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Always there for the team

Slinger senior committed to success

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Starting every game since freshman year is impressive enough.

Slinger senior Sierra West tops that.

"She never missed a practice, game, shoot-around or scrimmage, in four years here," Slinger coach Steven Reinhardt said. "Everything. Film sessions, scouting, everything. That just tells you the amount of dedication she has to basketball. We've had sick kids, kids that didn't want to play, kids miss things for other school events or family reasons. Basketball has been No. 1 in her life.

"In today's age, you have a hard enough time getting kids to work hard in practice, let alone never miss a practice."

So far, it has paid off for West. The guard was named co-player of the year in the Wisconsin Little Ten Conference last season and she is ranked the 21st-best player in the state by the Wisconsin Basketball Yearbook.

"The easiest answer I guess is I love basketball," West said. "I have a total respect for the coach and team, and missing something has never been an option, really. Everything I do works around basketball. That's how I plan things."

West didn't plan for that one day when she was a freshman, however.

"I couldn't drive yet," West said. "It was freezing and snowing, and I didn't have a ride there. My sister had to leave work to take me to practice. Then we got stuck in a ditch. We didn't have cell phones, so I walked the half-mile to practice. I was late, but I could never miss it. I had to be there, no matter the conditions.

"It wasn't that bad. The sidewalks were pretty clear."

West averaged 12 points, four assists and three rebounds per game last season and shot 42% from the floor in leading Slinger to a second-place finish in the Little Ten.

She has a few Division I schools interested in her, and by the time this season ends, she will be Slinger's all-time assists leader and will rank in the top five of every other offensive category.

"She is a total team player and unselfish player," Reinhardt said. "She much rather set up her teammates for a score than score herself. She's so unselfish and never wants to put herself above the team."

It took just three games for Reinhardt to realize what West was all about.

"We played Washington when she was a freshman," he said. "We weren't very good but she scored 25 points in her third basketball game of her career. They were one of the No. 1 teams in the state at the time, but she kept us in the basketball game we had no business being in.

"When she was a freshman, she had the baby face, a nervousness about playing varsity basketball. Now I watch her and she's in total command of the game. Her confidence level has risen, she's a leader and has grown into a player that wants to play college basketball. She has grown in leaps and bounds."

BEAVER DAM

Coach: Tim Chase, third year.

Key players: Abby Gregory, 5-10, jr.; Alyssa Zillner, 5-7, jr.; Becky Jeanes, 5-9, sr.

Outlook: Chase says he has girls who have a passion to play basketball but hopes the team can find a way to score. Beaver Dam, winless in league play last year, will rely on Gregory. She averaged 5.7 ppg and 4.4 rpg. Zillner, Jeanes and Emily Aplin each averaged three ppg.

HARTFORD

Coach: Chris Shelsta, second year.

Key players: Chantel Burg, 5-10, sr.; Kaitlyn Miller, 5-6, jr.; Carrie Thoma, 6-1, jr.

Outlook: Full-court defensive pressure and experience are strengths for Hartford. The Orioles are working on making better decisions with the ball to cut down on turnovers. Burg averaged 6.6 ppg last year and led the team in rebounding.

OCONOMOWOC

Coach: Arnie Kirchenwitz, 17th year.

Key players: Molly Haertle, 5-8, jr.; Lynsey Bakkum, 5-9, sr.; Cara Marshall, 5-7, sr.

Outlook: The team needs help rebounding, but Oconomowoc can count on an aggressive young group that is quick. The co-conference champions finished ninth in scoring defense last year (35.6 ppg) but has to replace Sammi Solveson. She made all-area honorable mention last year.

SLINGER

Coach: Steven Reinhardt, 15th year.

Key players: Sierra West, 5-6, sr.; Lindsay Walter, 5-8, jr.; Kristin Bush, 5-11, sr.

Outlook: Slinger returns four starters. In addition to West, Walter averaged 10 ppg and 6 rpg and is a third-year starter. Bush averaged 7 ppg and 6 rpg, and shot 52% from the floor.

WATERTOWN

Coach: Todd Hoffman, sixth year.

Key players: Erienne Lauersdorf, 5-8, soph.; Leanne Lillge, 5-10, soph.; Lindsay Schwartz, 5-10, sr.

Outlook: Lauersdorf made all-conference second team as a freshman last season after averaging nine points and four rebounds. Lillge, another sophomore, averaged 7 ppg and 4 rpg. Six of Watertown's final nine games are on the road.

WEST BEND EAST

Coach: Joe Pintens, second year.

Key players: Jessica Kromray, sr.; Katie Krubsack, sr.

Outlook: Kromray made first-team all-conference last season and Krubsack landed on the second team for the reigning co-conference champions. East finished second in the area last season in scoring defense (33.8 points allowed per game).

WEST BEND WEST

Coach: Mark Maley, seventh year.

Key players: Brittini Hayes, 5-10, jr; Kelsey Stuebe, 5-10, sr.; Monique Hughes, 5-6, jr.

Outlook: West will be a quick and aggressive team but needs to improve its rebounding. Hayes averaged 8 ppg and 5 rpg last year, and Hughes and Stuebe each averaged 6 ppg. Hughes made 40% of her three-pointers.

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN

Coach: Gil Tatge, 10th year.

Key players: Rachael Hackbarth, 6-2, sr.; Rachel Johnson, 5-10, sr.; Tiffany McCoy, 5-3, sr.

Outlook: The Vikings return 88% of their offense, led by Hackbarth's 12.5 ppg. She is one of four returning starters and will play for Drake next season. Johnson is a three-year starter. Tatge would like to see the team's intensity and free-throw shooting improve.

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