Game Day Kaimin, February 3, 2001

Associated Students of the University of Montana
Simarron Schildt spent her youth playing hoops with boys two years older than her. Now she's all grown up and has become the most noteworthy sixth-woman in Lady Griz history.

Story by Courtney Lowery
Playing with the big boys

By Courtney Lowery

The East Glacier boys basketball team takes the floor at Browning Middle School gym. The players gather around their coaches, preparing for the game. Starting line-ups. Tip off. The game begins.

Eighth-grader Sterling Schildt is matched up with a big guy. Sterling is intimidated.

He is pulled from the game and a lanky 12-year-old checks in. Watching from the sidelines, he sees this player handle the big guy with no inhibition. He’s a bit embarrassed, but can’t help but be a little proud — he just got pulled in favor of his little sister.

It was 1992 and Simarron Schildt had hit the big time. In her memory the Browning Middle School gym is enormous. To a sixth grade girl used to playing in a half-court gym with walls out of bounds lines, it must have seemed that this court was endless.

Although her father first put a basketball in her hands in the third grade, Simarron put a basketball in her hands and learned quickly. She learned to respect them on the court.

When Kareem wore them, they were anything but.

Sterling remembers that playing with rec specs is not for the faint of heart. He is pulled from the game and strapped on, they were anything but.

"It was like tunnel vision. You never really realize how much you use your peripheral vision until you get hit in the side of the head with a loose ball and don’t even see it coming," Sterling says.

"Playing with rec specs is not a good experience, but we’d do it again," Simarron’s vocabulary. When Kareem wore them, he always did. Dad made us wear them."

Sterling says he endured rec spec jokes all the way to high school, even after he ditched them for his first pair of sunglasses. When the bespectacled Schildts were teased about their gear off the court, players learned quickly to respect them on the court.

Both exceled in high school; both were recruited by college coaches but didn’t take any offers. Sienna and Sierra have just finished their last season at Browning High, and permanent fixture in the field house.

While other college students are lucky to see their parents once, maybe twice a semester, the eight-member Schildt crew crashes almost every weekend to watch Simarron play. Lady Griz is a section of Schildts in the Adams Center. They drive three hours to the games.

For the Schildt family, it’s a love that just won’t end.

As the Schildt kids got taller and the Schildt dream expanded, the kids got taller. Simarron didn’t talk for two years. She was quiet, she was a pleaser, she was the personification of a score.

Shayna added to this. She’s the personification of a heart. She’s just a great kid. She’s like a cat out there. She’s just a quiet player, one who doesn’t do anything for me. It just clouds my thinking. I can’t focus if I’m angry. I’ve always just been that way," she says.

"It’s not that I don’t care. I care, but I just get anything done if I concentrate on those mistakes."

"She’s like a cut out there. She kind of slinks around and gets things done in her own quiet way," Rocheleau says. "She’s just a great kid. We even sometimes tease her about being too nice.

Sterling laughs about his sister in high school, always making friends with players from other teams. She wasn’t one to hate someone because of a score.

"Calm" is the word she uses. "Finesse" is the word her coaches use, but "heart" is the only way her brother can put it.

"She does a lot of things out there that are intangible. Things that don’t show up on the stat sheet," Sterling says.

That’s just the kind of player she is. I guess that is just a player with... heart."

"Stats" may not even be in Simarron’s vocabulary. When asked what her career high in...
Around the Sky

THE WEEKLY REPORT OF NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BIG SKY CONFERENCE

EASTERN WASHINGTON AT MONTANA • CAL STATE SACRAMENTO AT IDAHO STATE • PORTLAND STATE AT MONTANA STATE • CAL STATE NORTHIDGE AT WEBER STATE

Casey Temple
GameDay Kaimin

While it may be a surprise the Lady Griz aren't dominating the Big Sky this season, it's no surprise that Idaho State is doing as well as it is, jumping to a 6-0 record in the conference. Anyone who was in attendance at last year's Big Sky Tournament in Missoula knew that the future was bright for the Lady Bengals. Idaho State, presently 13-4, returned three starters off the best women's basketball team in Bengal history. Well, at least until this season. The team's general is fiery head coach Ardie McLnelly, who has made this traditionally dismal team a championship contender in just five seasons in Pocatello. McLnelly, the best coach in basketball ever to coach at Idaho State, is doing as well as anyone that the Lady Cats (5-2 in the conference) won 65-58.

And the fact that Cal State Northridge beat Montana State 72-65 shows just how strong this conference is. Led by an impressive scoring trio of Kristi Rice (12.7 ppg, 7.6 rpg, 22 blocks), Sha'Tasha Allen (9.9 ppg), LaShunda Fowler (9.8 ppg) and Monica Hernandez (5.32 apg), the Matadors may be the Big Sky's best offensive force.

On an interesting note, Cal State Northridge boasts players from such homes as Paris (Lynda Amari), Antwerp, Belgium (Daphne Verrept) and Belgrade, Serbia (Neda Milic).

Like the men's side, Sacramento State and Portland State occupy the depths of the conference. It's a position Sacramento State has gotten used to in Big Sky athletics.

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— Chad Dundas
22 Jamie Granger Guard
A junior from Stanwood Wash., Granger contributes five points per game, but makes sure her teammates are pouring in the buckets. Leading the team in assists with 62, Granger's got the golden-guard touch for squeezing the rock in tight places.

13 Michelle Demetruk Guard
A 5-4 sophomore from the sugary community of Maple Valley, Wash., Demetruk had six assists last week against Sac State as the Eagles cruised to a 67-54 victory. She's also sixth in the Big Sky in steals. The Griz best take care of the rock if they don't want to go the way of the Hornets.

33 Molly Carlson Center
Carlson can be counted on by coach Pfeifer and the gang to pour in a handful of points night in and night out. At only 6-1, though, she'll be challenged in the key by Laura Valley, who checks in at 6-3. If the Eagles are to come away with a win, Carlson will have to win the battle inside.

34 Janelle Ruen Forward
Ruen is a crafty sophomore from Post Falls with a bad habit of taking things that don't belong to her. She's third in the Big Sky in steals. Montana arenas are good to her, too (she went off for 15 the first time EWU played the Cats). Scary, considering her 49 percent shooting average.

25 Allie Bailey Forward
This junior from the popular vacation destination of Spokane, Wash., is a force on defence for the Eagles. Bailey is third in the Big Sky in rebounds and fourth in conference in blocks. In fact, the whole EWU team is big on rejection (it's second in the BSC in blocks).

Head Coach: Jocelyn Pfeifer
Assistants: Anna West
Lynn Kennedy

EWU
Eastern Washington

3 Alison Chase G/F 6-0 Jr.
10 Kelli Pilkington G/F 5-9 Sr.
11 Kathleen Nygaard F 6-2 Jr.
12 Jacqueline Bemmon G 5-0 Fr.
13 Michelle Demetruk G 5-4 So.
14 Heather Rednour G 5-8 Jr.
20 Jennifer Paluck G/F 5-11 Jr.
22 Jamie Granger G 5-9 Jr.
25 Allie Bailey F 6-1 Jr.
32 Heather Thoelke G 6-0 Fr.
33 Molly Carlson F/C 6-1 Jr.
34 Janelle Ruen F 6-11 So.
50 Colleen DeGroot F 6-3 Fr.

EWU

Overhead at the
Probable Sta
Montana vs. Eastern Washington

There must be something in the water in Malta. Keller not only follows in the footsteps of other M-Ettes to kick booty for UM, following suit as well. In her Lady Griz debut, she poured in 13 points. She's a solid ball handler and was second on the team last year for rebounds — and she ain't towering over anybody, she's just tough.

She's quick, she's spunky and she's only a freshman. At the helm of UM's ship, this girl is showing maturity beyond her years. Between Brooklynn and LeAnn Montes, the Lady Griz are looking at years of strength at the point.

Moving into eighth place for Lady Griz all-time scoring, Cooper is making her way to legend-dom. Selvig tends to look to Lauren for on the court leadership — as do her teammates. She's got a pretty shot and a sharp drive and she can hold her own in the paint, a deadly combination.

What were we telling you about Malta? You'd better be listenin' to us when we talk about the Malta girls — they are the epitome of tough, smart and talented. Linda, already a three-time All-Big Sky selection, is coming back from a painful foot injury and is already back as the second leading scorer shooting 41 percent from the field.

Valley gives the Lady Griz size and strength in the middle. When the gals on the outside get all stoved up, they can go to the "Valley of doom." Look out, EWU girls. You don't want to be flying into her key unannounced.

The big news for Robin Selvig this week is his induction into the Hall of Fame, but all Bob is looking to concentrate on is the next contest. Bob is only one of 15 coaches working over the 500-win mark. Although struggling this year, Selvig is notorious for mid-season spurts.

LeAnn fills in at point guard, taking on a big role at crucial times and doing it well. She's an excellent defender, quick on her feet and handles the ball well. The three is nothing but another shot to this girl, so watch her on the outside.
Lady Griz look for second victory over Eagles

Bryan Haines
GameDay Kaimin

Montana plays host to Eastern Washington Saturday night in the second game of a three-game home stand, and both are in must-win situations. Montana, mired in a six-game shooting slump, must have the win to stay alive in the race for the Big Sky Conference title. Eastern meanwhile, has its sights set on gaining a berth in the conference tournament March 8-10.

Montana won the first meeting, 58-45 in Cheney, Wash., as the Lady Griz used a late run to put the game away. Leading only 46-43 with a little over five minutes left, Montana scored 12 of the final 14 points to secure the conference win. Lauren Cooper was one of three Lady Griz in double figures, scoring 12 points. Cheryl Keller and LaSha Cummings each added 10 in the win. Masked in the victory was the first of a string of poor shooting performances by Montana. The Griz shot a paltry 34.9 percent from the floor, but a great defensive effort held Eastern to an even worse 29.9 percent.

Heading into the game, Montana has lost two in a row and three of its last four to fall to 4-3 in the Big Sky, 12-6 overall. The Griz were swept on the road by Northern Arizona and Cal State-Northridge last weekend, as they once again failed to fire on all cylinders on offense.

Offensively, Montana must shoot the ball better as a team, plain and simple. As head coach Robin Selvig knows, they are not going to beat many teams shooting below 40 percent, no matter how well they play defense.

"In the early part of the season we were hitting the ball well, but not playing consistent defense. Now, it is the opposite. Hopefully we can get our offense going while still playing good defense at home," Selvig said.

As head coach, Selvig knows, they are not going to beat many teams shooting below 40 percent, no matter how well they play defense.

"It's always hard to play at Montana. They'll have three to four thousand people there so we need to make sure we keep the crowd out of it," Montana head coach Don Holst said.

Indeed, teams are playing their best basketball against the Grizzlies. Case in point, Idaho State. The Bengals knocked down 16 of 29 three-point shots, including 9 of 12 in the second half to blow open the game in Pocatello and defend the Grizzlies, 97-69 Jan. 18.

The Grizzlies were simply ambushed. But two nights later, the same Bengals played Montana State and shot a paltry 3-15 from behind the three-point arc, losing badly to the Bobcats.

"We were defending champs and teams are going to be ready for us no matter what," Holst said. "They certainly aren't going to look by us. That's part of the territory. You have to go out there and play like everyone's going to play great against you."

And consequently, the Grizzlies have struggled a little. UM is currently 2-5 in the conference as of Wednesday and 7-11 overall. But in those conference losses, UM could have very well won four of those five games. In games against Weber State, Montana State, Eastern Washington and Cal State-Northridge, the Griz had plenty of chances to win coming down the stretch but a few bad possessions cost them wins.

What is even more frustrating for Holst has been his team's inability to win away games. UM is 0-7 on the road this season, but even worse, it is 0-3 on the road in the Big Sky conference.

Holst readily admits there is no chance of his team winning the regular season title and hosting the tournament again. The Grizzlies' goal now is simply making the tournament. Only the top six teams make the Big Sky conference tournament, and right now the Griz are not in that top six. As of Wednesday, they were in eighth place, a game behind Idaho State at 2-4 and two games behind Portland State at 3-5.

"There is a real sense of urgency," Holst said. "Because we only have nine game left to qualify for the tournament and we have only two wins."

Holst believes seven wins in conference will be good enough to secure a spot in the Big Sky tournament. The Grizzlies have only nine games left on the Grizzly schedule, four of which are home. Simple math determines that the Griz must win a game somewhere other than Dahlberg Arena.

"It's really crucial that we go on the road and get a win," Holst said. "We can't just think we'll win our four remaining games at home and limp into the tournament.

The ultimate goal is to not only make the tournament but to get at least one win on the road, win the four remaining games at home and build some momentum so the Grizzlies are playing their basketball when the tournament rolls around.

"We're working toward getting our share of wins ... getting into the tournament," Holst said. "I guarantee that this group of kids will be so excited to play in that tournament that we'll play great. And I don't think anybody is going to want to play them."
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she just shakes her head. She can't seem to remember.

In the 20's?

"No, I don't think so ... I really can't even guess."

And when you mention her Sixth Player of the Year award she received last season, she just blushes and looks at the floor.

" Awards don't really mean anything to me."

Sixth Player of the Year.

She says she's happy with the others. It's one of those things. You can't remove something from your life. It is not something you can ignore.

Even though there is really no future in it anymore, I love it. It really is the only one I ever like to play," he says.

And indeed, it is just a game, but it is a game that Simarron and Sterling have gone in separate directions while continuing to play.

Sterling and Simarron may have gone in separate directions when it comes to the game, but you can hear in their voices how close they are to each other in every other way.

Today, it is still Sterling who cheers the loudest when Simarron rises from the bench to check in.