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FRCC girls basketball: Redbirds lean on Ritchie

By [Scott Venci](#)

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2007

Adrian Ritchie did a little bit of everything for the De Pere girls basketball team as a sophomore point guard last season.

Assists. Points. Steals. Rebounds.

She was young, but was instrumental in the Redbirds going 16-0 in the Bay Conference and reaching a WIAA Division 1 sectional semifinal.

Now, at the start of her junior season, Ritchie is being asked to do more for a young De Pere team that lost some key players to graduation.

Ritchie averaged 7.9 points per game last season, always contributing something but not needing to be a big-time scorer with the veteran players around.

It can be difficult for a point guard to think about shooting first, but that's what Ritchie will have to do at times this season.

She'll have help — most notably with fellow junior Claire Steffen playing next to her — but she'll be a focal point on offense.

The Redbirds don't have the size they've had in the past — they'll press on defense all game — and will need their guards to help more in the scoring department.

"She'll step into a much bigger role, as far as scoring on the offensive end," De Pere coach Dave Johnson said. "She does a great job of leading by example. Nobody plays harder."

It's too early to tell, but Ritchie appears to have adjusted to her expanded role.

She was saddled with foul trouble in De Pere's season-opening win over Waukesha West and finished with seven points. But her offensive capabilities were on full display on



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De Pere guard Adrian Ritchie scored 26 points in the Redbirds' victory over Appleton West on Saturday at the Kress Events Center.
Evan Siegle/Press-Gazette

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Saturday against Appleton West in De Pere's 70-44 win at the Kress Events Center.

Ritchie finished with a game-high 26 points, drawing fouls, hitting mid-range jumpers and even delighting the crowd at one point by putting the ball behind her back while driving to the hoop and laying it in.

It wasn't an arrogant display, rather, an instinctive one that showed a small glimpse of how good she can become over the next two years.

"I'm so confident in this team," Ritchie said. "Yeah, we are young, but we've already improved. We are improving week by week. We have goals every week for ourselves so that we can make our team better.

"I don't have any doubt that we can't be better or as good as all those teams in the past."

Like some standouts in De Pere's past, Ritchie is more than just a high school talent. The prep scene is just the start for what appears to be a blossoming career.

In August, three months before her junior season began, Ritchie made a verbal commitment to play for the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay in 2009.

Johnson has watched several of his former players earn college scholarships — Heather Golden is playing at UWGB and Natalie Taylor signed with Southern Illinois last year, to name just two — but all of those players committed during their senior year.

"That's very unusual, as early as it was," said Johnson, who credits De Pere's youth program for developing players. "Adrian always told me she wanted to play at UWGB. When the opportunity came, it is the perfect fit there for her."

Ritchie knows there are more expectations on her now that she's headed to UWGB, but she insists it won't change her on the court.

"I try to avoid it," she said. "I know that it doesn't make me any different as a player or a person. I try to keep it out of my mind. Although I'm excited, I just try to forget it and be a leader on this team."