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Sperka hits the gym, jump shots

Lions senior makes workouts a priority

By DAVE BOEHLER

dboehler@journalsentinel.com

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Not many defenders can stop Kelsey Sperka. Apparently, doctors can't, either.

The New Berlin Eisenhower girls basketball player insists on working out so much, she recently ignored doctors.

"She had a little injury about a month ago, just a little strain in her back," Eisenhower coach Gary Schmidt said. "Doctors said to take it easy for a couple weeks. She had to lift weights. She was afraid to lose her edge.

"She doesn't tell people, she just goes off on her own and does it. She knows she needed to be stronger. She doesn't have to be pushed. Mom and Dad don't have to tell her to go work out. When scouts and colleges call me, I tell them they can find her in the gym," Schmidt said.

Sperka, a senior guard, is ranked the 10th-best player in the state by the Wisconsin Basketball Yearbook after making all-Woodland Conference the last two seasons.

She was all-state honorable mention last season after averaging 15 points, six rebounds and four assists per game.

"All summer, I just like to go to the gym and shoot," Sperka said. "I find it fun to do. I don't find it boring."

According to her coach, "a whole bunch" of colleges were interested in Sperka. She decided to play for Evansville over Bradley and Indiana State.

"I think people will find out this year she will be an incredibly tough girl to handle," Schmidt said. "I don't think I've seen a girl with her ability to penetrate and handle the ball the way she does. She can go to the basket any time she wants. I've been coaching a long time, and a lot of times there's a good shooter or someone who can penetrate, but she just does it all.

"That's why this year I'm expecting so much from her. Only a few girls can get to the paint, take a jump shot, get all the way to the basket. She has one of the best jumpers I've ever coached. Being (ranked) 10th doesn't surprise me. She's got a phenomenal basketball mind."

Eisenhower has to replace six seniors who were "pretty darn good," says Schmidt, whose team reached the sectional final last season for the first time since the mid 1990's.

The team was fourth in the Milwaukee area in scoring with 61.3 points per game last year.

A lot of it had to do with Sperka.

And she wasn't one of those girls who started playing organized basketball at the age of four or five.

"I started playing in the fifth grade because that's when we could," she said. "I just happened to be good at it."

BROWN DEER

Coach: Charles Kazel, second year.

Key players: Sydney Nelson, 5-4, jr.; Sam Weber, 5-10, jr.; Kaya Senaya, 5-7, sr.

Outlook: Nelson and Weber received honorable mention all-conference last year and the Falcons have to replace just two starters. No one on the team is above 5-10, however. Senaya is the two-time reigning state track and field champion in the 100 and 200 meters.

CUDAHY

Coach: Gordon Nikolic, ninth year.

Key players: Amanda Rice, 5-5, sr.; Kelly Wilde, 5-9, soph.; Amanda Janik, 5-9, jr.

Outlook: Wilde received all-conference honorable mention last year after averaging nine points and three rebounds a game. The Packers are strong on speed on shooting, and the junior varsity was 17-3 last season. But Aimee Lockwood, a first-team all-conference player, graduated.

GREENDALE

Coach: Jerry Hastings, 11th year.

Key players: Marybeth Lueck, 5-11, sr.; Kelsey Pohlmann, 6-1, soph.; Laura Ulatowski, 5-11, sr.

Outlook: The Panthers have to replace two all-conference first team players, including Ashley Imperiale. She was the South player of the year and made all-state first team after ranking seventh in the area in scoring with 18.0 ppg. The Panthers, who made state last year for the first time since 1995, were sixth in scoring defense with 34.8 ppg.

GREENFIELD

Coach: Robert Graetz, first year.

Key players: Alyssa Evans, 6-2, sr.; Stacey Butts, 6-1, jr.; Shannon Butts, 5-10, soph.

Outlook: Stacey Butts returns after an injury kept her out of portions of last season. Greenfield's backcourt that averaged 50% of the scoring has to be replaced. Evans contributed 10 points and eight rebounds per game last year.

NEW BERLIN EISENHOWER

Coach: Gary Schmidt, seventh year.

Key players: Sarah Potochich, 5-7, sr.; Kelsey Sperka, 5-10, sr.

Outlook: In addition to Sperka, Potochich is a returning starter and can shoot and defend as well. Eisenhower is ninth in the Division 2 state pre-season rankings listed by the Wisconsin Basketball Yearbook. The Lions lost by two points in a Division 2 sectional final to Grafton last year.

NEW BERLIN WEST

Coach: Jeff Radtke, 14th year.

Key players: Ashley Averkamp, 5-11, sr.; Caitlin Moore, 5-5, jr.; Liz Radtke, 5-10, jr.

Outlook: All five starters return for West, which tied for second in the North last season. Averkamp is just one of two first-team all-conference players who did not graduate last year. Radtke made the second team and Moore received honorable mention.

PEWAUKEE

Coach: Todd Hansen, fourth year.

Key players: Janelle Groer, 5-8, sr.; Lexi Panagopoulos, 5-7, sr.; Amy Slesar, 5-10, jr.

Outlook: Pewaukee has to replace Jenilee Klomstad, who made all-area third team last season and was the North Division player of the year. Nine players return for the Pirates, however, and the junior varsity went 18-2 last season. Groer averaged 8.6 points and 4.5 rebounds per game.

SHOREWOOD

Coach: Matt Stuve, second year.

Key players: Emily Jacobson, 5-8, soph.; Alyssa George, 5-10, sr.; Olivia Rice, 5-5, sr.

Outlook: Amanda Schick has to be replaced after averaging 17 ppg and 14 rpg last season. Jacobson is one of three returning starters. She averaged five points per game as a freshman, and George also averaged five points and four rebounds.

ST. FRANCIS

Coach: Michael Szydowski, 14th year.

Key players: Melissa Franken, 5-9, jr.; Robyn Bunk, 6-1, jr.; Kassidi Macak, 5-6, soph.

Outlook: Franken was all-conference honorable mention after averaging 11 points per game. Bunk averaged 5 blocks per game to go with 5 rpg and 4 ppg. The Mariners can't count on Abbie Windus' 11 ppg since she graduated, and the junior varsity was 3-17 last year.

ST. THOMAS MORE

Coach: Brian Krysiak, second year.

Key players: Amber Meka, 5-4, sr.; Chantel Newman, 5-5, jr.; Emily Simmons, 5-8, sr.

Outlook: Four starters return for the Cavaliers, including guards Meka and Newman. They both were honorable mention all-conference. Thomas More needs help with its inside game. Krysiak went 5-15 in his debut last year, and the Cavaliers' junior varsity team was 5-14.

WAUWATOSA WEST

Coach: Mike Pietrowiak, 16th year.

Key players: Ellen Coleman, 5-8, sr.; Anastasia Williams, 5-8, sr.; Jaclyn Glaser, 5-1, soph.

Outlook: Three starters return for West, including Coleman. She averaged 13 points and three rebounds per game last year and made all-conference second-team. The Trojans need other girls to help in the scoring department as well. Williams and Glaser combined for seven ppg.

WHITNALL

Coach: Keith Larson, ninth year.

Key players: Tamekio Young, 5-5, sr.; Keira Al Mohareb, 5-9, jr.; Sam Selepir, 5-8, sr.

Outlook: Three starters have to be replaced at Whitnall, which has few players with varsity experience. The Falcons are a fast team, however, and will rely on Young and Al Mohareb for scoring. They each averaged 7 ppg per game, with Al Mohareb adding 5 rpg as well.

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