

Basketball Season

The 2025-26 season for the Mountaineers and Lady Mountaineers has been one of resilience. The last regular season game is February 20th, and they head into the district tournament on February 23rd.

The Lady Mountaineers were challenged this season by playing several teams with a higher rating. Head Coach **Jamie Middleton** said, "We became more competitive in those games. Our goal was to improve in some area in each game." The team earned more steals per game than last season and improved in rebounding and points scored. A season highlight for the team was finishing second of four schools at the Amazon Roundball Classic hosted at Louisville Collegiate School.

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PLAYER PROFILES



Jayden Balfour
 Point Guard
 Shooting Guard

A senior from
 The Bahamas

One word to describe your game? Aggressive

How many years playing basketball? 4

How many years playing at OBI? 1

Best personal achievement in basketball?
 Named Most Improved Player at last school.

Best part of being on the OBI team?
 The coaching staff's encouragement means a lot. They tell us to play aggressively but stay positive and have fun. They tell us to be leaders and to remember that we represent the team, OBI and God.

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Blue & White Night is our annual kick-off to the basketball season. OBI fans got together on November 14th to watch a showcase of skills by the cheerleading and basketball teams.



Career Achievements

Tommy Branstutter was recognized for 500 Career Rebounds. He is a junior from Garrard, Ky. and is pictured left with OBI Head Coach **Jared Gray**.

Skyler Roberts (right), a sophomore from Oneida joined the 1,000 Point Club.



(Player Profiles continued)



Jackaylah Lewis Center

A junior from Oneida, Ky.

One word to describe your game? Physical

How many years playing at OBI? 3

Best personal achievement in basketball? Making a double-double in a double overtime game; earning a 49th District All Tournament Team award.

Best part of being on the OBI team? Being an encouragement and a leader for the younger players.

Ryder Salmons Shooting Guard Small Forward

A sophomore from Oneida, Ky.

One word to describe your game? Intelligent

How many years playing at OBI? 4

Best personal achievement in basketball? Winning back-to-back All A Regional Championships in middle school.

Best part of being on the OBI team? The team feels like a family.



Sophia Garcia Silva Point Guard

A sophomore from Brazil

One word to describe your game? Tenacious

How many years playing at OBI? 2

Best personal achievement in basketball? Learning a new sport and getting closer to my teammates.

Best part of being on the OBI team? I get to play with my friends.

OBI Senior Wins WYMT Mountain Classic Scholarship



OBI senior Eden Conder received a \$1,000 scholarship to be applied to college next fall.

The WYMT Mountain Classic Scholarship is an annual award for high school seniors in Eastern Kentucky. Students apply for the scholarship early in their senior year and recipients attend an awards banquet in December in Knott County. This year, **Eden Conder** was among 128 student-athletes from the mountain region to receive the award.

Eden enrolled at OBI in the fifth grade after her family moved to Oneida, Kentucky from Colorado. She recalled, "My mom wanted out of the big city. For me, it was like a culture shock. There were so many trees, and I couldn't understand anyone." Her parents considered the school options and decided on OBI.

Eden's athletic career at OBI began in the 8th grade when one of her teachers who was also the track and field coach talked her into joining the team. "I gave it a shot, and I really liked it," Eden said. She won first place in the triple jump event at a track meet that first season.

Her freshman year, she was recruited for the volleyball team. She went on to play basketball and stayed involved in all three sports throughout high school. She said, "I enjoy how everyone can join because there are no cuts. I like how coaches are patient and take their time when you are new to something."

In addition to earning athletic letters in each of her sports, Eden was named the MVP and Best Defensive Player in volleyball and received the 2024-2025 Athletic Director's Award. Eden is a top scholar who was voted by the faculty the Most Outstanding Girl in her class in grades 9-11. She plans to attend Asbury University to major in political science as her first step toward a law degree.

(Basketball Season continued)

Jared Gray, Head Coach for the boys' JV and varsity is proud of the hard work he has seen from the team this season. He stated, "So far, we have learned a lot as a team. Each and every day we get a little bit better. One thing that I always say to my boys is hard work always pays off, and the small things always add up."

Their hard work has paid off in multiple individual 30-point games. In mid-January, the boys' 7-9 record reflected games played against much larger schools. Coach Gray summarized the team goal for the remainder of this season: "By the district tournament we hope to be over .500. The way these kids work in practice, I believe this goal is more than possible."



Josh Futrell—Class of 1999

Our special guest in chapel on January 16th was OBI alum Lt. Col. **Josh Futrell** with the Army National Guard. Futrell enrolled at OBI as a freshman in January, 1996, when his parents, Robert and Kathy, joined the OBI staff. He recalled, “We had lived in Knox County, so I was used to small towns, but Oneida was out in the middle of nowhere!”

He made the best of it, got plugged into sports and made some friends. He said, “In school here, I was challenged by some great educators like Mr. Walters, Mr. Stockton, Mr. Grant, and Mr.



LTC Futrell with LTC Brandon Davidson and Maj. Tyler Shields spoke with students at lunch.

Spencer, who pushed me to grow and to see things from worldviews not like my own. After school, I watched Mrs. Winters in the grill and learned that caring is the gateway to trust.”

After graduating in 1999, Futrell enrolled at the University of Kentucky as an English major thinking he might teach and coach basketball. By his junior year, he knew that teaching was not his path, so he signed up for the Army National Guard and left for basic training. He noted, “Much like here in Oneida, you meet all kinds of great people in the Army.”

Six months after BCT, he was deployed to Iraq for 15 months. “What I remember most about that first deployment is leadership matters, decisions matter, and the way you spend your time shapes who you are and who your team becomes.”

Following his deployment, Futrell finished his degree and then enrolled in Officer Candidate School. He married his college sweetheart in 2007. He is currently working on a Master’s degree at the Army War College.



Lt. Col. Josh Futrell with his wife, Emily, and their children in chapel.

In chapel, Futrell shared examples from his life and career as he spoke to our students about decision making, habits and resilience. He focused on three main scriptures: Proverbs 27:12, Proverbs 21:5 and James 1:2-4. He summarized, “The decisions we make each day are the foundation for who we are and the key to the opportunity that lies ahead.”

After chapel, students had the opportunity to meet and talk with Futrell and two other officers. We appreciate their time and interest in our young people! □

Jim Smith—Attended in the 1950s

While at the Kentucky Baptist Convention in November, OBI president, Larry Gritton, Jr., met **Jim Smith** who shared memories of his family’s time in Oneida and his years at OBI.

Jim was born at home in McKee, Ky., in 1944, the sixth of 10 children. Their father worked in the coal industry, and in 1946, the family moved to Clay County where a new coal mine at the head of a holler called Greyhound (or Graham) Branch was being opened. The children who were school-age walked to OBI, 3.5 miles from home. Jim’s four younger siblings were all born in the Oneida hospital. In 1953, the family moved to Oneida to be closer to a larger mine.

When the Sparks gymnasium was under construction, Jim, a sixth grader at the time, got caught throwing snowballs through the open windows. “This placed me on the receiving end

of Preston Baker’s infamous Black Betsy, a leather strap he used for discipline,” he recalled.

Jim was in the 7th grade when the family moved to a 160 acre farm in Indiana. His four oldest siblings graduated from OBI, and all 10 children attended for some amount of time.

Jim and his wife, Janet, have been married for 58 years and have three children. Jim earned a chemical engineering degree from Purdue University in 1966 and worked for 5.5 years at the Dow Corning Corporation before moving with his family to Saudi Arabia for eight years.

He returned to Kentucky in 1980 and went into farming, management of the local water company and later served on the Board of Directors of the Kentucky Rural Water Association. He



The Smith family in front of their home on Greyhound Branch.

has served as a Farm Bureau Director for 42 years and a deacon at Whites Run Baptist Church for 43 years.

Jim stated, “I feel that my time at OBI was instrumental to my success in the business world and my well being as a man, husband and father. I am grateful for the years there that helped form me into the person I am today.” □



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In Other News



It was a SOUPTACULAR night in mid-January. About a dozen OBI staffers prepared their favorite soup recipes, and the OBI cafeteria provided grilled cheese and more homemade soup. Students and staff enjoyed sampling and then voting on their favorites of the night. At OBI, we aren't just a school, we're a community!



Donate to OBI securely online at Network for Good.

Update Your Information

If you have a change of address or would like to be added to our mailing list, please email: diane.dimsey@oneidaschool.org or call 606-847-4111 ext. 292.



In Memoriam

Oma Burns Shepherd
 Class of 1959

"Hero" Wagner
 Former Student

Sophie Crumpler
 Former Teacher

Verna Dean
 Longtime Friend of OBI



Special thanks to Lawrenceburg First Baptist Church for providing Christmas gifts and goodies for all of our students. This is the 6th grade class enjoying their "Build-Your-Own-Stocking" party thanks to funds provided by the church.