at WPHS: **Austin** will be a WPHS



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In the 6A boy's basketball regional semi-finals, McClanahan finished his high school career with a shooting record of 1,503 points, in his final game against Winter Springs.