



# ONEIDA MOUNTAINEER

www.oneidaschool.org

A bi-monthly newsletter of Oneida Baptist Institute

January/February 2025

## Basketball Season in Oneida

What could be more iconic than settling in to your favorite seat in a warm gym in winter to cheer on the home team surrounded by the sounds of fans, referee whistles, and the smell of popcorn. There's a lot that goes into hosting a basketball game, providing the time and space for young athletes to exhibit their skills and family and friends to support their efforts. At OBI, our faculty and staff step up to fill the many extra roles, from announcing to security, so that our players, families and guests can have a great experience.

The 2024-25 season for the Mountaineers and Lady Mountaineers has been one of growth. Younger players stepped up their skills while returning players exercised leadership. Head Coach **Larry Gritton, Jr.** ('93) attributed the boys' success to player commitment. He said, "Our players spend lots of time outside of our designated practice times working on their own. They are super competitive and work hard most every practice. Each day with them brings me joy."

*(Basketball continued p. 2)*

*Above: A home game in Sparks Gymnasium.*

*Right: OBI senior cheerleaders, all day students (L-R)—Alexis Hoskins, Charity Carpenter, Paige Hubbard.*



## PLAYER PROFILES



**JACOB ROGERS**  
Freshman

**Position:** Point Guard  
**Where you're from:** Oneida  
**One word to describe your game?** Smooth  
**How many years playing?** 8-9

**How many years playing at OBI?** 3

**Best personal achievement in basketball?** Back-to-back Class A Region Champ; 2023-24 Basketball Most 3 Point FG's 80 and Best Free Throw Percentage 91%; 1000 Point Club 2024-25

**Best part of being on the OBI team?** Getting better everyday!



**BAILEY BRISTOW**  
Sophomore

**Position:** Shooting Guard  
**Where you're from:** Newport, KY  
**One word to describe your game?** Energetic

**How many years playing?** 11  
**How many years playing at OBI?** 2

**Best personal achievement in basketball?** Adjusting to a new team at OBI.

**Best part of being on the OBI team?** The glory we give to God as a team.



**DENNIS ESEMUDE**  
Junior

**Position:** Guard/Forward  
**Where you're from:** Nigeria  
**One word to describe your game?** "Certified"  
**How many years playing?** 2 years in Nigeria, 2 at OBI

**Best personal achievement?** I've been able to get better and learn everyday!

**Best part of being on the OBI team?** The energy and the spirit of the team and celebrating successes!

*(Player Profiles continued p. 2)*



(Player Profiles continued)



**CHARITY  
CARPENTER**  
Senior

**Position:**  
Point Guard  
**Where you're from:**  
Manchester  
**One word to describe your game?** Intense  
**Years playing?** 11

**Best personal achievement in basketball?** Scoring a buzzer beater that tied up the game in my sophomore year.

**Best part of being on the OBI team?**  
Our teamwork on the court.

(Basketball continued)

It is a blessing to be their coach."

Recent winning seasons in 2021-22 and 2023-24 demonstrate that the OBI Boys basketball program under Coach Gritton's leadership is building a solid foundation. The 2024-25 team has worked hard this season to accomplish three goals: win 20 games, win the All A 13th Region Tournament, and advance to the 13th Regional Tournament. Two of their three goals remain possible. They did not win the All A tournament, but they did advance to the semi final round. As of February 10th, the team record stands at 12-11 with eight games left on the schedule.

With a new coach this season and half of its members in middle school, the Lady Mountaineers varsity team is in a rebuilding season. Coach **Jamie Middleton** stated, "We use any positive or negative circumstances as a learning experience. Almost all of our players are just learning to play basketball, and they have improved each week." Sophomore **Bailey Bristow** made two triple doubles this season and set three school records for most points, most blocked shots and most rebounds in one game. □



**JASON ERHUNMWUNSE, Senior**

**Position:** Forward  
**Where you're from:** Nigeria  
**One word to describe your game?** Team Player  
**How many years playing?** 4

**Best personal achievement in basketball?**  
Being ranked number 12 in the state of Kentucky in rebounding.

**Best part of being on the OBI team?**  
Getting to play basketball with people of different races and cultures!

**GRACE SUGPLANG, Senior**

**Position:** Guard  
**Where you're from:** Thailand  
**One word to describe your game?** Determination  
**How many years playing?** 3 (all at OBI)

**Best personal achievement in basketball?** Every shot that goes in feels like my best personal achievement in basketball. As a player who started learning basketball not long ago, adding points to the scoreboard for my team is very rewarding. It makes me feel like every minute I've spent practicing has paid off.

**Best part of being on the OBI team?**

The OBI basketball team is very special to me. I love that before every game, we come together to pray, and after the game, our coach encourages us with Bible verses. Basketball at OBI has taught me not only how to be physically stronger but also how to grow mentally and spiritually. The encouragement I've received has been life-changing. It's taught me not to give up, to push through my limits, and to find hope in every situation.





## Saturday Intramurals Offer Fun, Growth, and Service Opportunity



This was the second year in a row that we offered intramural basketball and cheer for grades K-5 on Saturdays throughout the month of November. OBI Athletic Director **Tony Hall** explained, “We started this program to allow an opportunity for the lower school students to play ball with their friends, teach them fundamentals and keep athletics at OBI.”

This year, we saw about 30-35 kids each week. About half of that number were in grades PreK-2nd grade. Each Saturday session began with learning skills like shooting, passing, dribbling and defense techniques. About halfway through their time, the kids would gather for a short devotional time where they learned about Jesus and sportsmanship. After their break, the kids were assigned to age-based teams to play a four-quarter scrimmage. The teams were divided differently each week to teach the importance of playing as a team no matter who was on your team.

High school basketball players volunteered to assist the coaches each Saturday morning. The older players helped to teach skills to their assigned group of children. During group activities, the older boys modeled the activity and assisted with any stragglers. The cheerleading portion was conducted by the high school cheerleaders and their sponsor. The girls would learn a cheer which they performed at "halftime" of the weekly scrimmage.

Plans are in the works to play interscholastic games against other schools in 2025. Hall concluded, "We look forward to seeing our Lower School Basketball and Cheer programs grow!" □



**Blue & White Night** on November 10th was a great kick-off to basketball season. Students, staff and fans gathered in Sparks Gym to enjoy a night of meeting the teams and cheerleaders and watching Blue-on-White scrimmages and other contests.



The Upper School Choir and Lower School presented the annual **Chapel Christmas Program** on December 13th.



***“Souptacular” Fellowship!***  
Students and staff enjoyed a buffet of homemade soups on the last Wednesday in January. About a dozen staff members participated in cooking and serving their favorite recipes.





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## A blessing for the New Year from Bro. Davidson



*"As we face the new year, may we have a greater vision. May we realize the unreached and undeveloped possibilities. May God's blessings be on us, and may He use us in the promotion of his cause and Kingdom."*

Excerpt from the February 1925 issue of The Oneida Mountaineer.

Born on Bull Skin Creek near Oneida in 1891, **Melvin Davidson** attended Oneida long enough to become a "rural teacher." He was a classmate of **Rev. D. Chester Sparks**, OBI's 7th president who attended OBI from 1910-1913. At age 18, he began teaching in one-room schools in the area. He joined the OBI faculty in 1917 as an elementary teacher and taught for 19 consecutive years. Davidson took classes at OBI to earn his "regular" high school diploma and graduated with OBI's Class of 1924. OBI archives indicate that Davidson married and had at least one child.

In 1938, he left Oneida for five years but continued teaching. He wrote in 1943, "I am returning to Oneida ... for the sake of Him who died on the Cross. For the remainder of my time, I want to tell the story of His love and to help in bringing to our children the blessing of Christian education." When he returned, he became the Bible teacher, a position he kept until he retired in 1961.

Bro. Davidson served as Oneida's Sunday School Superintendent for 40 years and interim pastor for many of those years. At the close of each year, he had students and staff stand in a circle and sing "Blest Be The Tie That Binds." Davidson died in 1963 and is buried on Cemetery Hill overlooking the campus. □

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## In Memoriam

**Douglas Haire, Class of 1996**  
**Randolph Everhart, Class of 1966**  
**Paula Sue White, Class of 1967**  
**Bradley Bowling**, former student  
(a sophomore in 1969)  
**Denise Spencer**, former staff  
**William Speedie**, former volunteer  
(from North Carolina)  
**Sylvia Lewis**, former student  
Sylvia attended elementary school at OBI in the 1930s while her father was a teacher here.