Passion, Persistence Lead to Play

Some things in life are about winning and losing and some are not about the outcome but about how well you played the game. Golden Eagle women’s basketball player Junior Jamie Zelinsky, Brooklyn Park, Minn., believes that while winning is the desired outcome, your relationship with your coach and teammates, along with what you learn on the court are the most valuable lessons of an athletic career.

"I look up to Coach Mike Roysland," Zelinsky says. "He understands the game and how to coach me. I really connect with what he is trying to say." Zelinsky, and her twin sister Jill, visited several Division II schools to find one that suited them. "I looked a lot at the coaches," she explains. "I wanted someone who listened and someone I could learn from. For me, basketball is not just about winning; I wanted to have a good athletic and academic experience."

Scholarships have helped Zelinsky attend school. "The scholarship money influenced my choice of college," she affirms. "It made a big difference that scholarship dollars were available for me to come to Crookston. That financial assistance, along with the support of coaches and teammates, really helped my transition to college."

Brink Hall served as Zelinsky’s home her first semester. She lived with the other women who played on the team, and she maintains that after playing together, the women on the basketball team remain the best of friends. "We win together and we lose together; everything we have gone through has drawn us together," she states. "Those things have strengthened our friendships."

Over the summer, Zelinsky assisted with a shooting and scoring camp for girls in grades 3-12. She has been involved in basketball camps since she was a sophomore in high school. Along with basketball, she has coached soccer for three years and that keeps her involved with athletics year round.

Her academic career has been affected in a positive way by athletic involvement. "We have to go to class and that commitment keeps me involved in the classroom as well as on the basketball court," Zelinsky reflects.

She represents women’s basketball on the Student Athletic Advisory Committee (SAAC). Zelinsky’s athletic skill has led to recognition since she came to the Crookston campus including newcomer of the year in 2007-08, Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference co-freshman of the year in 2007, and second-team all conference in 2009.

A sport and recreation management major, Zelinsky hopes to become a coach, athletic director, or work in some capacity for a college team. For now though, it is about academics, athletics, and building relationships with coaches and teammates that will have a powerful impact on her college experience as well as her future career.

If you would like to find out how you can support student-athletes, contact Bill Tyrrell, director of athletic fundraising at 218-281-8436 (btyrrell@umn.edu). Your gifts influence the lives of students and help make their dreams a reality.