


Mathiowetz having ironwoman sophomore season

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BROOKINGS, S.D. - In her second season of playing Division I women's basketball for the South Dakota State Jackrabbits, Sleepy Eye's Madison Mathiowetz has continued to do what she's done every year during her basketball career.

Improve.



Coming off the bench as a freshman, the 5-foot-10 sophomore guard earned a starting spot this season. And her second year of college basketball isn't done yet.

After repeating as Summit League Tournament champions on March 12, Mathiowetz and the Jackrabbits earned the right to play in the NCAA Tournament for the second year in a row.

The Jackrabbits were seeded 12th and will open the tournament with a matchup against fifth-seeded Utah at 10 p.m. Saturday night at the McCarthy Athletic Center in Spokane, Washington.

Mathiowetz got her feet wet off the bench as a freshman and averaged 10.7 minutes per game, but a starting role this season has nearly tripled her time on the floor as she's become an ironwoman of sorts for her squad.

She's currently averaging 30.2 mpg and leads the team in total minutes played with 966.

"It's just been really rewarding to be in a starting role," Mathiowetz said. "Being able to get out on the floor every night and help our team do what we want to do, win games, win a conference tournament. ... Freshman year, I didn't play as much, maybe had a little bit different role, but I think I learned a lot from that and grew in that, which led me to being able to have some of the successes that I've had this year alongside a really good team with really great teammates by my side."

Mathiowetz, a three-time All-Journal Girls Basketball Player of the Year with the Sleepy Eye St. Mary's Knights, finished her freshman season of college basketball with 3.1 points, 1.5 rebounds and .7 assists per game. This year, she's averaging 11.8 ppg, 3.8 rpg and 2.6 apg.

Comparing last March to this March may be like comparing apples to oranges for Mathiowetz as she's earned a new, more-extended role and drawn more attention as well. But she's no stranger to seeing a lot of time on the court either as she started on varsity as an eighth-grader at St. Mary's under head coach Bruce Woitas.

She graduated from St. Mary's in 2022 as the school's all-time leading scorer (3,762 points).

"The last two seasons of mine have been so much fun for so many different reasons," Mathiowetz said. "Built a ton of really good relationships, but on the basketball side of it, I think there's just been a ton of growth. Acclimating to the Division I level can be tough as a freshman, and I think I grew a lot too last year into this year and it's helped me both on and off the court, so it's been really good."

After South Dakota State won the Summit League Tournament last year with a 93-51 rout of Omaha, it ended up as the No. 9 seed in the NCAA Tournament and won its first-round game against No. 8 USC 62-57 in overtime. No. 1 Virginia Tech ended the Jackrabbits' March Madness fun with a 72-60 win, giving the Jackrabbits a final 29-6 record.

"We graduated some really great players my freshman year," Mathiowetz said. "And getting to play with leaders like Myah , Paiton , Dru and Regan , it was super fun. Learned a ton from them. ... Had a ton of success last year, all the way through the Summit League and into the

Summit League Tournament, got an NCAA win.

"So all of that was super fun with that team. Now this year, it's been a different team and we've gone through a lot as a team as well with injuries and just stuff that's been thrown at us, but I think we've handled it well. ... We've gotten so close over this year, just battling together, day in and day out, and I think that's been really exciting and I wouldn't trade them for anything, that's for sure."

Mathiowetz was an Honorable Mention by the Summit League this year and was also a Summit League All-Tournament player. South Dakota State also saw 6-foot-2 sophomore forward Brooklyn Meyer (17 ppg) named the Summit League Player of the Year and Defensive Player of the Year, while head coach Aaron Johnston was named the Summit League Coach of the Year for the fourth consecutive season.

South Dakota State is now 27-5 and celebrated winning the Summit League Tournament for the second consecutive season after a 67-54 win over North Dakota State on March 12 in Sioux Falls. That earned the Jackrabbits a repeat appearance in the NCAA Tournament and 12th appearance overall.

The Jackrabbits ride a 20-game win streak into the tournament with the potential to knock off another team ranked ahead of them Saturday night. Utah (22-10) is led this season by 6-2 senior forward Alissa Pili, who is averaging 20.8 ppg and 6.5 rpg.

Not many small-town basketball players get to play Division I basketball and see their first two collegiate seasons end with an NCAA Tournament appearance.

For Mathiowetz, it's a dream come true.

"To win back-to-back conference championships, to get an NCAA Tournament berth two years in a row is really exciting for me as a player and for us as a team as well," Mathiowetz said. "For me, it's a dream come true. To go from playing for Sleepy Eye St. Mary's, a pretty small school, to going out and playing with SDSU on the biggest stage of college basketball, I think that's just super exciting, super rewarding and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

