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2006-07 Player of the Year: Devon Carbaugh

She did the unthinkable when she led the Warriors to the Class AA state tournament this season

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Devon Carbaugh didn't care much for basketball when she first tried the sport. Just ask her first coach.

"She didn't like it at all," remembered Laura Carbaugh, Devon's mother and the coach of her 3-year-old pee-wee team.

"I pushed her and pushed her, but it just wasn't for her."

It wasn't until Devon saw how much fun older siblings Taylor and Casey were having with the sport that she decided she liked it, too. Fifteen years later, the youngest Carbaugh has closed her prep career as one of the top players in Sterling girls basketball history and the 2007 SVN player of the year.

"She's right up there," Golden Warriors coach Bruce Scheidegger said. "If you look at the records Devon has or is close to, you see how good she is and how versatile she is. If you make an all-time Sterling starting five, she's the forward."

Carbaugh saved her best for last, leading her team on a whirlwind postseason run that ended with a loss to eventual state champ Fenwick at Redbird Arena. On the way to Normal, Carbaugh averaged 21 points and 7.8 rebounds in five Golden Warrior wins.

"It was a fun ride I'll never forget," Carbaugh said Thursday. "Just thinking about it, you get chills every time."

Carbaugh joined Sterling's varsity team in the middle of her freshman season, when frontcourt injuries forced Scheidegger to call her up for the Dixon Christmas tournament. Carbaugh scored 15 points in her first game, and she didn't leave the starting lineup the rest of her career.

"It was kind of a Lou Gehrig story," said Scheidegger, referring to the Yankees first baseman who subbed for an ailing Wally Pipp in 1925 and played the next 2,130 games. "We didn't know if we should bring her up or not, but she dispelled any doubts real quick."

For the next three-and-a-half years, Carbaugh excelled at every phase of the game. She ended her career second on Sterling's career points, rebounds and steals lists while leading the Warriors to a 107-24 record. Carbaugh's teams particularly enjoyed feasting on conference competition, going 41-2 and

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Paul Colletti Devon Carbaugh - SVN's 2007 Female Basketball Player of the Year

winning four NCIC championships.

"Devon's been a pain in our side for four years, and she's definitely one of the all-time best players in our conference," said Ottawa coach Mike Cooper, whose teams finished second to Sterling in 2005 and '06. "She's a great player, and she's probably an even better person."

Cooper's last compliment is often repeated when Carbaugh's name pops up. Scheidegger calls her the most coachable player and best teammate he's coached in 15 years on the sidelines at Dixon and Sterling. Newman's Ashley Vivarelli said she respected Carbaugh more than any opponent because "she's the first with a helping hand if you fall down."

"She's an excellent student, she's a really good friend," said Krisitin Scheidegger, Bruce's daughter. "She's trustworthy, she's honest. She's everything you could want in a person."

Carbaugh has been constantly double-teamed since her sophomore year, but as she matured, she realized how and when to make Sterling's opponents pay for paying her too much attention. For instance, Carbaugh was the Warriors' fourth-leading scorer in their 50-39 win against Forreston, and Jackie Howze made some of the biggest baskets in the postseason.

Carbaugh's also capable of dominating if that's what it takes. She scored 31 points against Boylan in the sectional semifinal and 28 against Maine West in the supersectional. Even in Sterling's 55-29 loss to Fenwick at the state tournament, no player on either team topped Carbaugh's 16 points and 11 rebounds.

"There haven't been many players you had to prepare for like her," Cooper said.

Carbaugh still hasn't picked a college, but she hopes to major in nutrition or exercise science and become a basketball coach. As she prepares for the next stage of her life, Bruce Scheidegger wonders what he'll do without the only four-year varsity player he's ever coached.

"It's devastating to lose a player like that, but she brought this whole program up," Scheidegger said. "Either way, it's still going to be tough."

Carbaugh doesn't worry about where she ranks among the Golden Warriors' greatest player or what her legacy will be.

"Hopefully I'm remembered for working hard and being able to fit into four different teams," she said. "I think I grew each year, kept developing and had fun along the way."

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