

Features



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McGowan Earns All-State; Signs With TRC

APRIL 12TH 2011 BY UNKNOWN

McGowan Earns All-State; Signs With TRC

By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports

1,777 career points.

53% shooting from the floor.

74% from the free-throw line.

696 rebounds.

86 charges drawn (a *MSHSAA* record).

142 three-pointers in his senior season (second in the *MSHSAA* record books).

As you can see, Jordan McGowan had an outstanding career for the Bernie Mules. McGowan, the 18 year old son of Brian & Valerie McGowan and Charles & Tara Stewart, was a big part of helping the Mules earn a record of 128-24 during his career, including three straight District Championships and two consecutive trips to the finals of the Show-Me Showdown.

After his senior season, McGowan was named First Team All-State in Class 2.

“This means a lot to me,” McGowan said. “We had a lot of fun, and getting recognized at that level is a great feeling. It didn’t feel very good coming out with second place [in state] again, but there’s thousands of kids that wish they could have at least made it to the Final Four.”

McGowan was also named the SEMO Conference Player of the Year and Defensive Player of the Year, coupled with Bernie head coach Brad Botsch being named Coach of the Year.

“We have expectations, and he had expectations, but the individual stuff isn’t something we really have goals for,” Botsch commented. “We don’t look at ‘we want to make this or make that’; we just want to do the best we can as a team. If any individual awards come along the way, that’s just the icing on the cake. [Jordan] earned the honor and he’s well deserving of it. He’s worked really hard to get where he is now.”

“[Jordan] is one of the hardest-working kids we’ve ever had come through this program,” Botsch added. “He’s never been tremendously blessed with athletic ability, but he’s worked hard and excelled at almost every aspect of the game. He definitely has brought a lot to our team and our program over the last four years.”

Along with all the post-season honors this young man has earned, he has also signed a letter of intent to continue his basketball career at Three Rivers College, and will play under local legend Gene Bess. Bess is one of the winningest coaches in any level of college basketball, racking up a 1114-290 record in his 41 seasons at TRC.

“Coach Bess has the most wins in any level of college basketball,” McGowan said. “It’s going to be great to go over there and perform for him and play with the other great talents [Three Rivers is] getting.”

McGowan hasn’t been informed of how much he can expect to play, but he doesn’t seem too concerned with playing time.

“We haven’t talked about my role much, but I’m more worried about winning games,” McGowan continued. “[Bess is] one of the greatest coaches to ever coach the game and I believe if you just listen to him, he can get you anywhere you want to go. We could make a run in the post-season with the talent we have.”

Botsch expressed similar excitement for his former player, citing the long player-coach relationship the two have had.

“I’ve had three or four different players move on [to play at the next level],” Botsch said. “I’ve coached [Jordan] in some capacity since he was in fourth grade. Being able to see him move onto the next level and play for a great program like

<images/Blog Images/Local News/McGowan.jpg>

Three Rivers was a great feeling as a coach. I think he’s always been the type of kid that has the desire to play at the college level because of his work ethic. He’s a kid that you’re pretty sure as a coach that will stick with it. There are a lot of kids that go to school and play for a year, sometimes two, but I think Jordan is the type of kid that’s in it, and he’ll be committed to it.”

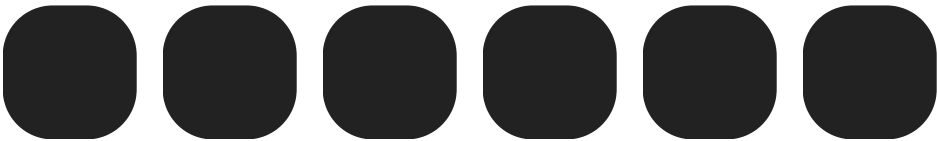
Always noted as a hard worker, McGowan seemed eager to get in the gym to start working for next season.

“We can start working out now if we want,” McGowan said. “We get to go to several camps this summer and I’m looking forward to it, but as far as practice, not until baseball season is over. I’ll have plenty of opportunities to get in the gym this summer and improve my game, and I’m looking forward to it.”

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Elk Arrive Back In Show-Me State This Month

APRIL 11TH 2011 BY NEWS

JEFFERSON CITY Mo – The first group of elk that are part of the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) elk restoration project are scheduled to arrive in the state on April 30.

The 34 elk will complete their 90-day quarantine and final health testing in Kentucky before being transported by a semi-driven livestock trailer to Missouri. The elk will be released from Kentucky pending approval by the Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA).

The elk also have been fitted with ear tags, microchips and GPS collars. After their overnight journey, the elk will be unloaded into a three-acre, double-fenced holding pen on MDC's Peck Ranch Conservation Area in southeast Missouri.


The pen is divided into four sections with one for young bulls, one for yearling calves, one for cows and one for pregnant cows.

Peck Ranch is part of a 346-square-mile elk restoration zone covering parts of Shannon, Carter and Reynolds counties. MDC will record the elk arrival and unloading into the holding pen through video and photography and post the images on its website (www.MissouriConservation.org) the afternoon of April 30.

"We know Missourians are very excited to have free-ranging elk back in the state and are eager to see them," said MDC Elk Project Coordinator Ron Dent. "While we would like to allow public viewing of their arrival and while they are in the holding pen, that is not compatible with the animals' welfare."

Dent explained that MDC's first priority is the health and safety of the elk.

"These are wild animals that have a strong natural fear of humans," he said. "The elk can become very nervous if they hear, see or smell people nearby. Minimizing contact with humans while the elk are in this confined space is vital to keeping them from getting more stressed, and possibly hurting themselves or other elk by trying to flee."

Dent added that MDC staff caring  for the elk will also minimize their contact with the animals. While the elk are in the holding pen, MDC staff will provide food and water daily and keep daily logs on each animal's activities. MDC staff will also provide around-the-clock security at the holding pen.

The elk will remain in the holding pen for up to two weeks pending results from the final round of health tests performed in Kentucky. Elk will be released from the pen following approval of the final test results by the MDA.

Once the elk have been approved for release from the holding pen, MDC staff will open the gates and allow the elk to move on their own into the 12,000-acre Refuge Area of Peck Ranch.

The Refuge will remain closed to the public for a few months to allow the elk to acclimate to the immediate area. During this time, the elk may move on their own from the Refuge into the larger restoration zone where public viewing is unrestricted.

Dent explained that this "soft release" into a temporary holding pen is strongly preferred over a "hard release" where the animals are unloaded from a livestock trailer directly into open country.

"We've learned from other states with restored elk, such as Kentucky and Tennessee, that a hard release with a crowd of people around increases stress on the elk," he said. "A hard release prompts them to bolt from the trailer and immediately spread out into a much larger area as they flee human contact. Our soft release into the holding pen will give the animals time to become more comfortable in their new environment. Allowing them to then leave the holding pen on their own will make them less likely to travel far from the release site."

He added that catching sight of elk in the restoration zone may be a challenge for people.

"This is not a zoo-type environment," Dent said. "These several dozen animals will have more than 221,500 acres in the rugged terrain of the restoration zone to call home. It will take some time to figure out where they congregate and where good viewing locations are. As we learn more and as the herd grows, viewing will get better and better."

For more information on Missouri's elk restoration efforts, visit www.MissouriConservation.org and search "elk restoration."

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Kleffer: The Hard Work Paid Off

APRIL 07TH 2011 BY UNKNOWN

Kleffer: The Hard Work Paid Off

By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports

It's no secret that Richland's basketball team had its share of struggles this season - posting a 7-18 record and being knocked out in the first round of both the Stoddard County and Bloomfield Christmas Tournaments.

Given the tough nature of the season, one would think that there wasn't a standout player on the squad.

Think again.

Ryan Kleffer, the son of Steve and Cheryl Kleffer, is a senior this year at Richland High School, and was recently named to the Missouri Boys All-State Basketball team in Class 1.

“I’ve always wanted to make All-State,” Kleffer said. “I did well last year, but didn’t get any awards. I’m just proud of myself for all the work finally paying off. I never got anything - all conference, nothing - it all happened my senior year.

Kleffer definitely put in hard work during the off-season, adding nearly 15 pounds of muscle to his 6’3” frame.

“He got on the *Bigger, Faster, Stronger* program at school this year and gained about 15 pounds of muscle,” Richland head basketball coach John Walker said, “and that really helped him in the post. He’s listed as a guard, but I used him a lot in the post this season (Kleffer recorded a 38” vertical jump).”

“Most of my jumping ability came naturally,” Kleffer continued, “but I worked hard all year to be able to get up more.”

A solid player all-around for the Rebels this season, Kleffer averaged upwards of 25 points, eight boards, and two blocked shots per game.

“We expected a pretty good season from [Kleffer] this year,” Walker continued. “He’s a good scorer (putting up 1,700 points in his career at Richland), and has a good three-point shot - he led the team in threes this year. He also shoots good from the free-throw line.”

Kleffer also possessed great endurance, rarely coming out of a game this year.

“He played a lot of minutes this year,” Walker added. “I can only think of five or six games that he really came out of.”

Kleffer began playing basketball competitively at a very young age, and cited an AAU coach as being key to his development as a player.

“I started playing competitively in third grade,” Kleffer said. “We had a school travelling team. In fifth grade, I played for an AAU team in Illinois - The Illinois Jets - and my coach Emerson Bowie was really influential on my game.”

Collegiate attention is pretty open for this young man, with several junior colleges already

making offers.

“State Fair and Cleveland State have offered me scholarships so far,” Kleffer continued. “Cleveland State has given me the best offer, but I’m looking to get some more tryouts this spring and get some more offers.”

“North Dakota State and Northwest Missouri State have also expressed interest,” Walker added. “He’s also going to try out for Three Rivers this summer. He’d like to go to a two-year school first to improve his skills, and hopefully transfer to a Division One school after that.”

Kleffer doesn’t seem to have any skills that need a lot of improving in his game, but his coach did note his defensive struggles.

“He has all the tools there, and that’s what I keep trying to tell people, and that’s what I’ve told him all year long,” Walker said. “When it clicks, he’s great defensively. He had a great defensive showing during a tryout at Cleveland State. He just has to put everything together.”

Walker noted Kleffer’s performance in the classroom as being just as impressive as his ability on the court.

“He does well in his classes, gets A’s and B’s,” Walker continued. “He’s an all-around good kid. He doesn’t get in much trouble, and he listens well.”

Kleffer also noted a pair of his favorite players, and even likened his style of play to one of them.

“I’ve always liked LeBron [James, of the Miami Heat]. I really liked Terrence Jones, from Kentucky, this year. I think I play a lot like [Jones],” Kleffer said, laughing, “except I’m about six inches shorter than he is.”

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Flannigan: All-State 'A Great Achievement'

APRIL 06TH 2011 BY NEWS

Flannigan: All-State 'A Great Achievement'

*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

Editor's Note: This is the first of a three-part series featuring the Stoddard County basketball players named to Missouri All-State Basketball teams.

One of the first things you notice about Alan Flannigan is how tall he is. At least to someone who is 5-foot-4, Alan is tall!

But one of the other impressions just might have to be how humble and unassuming the Dexter High School senior is. Somewhat soft yet extremely articulate, intelligent, grounded, focused, and (and here's that word again) - humble.

Flannigan has led the Dexter Bearcats on the basketball court during the 2010-2011 season and was named recently to the Missouri Boys' All-State Basketball Team for Class 4. During his senior year, Flannigan had an average of 24.6 points per game and over 12 rebounds.

It's a finale in a high school career that has included a number of top honors and plenty of big games for the young Dexter man.

"It's something (being named All-State) that I've worked hard for and been hoping I would get. It's a great achievement," Flannigan said while sitting on a bench in the lobby by the high school gym. "I give a lot of credit to the guys I played with and the coaches, and my parents."

Early Start To The Game

For those who have known him, it would almost seem as though there has not been a time when Alan Flannigan was not playing basketball. The assumption wouldn't be far off the mark. Flannigan started playing basketball when he was a kindergarten student – for his older brother's fourth grade team!

"It was the first time that I scored," he recalled. "I was in kindergarten playing with the big guys. I used to get to go to practice and go through drills and stuff. I would only get to play if we were up by a ton. I got in a couple of games and it was a lot of fun."

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He was hooked on the game, and the basketball hasn't stopped. It's something he works at – hard and diligently. He practices, practices, practices. He is still – in the off-season – putting in about four hours of conditioning and shooting every day.

Flannigan admits he likes the game's competitive nature.

"It's a high paced game. For me, it just fills that competitive urge more than any other. It's just what I love to do. It's what I put all my time, energy and effort into," he said.

But Flannigan also still finds time for his studies and maintains the same level of excellence with academics that he does with athletics.

'You Work Hard'

"You just have to get it done," he said. "You work hard while you're at school so that way you don't have as much homework at home. Any free time and you can't waste it; you gotta be doing something at all times. Sleep's at a premium."

Flannigan says his dad, Charlie Flannigan, is his hero.

“He really works hard and has taught me a lot of good life lessons. He’s taught me everything I know about basketball,” the young Flannigan says of his father. “He’s taught me to be a competitor and never give up and always to be a fighter when it comes to sports. That’s what has really given me an edge – my competitiveness and will to do the work – to do what has to be done to win.”

His greatest cheerleaders are his parents – Jana and Charlie Flannigan. He comments that they have always been right there for every game.

“My parents are up there at every game – sitting up there whether I’m playing well or playing poorly. They’re always yelling and screaming for me,” he said. Sometimes, he admits, he thinks they might “take it a little too far” but he appreciates and values their support. “I know it’s just ‘cause they care.”

The All-State title is not the only award the Dexter senior has received recently. Last month Flannigan was named SEMO Conference Player of the Year and received the John Gibbs Award – the first time a Bearcat has received the recognition in basketball.

“It’s a great honor to receive the SEMO Conference Player of the year,” he said. “The last 8 or 9 guys or have won it are all Division I players and have had successful careers in college.”

Flannigan noted that recent recipients include the Hansborough brothers – Tyler and Ben – from Poplar Bluff.

“It’s a great conference and tons of great teams. For me to win this is humbling and a great honor,” he said.

The Next Adventure

Flannigan signed a National Letter of Intent early in the school year – before the start of the basketball season – to play ball next season at Lafayette College in Easton, Penn.

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“The balance of athletics and academics is second-to-none; it’s a great fit,” he said of

Lafayette.

One of America's oldest colleges, Lafayette has roughly 2,400 students and more than 200 full-time faculty. Lafayette is a Division I school in the Patriot League.

Flannigan has visited the college said he feels the school plays a style of basketball that will be a solid fit. In addition, Flannigan will join fellow Southeast Missouri native Ryan Willan on the Leopards' squad. Willan will be a senior next year and played high school ball for Notre Dame Regional High School in Cape Girardeau.

The coaches at Lafayette seem to care a lot about the players, Flannigan said, and "want the players to be great people as well as great basketball players."

"It's kinda like an adventure – to go out and be far away from home and on your own. It's something exciting that I look forward to," he said. "It'd be really nice if, after college, I could go overseas and play somewhere. I haven't set my mind on anything yet. Hopefully, that's what the next four years is about."

A year of memories – All-Tournament Teams for Christmas Tournament and County Tournament, SEMO Conference Player of the Year, and finally being named to the Missouri All-State Team.

"Dexter's a special place," he reflected. "Tons of memories of growing up; I made friends and connections here. It's going to hold a special place in my heart forever. Someday I'll be back and maybe my kids will go to school here!"

Favorite Basketball Memory: Winning the Stoddard County Tournament as a sophomore and again as a senior

Least Favorite Basketball Memory: Loosing any game

Basketball Hero: Blake Griffin (power forward with the Los Angeles Clippers) "He's unbelievable."

Favorite Word: "Swish"

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Energy + Pink = Big Success

APRIL 03RD 2011 BY NEWS

Energy + Pink = Big Success

*By Annabeth Miller,
ShowMe Times Editor*

It's amazing what a small group of young girls, a lot of energy, and a big splash of pink can accomplish!

The T.S. Hill Middle School volleyball teams accomplished a lot last week, with the first-ever "Dig Pink" volleyball game in Dexter. In just a handful of days the girls organized, plan and energized a benefit game to help local women facing breast cancer and along the way united area folks behind a common cause.

The gymnasium at the middle school was packed Thursday evening for the Dig Pink game, complete with a sea of pink on the court and in the stands and a real buzz that energized everyone.

Literally planned and organized in just days, the girls and their coaches and parents had put everything into place – ordered the pink balls and referee whistles, contacted a local organization that would receive the funds, collected donations for a silent auction, published the event and decorated the school. It was a complete effort on the part of the two middle school teams and their supporters.

And in the end, the effort was monumental – and raised important awareness about the fight against breast cancer and funds to help the cause.

“I am very proud of the volleyball girls and coaches in the effort they put forth not only on the court but into the Dig Pink event,” said middle school assistant principal Angie Duncan. “I am very thankful for the community support in making the event successful.”

Coach Melissa Hahn said she was excited to see the stands full of fans for the game and for the community support that “fired up” the teams.

“Teachers and coaches are always looking for ways to motivate their students/players. We want them to make those connections where they will take what they have learned, build upon it and use it in their lives. I really feel that the preparations leading up to the ‘Dig Pink’ event and the game itself provided these girls with an experience that will stay with them way beyond middle school,” Hahn said.

Hahn said the girls could feel the energy of the crowd and the support of the community behind their efforts.

“It energized them not only to play awesome volleyball, but to work hard and to give back,” she said. “Our team huddle saying is ‘How do we play? - HARD - SMART – TOGETHER’! These girls are smart, work hard and together can make a very big difference in our community.”

Working hard, smart and together the girls did make a difference, raising \$2,133.95. They decided as a team that the money would be given to 18 Fore Life and designated to help local women fighting breast cancer.

Scott Kruse of the 18 Fore Life organization heaped praise on the girls and the community.

“Nothing about this community's generosity surprises you anymore,” Kruse said. “When great people run with a great idea, great things can happen and it did. The players and coaches were amazing. They literally threw this together and yet it looked as if they had spent a month planning and organizing. I would say they have proven to be champions on the court, but this shows an understanding of wanting to do something more than just win games. This was just an incredible night.”

Kruse noted that the winner of a 50-50 drawing was from Poplar Bluff. But the gentleman

knew the work of the 18 Fore Life organization and donated his prize money back to the Dig Pink cause.

Hahn is looking forward to the Dig Pink event growing next year.

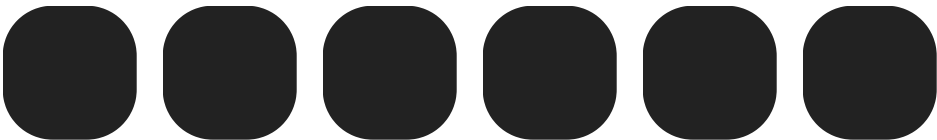
“We have already started planning next year's DIG PINK event and a few of my eighth grade players let me know they want to participate and help out even though they will be in high school,” the coach said. “I look forward to watching this event grow bigger every year. I also look forward to following this very special and talented group of 7th and 8th grade volleyball players over the next several years. I am confident they will continue to amaze me.”

And yes, both the seventh and eighth grade girls won their games against Poplar Bluff – both in just two sets!

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