

Women's Basketball

Rebekkah Brunson Is Truly An All Star

By Kevin Wilson

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MARYLAND -- With tons of WNBA fans, at the Richard England Boys and Girls Club, in Washington, D.C., last Saturday, Rebekkah Brunson delightfully shared that she played with the boys growing up.

However, while being a lifeguard, it was AAU Coach Thurman Watson, who provided her the opportunity to play with the Oxon Hill Roadrunners. Making the appropriate choices and hard work has paid off for Brunson, who returned home as an Western Conference All-Star reserve at the Verizon Center.

Prior to the All-Star Game, Brunson, a starter for the Sacramento Monarchs dominated the Minnesota Lynx and New York Liberty. The three-year pro injured her right calf against the Connecticut Sun the Thursday before the homecoming event. The recovery process was day to day.

Asjha Jones, a forward for the Sun, who made her first Eastern Conference All-Star showing says, "Rebekkah is an amazing athletic player, she continues to grow, and it's an honor that people recognize her as an all star player."

The first team All-Met basketball standout from Oxon Hill High School participated in the Be Tour. "We went downtown and interacted with the fans, gave away gifts and signed autographs," she added. In spite of, Brunson still enjoyed herself, even though, she was unable to make a hardwood contribution among the hometown crowd.

During her rookie season, Brunson tallied a career high 12 points against the Mystics. In 2005, she registered a career high 12 points and 11 boards in playoff action against the L.A. Sparks. Last year, against the Shock she ripped the nets for a career high 18 points. Apparently each year she gets better and better.

Brunson has won a title with the Monarchs, along with her first all star appearance. Not bad for a newcomer. "It's a wonderful experience to come home and to achieve a personal goal

makes it that much better," she says. Actually, her family members were more excited.

Brunson currently averages 12 points and 8 rebounds per game. She leads the league in offensive rebounds, and is fourth in rebounds per game. Even though, the West lost 99-87, Western Conference and rookie Monarchs head coach, Jenny Boucek has nothing but high praises for the all time leading rebounder from Georgetown University.

"Rebekkah is just scratching the surface in the WNBA. She has talent, athletic ability, a bright mind and a teachable spirit," Boucek stated outside the locker room.

Playing overseas is optional for most WNBA players, but not for Brunson. As a member of the 2003 U.S.A. team at the Pan American Games, the international experience keeps her prepared for the next regular season.

During the 2004-2005 off season, Brunson played for the Dexia Namur in Belgium averaging 16 points and 9 rebounds per contest. During the 2005-2006 off season, she returned to Belgium to pick up where she left off, netting 17 points and 11 rebounds per game. Her impressive stats allowed Brunson to participate in the 2006 FIBA All Star Game.

Growing up and playing against Chicago Bulls and ex-Georgetown forward Micheal Sweetney, Rebekkah competed all around the city of Washington, which included the prestigious Jelleff Summer League.

As a Hoya, Rebekkah was the 2001 Big East Rookie of the Year, and the Big East Defensive Player of the Year, who led the Hoya in scoring 18 times and rebounds 27 times. She also set a single season record in rebounding with 336 in 2004, and ranks second all time with 1,762 points.

"Rebounding is a desire, a hunger for the ball," Brunson clarified. The intensity in knowing that she's going to get the ball is her motivation. Former Hoya coach Patrick Knapp said that Rebekkah was great to coach, and he always felt that she was WNBA.

"All-Stars are made after you get into the league. All of us who had her at Georgetown applauds her success," says Knapp, now coaching at the University of Pennsylvania.

Living your dream as a pro athlete, some forget who assisted them along the way. Rebekkah doesn't fall in that category. In 2005, she created 32 Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Maryland that caters to the Washington, D.C. metro area.

The foundation provides academic-athletic enrichment programs, scholarships, and initiate programs to incite amateur play and mentoring. Brunson wants to be hands on in the foundation.

She wants to show her face in the community, to let the kids know that sheâ€™s there for them. Unfortunately, for now, this all star must make a living entertaining the passionate fans of the WNBA.

"I received a lot of help and I wouldn't be in this position today, if it weren't for those who assisted me," she said humbly. "It's about giving hope and reassurance."

When asked what does it take to invade the WNBA, to stay there and blossom?

Brunson said, "It's a lot of hard work, don't get discourage, don't get distracted, because that's a big problem in the city, where people can't stay focused. Don't let outside influences stir you off your path. Everything is possible."

Homegirl Rebekkah is living proof.

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