

2013 | Press & Dakotan Prep Female Athlete Of The Year

Desire To Succeed Drives Bertram

BY JEREMY HOECK

jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

ELK POINT — There are no trophies or banners inside the already-filled trophy case at Elk Point-Jefferson High School to signify second-place finishes at a district basketball tournament.

Keely Bertram doesn't need any such reminder.

The loss she and her girls' basketball teammates suffered on Feb. 21, 2013, in Beresford is firmly imprinted on their minds. Forty-six to forty-four.

In losing that District 8A championship game to Beresford, Bertram and the rest of the Huskies vowed to work even harder for the rest of the year to ensure that doesn't happen again.

"I remember at the end of the game, just sitting there like, 'What just happened?'" said Bertram, an EPJ senior who has been named the *Press & Dakotan's* 2013 Girls' Athlete of the Year.

"That definitely motivated us. We know what we want this season."

Bertram was chosen by the P&D sports staff over Maddie Lavin (Vermillion), Chesney Nagel (Avon), Kieran O'Malley (Centerville), Lindsey Smith (Dakota Valley), Maria Wortmann (Crofton) and Quinn Wragge (Crofton).

A Black Hills State basketball recruit, Bertram found success in three sports during 2013. She earned second team All-State basketball honors, recorded three top-10 finishes at the state track meet, and was named an honorable mention All-State volleyball selection.

It was basketball, though, that fueled her competitive fire in 2013.

"That game was over and we were sitting there in the locker room, and they said, 'We're not letting that happen again,'" said EPJ head coach Gary Nebelsick.

"That hunger carried over into the summer and into the season so far."

As a way to motivate his players, Nebelsick bought a T-shirt at the state girls' basketball tournament and hung it up in the doorway to the EPJ locker room.

On the way to and from every practice and game, the Huskies see the shirt and touch it for good luck.

"When you lose by a couple points like that, that's not a good feeling," said senior Skylore Curry, Bertram's teammate dating back to their third grade year.

"You were so close. It ate at all of us; motivated us to be even better," Curry added.

'Desire To Succeed'

At the same time light-hearted and always with a persistent smile, Bertram is fiercely competitive.

Those around her say she is probably the most 'intense' person they know.

"Her desire to succeed rubs off on everybody," Nebelsick said at a recent practice.

Of the three sports Bertram competes in, basketball (where she ranks third on EPJ's all-time scoring list) is her main focus, according to Curry.

"She's always worked really hard at every sport, but basketball is her passion, and you can obviously tell that," Curry said. "Her intensity makes you want to be a better player, it motivates you."



RIGHT: Elk Point-Jefferson senior Keely Bertram poses under the Elk Point-Jefferson banner at EPJ High School. A three-sport standout for the Huskies, she has been named the Press & Dakotan's Prep Female Athlete of the Year. (Jeremy Hoeck/P&D)
ABOVE: Bertram competes at the Howard Wood Dakota Relays earlier this year. (P&D File Photo)

The question that teammates and opponents alike have likely wondered over the years: Where does that competitive fire come from?

"I honestly think it's from my dad," Bertram says, smiling. "Don't get me wrong, my mom is super competitive, too, but she doesn't show it."

An admitted and proverbial 'gym rat,' Bertram spent most of her childhood around EPJ athletics — though mostly out on the football field, where her father, Rahn, has been a long-time coach.

Rahn Bertram, a 1995 graduate of the University of South Dakota, currently serves as the defensive line coach at Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa. He was the head football coach at EPJ from 1998-2006 and then spent five seasons as an assistant at Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School in Iowa.

During those EPJ coaching days, Bertram's older daughter, Keely, served as the unofficial water girl — a constant presence on the Huskies sidelines during practices and games.

"She was there pretty much every day," Rahn said. "I think just being out there and seeing kids compete like that rubs off on her."

"Plus, I was more fiery back then. That competitiveness comes out."

As time has passed and Keely became more and more dedicated to athletic success in high school, her father's one key message has rang

true, she says.

What was that piece of advice?

"I've always tried to instill with my players and with her that the one thing you can always control is your effort," Rahn said. "There are so many other things you can't control as an athlete, but you can always outwork your opponent."

And so, it would come as no surprise that Bertram and the other five seniors on the EPJ girls' basketball team needed no prompting to come in for open gym sessions this past summer.

"We're all very close, so we wanted to keep that flow together on the court," Keely said.

Though she's not the only vocal leader on a basketball filled with experienced veterans, Bertram naturally assumes the mantle of go-to weapon.

"I remember watching her play as a freshman, and I thought, 'Wow, that kid's got a lot of ability,'" Nebelsick said, watching his team practice. "At that point, I wondered, 'I wonder what it'd be like to coach her.' And now here I am."

Moving Forward

Halfway through her senior season of basketball, Bertram has her Huskies ranked No. 2 — following a loss to top-ranked St. Thomas More in last Saturday's Parkston Classic.

Still, don't expect the loss to do anything but motivate an already motivated squad,



according to Nebelsick.

"When you have six seniors, your leadership is tremendous," he said. "We get to practice and they're already out here doing what they should be."

"Keely's a huge part of that. She demands so much of herself and of her teammates."

At least she has one rather large distraction out of the way.

Bertram signed last month to enroll at Black Hills State University in Spearfish, where she will play basketball for the NCAA Division II Yellowjackets.

"We were thrilled with the looks she was getting," Nebelsick said. "I knew she wanted to go Division I, but she's not the kind of kid that wants to sit and wait for her turn."

If for example Bertram would have signed with a DI school, she would have likely redshirted her freshman year and fought for playing time the rest of her career.

"The competitiveness she

has, I was hoping she would find a fit somewhere," Nebelsick said. "We went to the team camp at Black Hills State, and everything just fell into place."

Even if it was an unexpected destination.

"Her dream was to play DI basketball, and at the time, she had absolutely no interest in Black Hills," Rahn said. "And we just told her, as parents, 'You'll feel in your heart when you're at home.'"

Halfway through her unofficial visit in June, Keely's mind was made up.

The way her father tells it, Keely chimed in with, "Dad, I think I really like it here."

"I just love the whole place," she said. "They're all very close, and the coaches really care about their players."

Those around her, too, realize just how much she cares about basketball.

"She is so dedicated," Curry said. "She's always in the gym or the weight room for basketball."

RECENT WINNERS

2012: Alexis Steffen, Hartington Cedar Catholic
2011: Devon Brecke, Wagner
2010: Chrissy Strassburg, Elk Point-Jefferson
2009: Bethany DeLong, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge
2008: Abby Burbach, Yankton

"Everything she has is because of basketball."

And this is where the conversation invariably returns to Feb. 21, 2013, the infamous date when the Huskies were eliminated by Beresford.

As Bertram again pointed out, the obvious goal for EPJ is to advance to the state tournament.

"We're playing so well, I'm so anxious to see how far we can go," she said.

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at twitter.com/jhoeck. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

Minnesota Vikings Fire Coach Leslie Frazier

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — Leslie Frazier's admirers were all over the Minnesota Vikings locker room and throughout the organization.

Credited with keeping the team on an even keel and eliciting maximum effort through several rough stretches of his three-plus seasons, Frazier rarely spoke a pessimistic word. In the NFL, though, even the class acts have a hard time staying when the losses pile up.

The Vikings fired Frazier on Monday, one year after they made the playoffs and

one day after they finished a 5-10-1 season.

"It's a harsh business," safety Harrison Smith said. "As a player, we all love coach Frazier, as a coach, as a man. You can't meet a better guy. And also as a player, we didn't make enough plays on the field. So you just feel like you let him down a little bit."

After going 10-6 in 2012, the Vikings were done in by a leaky late-game defense and ongoing instability at quarterback. Frazier finished 21-33-1 in three-plus years, including 8-22-1 outside the Metrodome.

Speaking to the team shortly after his dismissal, he received a round of applause on his way out.

Frazier wasn't available for comment, but after the season-ending win over Detroit on Sunday he urged the front office to honor the remaining season on his contract and made a point to mention the quarterback problem and a lack of depth the Vikings had this year while expressing pride in the job he'd done.

Lancer Men Fall In Phoenix

PHOENIX, Ariz. — The Master's College downed Mount Marty College 67-46 in the opening game of the Embassy Suites Classic, hosted by Arizona Christian University.

Reid Shackelford led The Master's (10-2) with 15 points. Zach Stalin added 12 points and nine rebounds.

For Mount Marty, Tyler Payer netted 14 points. Chris

Richardson had 13 points.

The Master's jumped out to an early 14-3 lead, and led by double digits for the final 32 minutes.

MMC plays host Arizona Christian, the sixth-ranked team in NAIA Division I, today (Tuesday) at 8:30 p.m.

LORENZO DAVIS (1-2) 1-2 1, Bud Smith 2-12 0-0 5, Tyler Payer 4-12 2-3 14, Grant Ficek 0-1 0-0 0, Nermin Krzalic 1-6 0-0 2, Alex Irvine 1-5 0-0 2, Patrick Ciganovic 0-2 0-0 0, Sam Forrer 0-1 0-0 0, Anthony Stransky 0-0 0-0 0, Ben Hegge 1-1 5-7 7, Mitchell New-

house 0-0 2-2 2, Chris Richardson 5-12 0-0 13. TOTALS: 14-53 10-14 46.

THE MASTER'S (10-2) Bernard Ireland 3-6 0-2 7, Reid Shackelford 5-10 0-0 15, Dominique Lamer 2-4 0-0 4, Derek Walters 0-0 0-0 0, Jason Logan 2-6 2-4 6, Travis Divita 0-0 0-0 0, Derrick Fain 3-8 1-2 9, Chris Patureau 3-5 1-1 7, Corey Anderson 2-2 0-0 4, Britton Doerbecker 1-1 0-0 3, Zach Stalin 6-13 0-1 12, Nick Dudley 0-1 0-0 0. TOTALS: 27-56 4-10 67.

At the half — TMC 37, MMC 21. Three-Pointers — TMC 9-24 (Ireland 1-3, Shackelford 5-10, Fain 2-5, Patureau 0-2, Doerbecker 1-1, Stalin 0-3), MMC 8-23 (Smith 1-4, Payer 4-9, Ficek 0-1, Krzalic 0-3, Ciganovic 0-1, Richardson 3-5). Rebounds — TMC 41 (Stalin 9), MMC 31 (Smith 6). Assists — TMC 15 (Laner 5), MMC 12 (Smith 4). Turnovers — MMC 14, TMC 11. Steals — MMC 10 (Irvine 3), TMC 8 (Fain 2). Blocked Shots — TMC 5 (Stalin 2), MMC 1 (Richardson). Personal Fouls — TMC 15, MMC 13. Fouled Out — Logan.

INSPIRING IDEAS FOR YOUR HOME

Our experienced staff can help with all the details to make your house a home. A huge selection of quality building products are available at ProBuild.

PROBuild
BUILDING MATERIALS

YANKTON
301 EAST 3RD STREET
605.665.7423
www.probuild.com

©2013 ProBuild. All Rights Reserved.

2014

HAPPY NEW YEAR

L&S ELECTRIC Home: 665-6612 Mobile: 661-1040

EdenPURE Never Be Cold Again!

·Will never dry the air
·Will not harm children or pets
·Made in the USA

Available at...

Larry's APPLIANCE

920 Broadway, Yankton • 665-9461 • 1-800-491-9461