

Mathiowetz looks to keep improving this summer

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SLEEPY EYE - Now that Sleepy Eye St. Mary's junior Madison Mathiowetz has experienced playing in the state tournament, she has set some even bigger goals for next year.

One of those goals takes place soon, where she will play AAU basketball for North Tartan. The team will play in tournaments all over the country, giving her the chance to play with some new teammates and get exposure from college scouts all over the country.

Mathiowetz repeated as the All-Journal Girls' Basketball Player of The Year. Her numbers this year were even more impressive. What's even more difficult to believe is she accomplished all of this during a pandemic, a year when gyms were closed. She had to adjust her training and it worked out just fine.

"When school was shut down spring, I actually went to my grandparents, they have a shed and a hoop out there," Mathiowetz said. "Driveway basketball made a big comeback last spring and summer, but just finding a spot to practice. Ballhandling, having a basketball in your hands but the stuff without a basketball too is super importing. Lifting and just staying in shape and getting ready to go."

Mathiowetz finished the year averaging 33 points, 11 rebounds and 4.4 steals per game. She was the Tomahawk Conference Player of The Year and her career totals are 2,716 points and 999 rebounds, both rank first in school history. She helped lead the Knights to the state semifinals, their only loss of the season coming in a 51-50 loss to Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa at Target Center.

While it wasn't the storybook ending for the Knights, she and her teammates still made plenty of memories from their 23-1 season.

"I think it was just a really great opportunity for us," she said. "We got to prove how hard we worked all season and our whole careers to get to that moment. I thought we did a great job of winning our section title, which was our goal, and we set ourselves higher goals. We came up just a little bit short, but it doesn't take anything away from what we got to accomplish as a team. Playing on that floor, you get to play on the biggest stage there is and you have the lights and everything. That stuff's all great and crazy, but ultimately it was we were out there playing ball with your best friends and those are the memories that we're going to remember."

Mathiowetz made the switch from playing with the local MN Rise AAU program to North Tartan. It was a difficult one for her, but she knows she will continue to see great competition and it will give her a chance to play with new players, where she can learn and make new friends and connections.

"A couple of other coaches reached out to me, they kind of watched me the past couple of months and they asked me to come play for them," she said. "I'm going to do that, travel around and get to play with some of the best players in the state."

She's looking forward to improving with the help of some coaches and players around her this summer. She knows that what she learns this summer, she can bring that back to the Knights next year and help her teammates out there.

"I'm super excited, I know it's going to help me improve as a player a ton," Mathiowetz said. "I'll be able to bring that back to my school team and help make my team better next year, too -bringing all of the things that I get to learn, playing for a different program and for a different group of people."

Her coach Bruce Woitas was also named the Coach of The Year in the Tomahawk Conference and he's looking forward to one more year with her on the roster.

"Madison is a player that has a great passion for the game of basketball and also is a player that has invested a lot of time into the game," Woitas said. "Madison is a very special player that works hard to make herself a better player and in turn makes her team a better team and she is a true team player. It has been a pleasure to watch her develop over the years into the player she has become."

Mathiowetz is being recruited by several Division I programs (South Dakota State, Drake, Wisconsin-Green Bay among them), but she still isn't sure where she wants to go. She knows that this summer is huge for her, both in the recruiting aspect and the growing aspect.

"Obviously the scouting is great, but I'm most excited to make new friendships and being coached by some of the best coaches," she said. "I know they're going to help push me and make me a better player so that when I do decide on a college, I'm going to be prepared to do it at a high level."