

Brooke Blonquist:

Miners' center was short on respect, but played up to her big potential

By Bruce Smith
Matchup

"Think big, play big, dream big."

That was the 2010-11 Bingham girls basketball team's slogan. It was created by the team's four senior captains but it couldn't have described Brooke Blonquist's season any better.

Blonquist was Bingham's 5-foot-11 center. Coach Rand Rasmussen used to roll his eyes whenever he imagined Blonquist trying to dominate inside the key, but things turned out well. Blonquist did far more than what was expected during Bingham's 18-5 season, which included a second-place finish in Region 3 and a 5A state tournament berth.

"We made a joke about it (my size)," Blonquist recalled. "That's why we had that theme. But Rand knew and believed in me."

Bingham's longtime coach has had taller players most years, and it's likely his comments were an attempt to inspire Blonquist, who played all 23 games and was the team's second-leading scorer (8.1 points per game) and top rebounder.

It worked. Blonquist was named to the all-region team and selected second team all-state. Her best game came against rival Riverton, when she impressed a lot of people by scoring 23 points in the Miners' 61-57 win. Blonquist made 9-of-12 shots that night and also pulled down seven rebounds.

"Riverton and Pleasant Grove were my best games," Blonquist said. "I always wanted to be aggressive on every single play."

"She was 'lights out' in that Riverton game," Rasmussen recalled. "It was good to see her come back and have a great game that night."



A lot more than expected from Brooke Blonquist, who carried a big load as Bingham's undersized center.

That's because two nights earlier, the Miners had lost 54-52 at home to Taylorsville. Blonquist had just two points and – worse yet – rebounded a missed Taylorsville shot and (absent-mindedly) put the ball back into the basket, giving the Warriors' two important points.

"Rand took me out right after that, and I didn't play the rest of the game," she said. "It's something I laugh about now. I wasn't thinking, and Rand was right to get me out of there."

The rest of the season had plenty of good memories. She played a major role as a team captain and an inspiration leader. She was occasionally known by the nickname "Elsa B" (Elsa is actually her first name) and teammates would

Continued on next page



Continued from previous page

call her that on the court.

"It caught on and a lot of people thought it was funny," she said. "They'd call me that on the court and our opponents wouldn't know what they were talking about."

Blonquist said one of her favorites came in the locker room, when she and Chantee Renouard would dance in front of the group before each game. At the start of the season, Bingham was a diverse team with players ranging from a few seniors to a huge group of sophomores and freshmen.

"But we played as a team and it was cool to watch how we grew," Blonquist said. "I felt my role on the court was to show an example."

She had to do it while playing a series of powerful teams, which included eventual 5A champion Alta, defending champion (and this year's runner-up) Syracuse, Brighton, Weber and then the Region 3 schedule.

"I wish we could have played some of those teams again," said Blonquist, referring especially to Syracuse, which handed Bingham a 63-41 defeat. "They (Syracuse) was definitely the toughest team we played and Brittney Martin was a great player. We could put three girls on her and she would still take it to the bucket."

Memories of the games began to fade immediately after the season, but Blonquist said she will always recall the camaraderie she felt in the locker room and on the buses traveling to and from each game. She hoped to continue playing basketball in college (while studying to be a nurse).

"There aren't many places that have that tradition Bingham does," she said. "It's going to be tough to feel the same way anywhere else."

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