

# Veteran leadership: Former staff sergeant key in the key for BC3 men's basketball team

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Members of the 2018-19 Butler County Community College men's basketball team are, top row, from left, Josh Campbell, Luke Haas, Josh Knochel, Matthew Nichol and Jordan Sager. Bottom row, from left, Jake Slomers, Jace Stutz, Joel Stutz, Andrew Yonker and coach Dick Hartung.

(Butler, PA) A former Air Force staff sergeant will control air traffic from inside the lane for a five-guard Butler County Community College men's basketball team that coach Dick Hartung says will shoot at least as many 3-pointers this season as it did in 2017-18.

That's when the Pioneers led all 112 squads in the National Junior College Athletic Association's Division III with 35.2 attempts per game from beyond 20.75 feet and made nearly 1 out of every 3.

"And we are going to be first nationally again," Hartung said. "We have to. We can't wait for layups."

Decisions from the key by sophomore Jordan Sager, 27, a 2009 Mohawk High graduate who served six years in the military and at 5-foot-9 is the shortest player on BC3's roster, will be pivotal for a Pioneers squad that converted 31.7 percent of those 3-point attempts in 2017-18.

"He is small, but he is quick," said Hartung, whose Pioneers look to rebound from records of 4-24 overall and 3-9 in the Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference and capture their first WPCC crown since 1993-94 and fifth overall. "He is fast. He is aggressive."

"A bulldog," said sophomore guard Josh Campbell, a 6-1 Knoch High graduate. "Toughest guy on the team."

"Our enforcer," added sophomore guard Jace Stutz, a 6-1 Butler High graduate. "He gets chippy real fast."

## 2 of top 3 scorers, rebounders return

Passes into the key will force defenses to collapse on Sager, Hartung said. Sager can then find what he calls one of BC3's "great shooters" or drive to the basket with "reckless abandonment.

"If I have a lane, I may go ahead and try to hit a layup," Sager said. "If not, I definitely have the passing ability to get it out to one of our great shooters. All four guys on the outside can hit shots. And I trust every single one of them."

BC3 returns two of its top three scorers in shooting guard Joel Stutz, who led the Pioneers with an average of 21.7 points and was No. 10 in Division III with 109 successful 3-pointers in 2017-18; and his twin brother, point guard Jace, who averaged 10.2 points and made 32 3-point shots.

Joel Stutz led BC3 with 6.7 rebounds per game in 2017-18 and Jace was third at 6.0.

"Both Stutzes," Hartung said, "are smart. That is their strength. They do a bunch of things right. They dribble well. They shoot well. They are in the right spot. They do not throw bad passes. They are in position defensively. Both of them have very high basketball IQs.

"Some guys can be talented, but their basketball IQs may not be high. They might be out of position. They get faked out. The Stutzes know how to play."

## "We can shoot a basketball"

Sager may also find on the perimeter sophomore Josh Knochel, a Knoch High graduate who at 6-3 is BC3's tallest player and who scored at least 11 points in nine of the Pioneers' final 13 games.

“He had a good second half of the season,” Hartung said. “And we are expecting a lot from him. He can shoot and he has a little bit of size. He can shoot over people.”

Freshman guard Andrew Yonker, a 6-1 2018 Butler High graduate, will also start. Campbell will be the Pioneers’ sixth man.

“We can shoot a basketball,” Hartung said. “Every one of them can.”

Particularly from the free-throw line, where the Pioneers were second in Division III at 76.1 percent.

“Not bad,” Hartung said. “And that’s where Sager comes in.”

Sager finished second among BC3’s returning players by making 73.9 percent of his free throws in 2017-18, behind Knochel, at 90.9 percent and ahead of Joel Stutz at 73.7 percent.

“The shooters are going to take a lot of pressure off me,” Sager said, “because they are going to be crowded and that might create some lanes for me. But I definitely look to kick it and get it to those guys to shoot. And man, can they shoot.”

BC3, seeking its first winning record since a 15-14 finish in 2014-15, opens its 26-game regular season with a nonconference matchup at Penn State-Greater Allegheny at 8 p.m. Friday. The Pioneers begin WPCC play by hosting the Community College of Beaver County at 2 p.m. Jan. 5. BC3 visits Penn Highlands, the defending WPCC champion, at 7 p.m. Jan. 7.

The Pioneers’ roster includes Butler High graduates and freshmen Jake Slomers, 5-11; Luke Haas, 5-10; and Matthew Nichol, 5-10.