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## Prep girls basketball: Jefferson Starship

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JEFFERSON - At first glance, the basketball hoop that stands in the driveway of the Zastrow residence appears to be brand new.

Take a closer look at the snow-covered rim, though, and a slight bend reveals years of wear and tear.

Blame Jefferson senior Lin Zastrow for some of it, since home is where she honed her skills growing up. The jump shots. The crossover dribbles. Those nifty up-and-under moves that coaches can't teach. And, on occasion, a dunk contest with her older brother, Chris, after lowering the hoop to 8 or 9 feet.

"She was always practicing," senior teammate Amber Hemp said. "You could have asked anyone in town. They'd be like, 'Yeah, I saw Lin Zastrow playing outside.' "

Zastrow, a unanimous all-state selection last season headed to the University of Wisconsin, can't quite finish a flush on a regulation basket - not yet anyway. But that's about all she can't do.

"The biggest problem we've had with Lin is that she's too unselfish," Jefferson girls coach Dena Smith said. "She would rather give the ball to somebody else to score than take the limelight herself.

"She just doesn't like that type of limelight. If she was the type of person that did, she could score 50 points a game."

While several area coaches believe Zastrow is the best player in the state, the bigger question might be how good she can become.

"I think the sky's the limit for her. . . .," UW women's coach Lisa Stone said. "She'll have an immediate impact (next season). She'll definitely contend for a starting position."

### The state's best?

Zastrow, listed at 6-foot-4, wasn't always one of the taller players on the court. Until a growth spurt upon entering high school, Zastrow was average size and focused her energy on passing, ball-handling and shooting from outside.

That probably explains her rare combination of size and coordination, according to area coaches.

Zastrow is averaging 19.3 points, 10.8 rebounds, 4.1 assists, 3.2 steals and 3.5 blocked shots per game this season. And while she plays inside,

she often maneuvers like a point guard.

"It's like, 'Wow.' She's 6-4 and she can make a move like *that*," said Whitewater coach Judy Harms, who called Zastrow the best player in the state after her 34-point, 14-rebound performance against her team Jan. 9. "I don't think any coach can go in thinking they're going to stop her. I don't think that's possible. I've seen games where she wasn't shooting the ball well and she still scores 15 points."

Paul Biddick coaches Zastrow's AAU team, the Wisconsin Fastbreak Select. He's coached for nearly 30 years and on the AAU circuit for 10. Biddick likened Zastrow's all-around game to Tennessee sophomore Candace Parker, considered one of the best college players in the country.

"She's without a doubt the most physically gifted player I've ever coached," Biddick said. "Just as Candace Parker was a once-in-a-generation type of player, for Wisconsin girls basketball I believe Lin Zastrow is a once-in-a-generation type of player."

### **Quiet assassin**

So what does Zastrow think of all the praise?

"I don't know," she said, shrugging at the suggestion she might be the best player in Wisconsin. "I haven't seen everybody play."

One thing is certain. Until Zastrow took it upon herself to score more in the second half of last season, the discussion might not have been brought up.

"I think she was sick of losing games that maybe we shouldn't have lost," said Smith, whose Eagles (14-1 overall, 8-0 Southern Lakes) are ranked second in The Associated Press Division 2 state poll. "And she took it upon herself to do something about it."

Zastrow, who has a pen collection of around 3,000 - "If you need a pen, you go to her," Hemp said - and charges her teammates 50 cents each time they swear - "I think I owed her three or four dollars last year," Hemp added - entered high school as a shy teenager. Her peers say that's changed a bit, but Zastrow can still be timid at times - even on the basketball court.

Zastrow can get up high enough to grab the rim. But asked if she might be able to stuff an alley-oop or perhaps put down a rebound dunk, she said she wasn't sure because she's never tried. That's not her.

"We just had to keep telling her to be confident in herself and take the shots, make those drives," said former high school teammate and current UW sophomore Caitlin Gibson, who teamed with Zastrow to help the Eagles win the 2005 WIAA Division 2 state title. "She really improved a lot from freshman to sophomore year."

### **Bird crazy**

For a kid from this generation, Zastrow's idol might come as a surprise. It's not LeBron James or even Shaquille O'Neal.

Zastrow's fondness is for Larry Bird - the posters near the entrance to her room prove it, though "it's not a shrine," Zastrow said - and she not

surprisingly tries to emulate his game.

"She thinks she's Larry Bird," Gibson said. "It's really funny. She's not the quickest player, but she makes a lot of smart moves and she's just smarter than the defense or the offense."

In other words, Zastrow outthinks the opponent, using anticipation and her long length to frustrate the competition.

"She may not possess Doc Rivers' quickness, but the kid is like Larry Bird because she can score, she can defend and she's a complete player and she's smart," Stone said. "If she's going to guard a little quick person, that little quick person is going to have a heck of a time."

And slowly, Zastrow is learning to take over games when her team needs her the most.

"Like after that Whitewater game, people were telling me that I could have scored 50 or 60 points," Zastrow said. "People keep telling me I have so much more potential than what I'm using. So I'm like, 'OK, I've got to use it then.' "

And use it to knife through the lane for a layup or pull up for a jumper - two moves molded years ago in her driveway.

"Cool moves that you see college players do," Hemp said. "Like floating in the air. But Lin's not a 'look-at-me' type of person. She just wants to get it done."

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