

COUNTY NEWS REVIEW

\$1

SERVING ISANTI & CHISAGO COUNTIES

www.countynewsreview.com

Volume 144 Number 52 THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2019



From all of us at the County News Review and the Scotsman!

Rebekah Dahlman turns wounds into wisdom



Rebekah Dahlman

by John Wagner

john.wagner@ecm-inc.com

In high school, basketball came easily to Rebekah Dahlman.

She led Braham Area High School to a state title as a sophomore in 2011 as well as two other trips to the championship game and four appearances overall. Dahlman was voted Miss Basketball for the state of Minnesota in 2013 and twice was a McDonald's All-American, setting a state record for career points (5,060) that has never been matched.

"I felt as if I was on top of the world," Dahlman said of that time in her life. "I felt I was prepared for the college world, and I was dreaming about playing in the WNBA and pursuing some really big-picture goals."

And she showed no signs of letting up as she began her career at national powerhouse Vanderbilt, scoring a team-high 23 points in her first collegiate game – the most for any Commodores player in their

first game in school history.

She started Vanderbilt's first nine games that season and averaged 11.4 points per game. Dahlman ranked among the top 3-point shooters in the country, making 51.4% of her shots from behind the arc.

And then things started to go wrong. Horribly, suddenly, unexpectedly wrong.

Thanks for nothing

"Around Thanksgiving of my first year at Vanderbilt, I told my roommate my arm didn't feel right," Dahlman said. "During practice the next day I got this shooting pain in my right arm, and I shot an airball. I remember the coach blowing her whistle and yelling at us to go to the baseline, but I thought, 'I didn't do it on purpose!' So then I looked at my arm, and it was black and blue."

Dahlman was rushed to the hospital, and after some testing she met with a grim-faced doctor.

"The doctor said, 'Rebekah, you're not going to be able to play basketball again,'" she said. "I had a very serious blot clot, and he said I would have to be on blood thinners for the rest of my life. And he said I would need surgery as soon as possible. That was the hardest thing I ever faced in my whole life. ... I was lost, because it was hard and scary."

Eventually doctors determined that one of Dahlman's ribs was pinching a nerve and causing the clots. So after surgery to remove part of the rib, she was forbidden to shoot or do anything with her right, or shooting, arm.

"So I would go to the gym on my own, so no one knew I was working out – because I wasn't supposed to," she said. "And I was practicing shooting with my left hand, in case I couldn't shoot with my right hand ever again."

That underscores a major difference

between Dahlman and many others: Instead of accepting the conventional wisdom, she started looking for ways to solve her problem.

"I just wanted to find a way. I wanted to have hope," she said. "I wasn't good with my left hand, so if I came back and was OK, then I would have developed my left hand and I would be a better player."

After multiple procedures and extensive rehab, Dahlman got the good news: Her basketball career was not finished.

"When the doctor said I could lace up my shoes again, I've never been so happy in all my life," she said. "I love basketball so much, I couldn't wait to get back in the gym. ... And when I got back on the floor, it was totally a blessing. I was so grateful."

But as her arm problems vanished, new problems arose.

Thanks for more obstacles

Dahlman had a solid year as a red-shirt freshman, averaging a team-best 10.3 points per game while leading the Commodores in a number of other cat-

egories. For her strong performance she was named to the Southeastern Conference's All-Freshman team.

After the season ended, her world was rocked again: Dai-Jon Parker, a former player on the Vanderbilt men's basketball team, died in a boating accident in May 2015.

"Mentally I was all over the place," Dahlman admitted. "I kept thinking, 'When will life get better?' I was in love with this guy, and we were such great friends. His whole team loved him. ... Dai-Jon had texted me, telling me he was going on a boat and would talk to me later and that he loved me – and that was the last time I ever heard from him."

While missing Parker greatly, Dahlman said she remains thankful for the effect he had on her life.

"Dai-Jon would never say 'goodbye,' he would always say, 'See you later,' because goodbye was so final," she said.

See **DAHLMAN** on page 13



Braham's Rebekah Dahlman holds the section championship trophy in March 2012. That season the Bombers lost in the quarterfinals of the Class AA tournament, marking the only time in her four high school seasons that Braham did not reach the championship game. *File photo*

Index

Your Voice.....	5-6
What's Happening.....	8-9
Focus on Faith/Senior.....	11
Obituaries.....	12
Government.....	14-17
'How to Cook a Turkey'.....	21
Classifieds.....	24-25
Public Notices.....	26-31
Sports.....	32-35
Business Spotlight.....	36

234 So. Main St.
Cambridge, MN 55008
(763) 691-6000

FAX (763) 689-4372

www.countynewsreview.com

facebook.com/CountyNewsReview



DAHLMAN*Continued from front*

“So I try to never say ‘goodbye’ again. But everything happens for a reason, and he has a place in my heart because of the impact he had on me and on other people too.”

So Dahlman shouldered on, but her numbers suffered. She averaged 8.6 points and 3.2 rebounds as a sophomore, and before her junior year there was a coaching change at Vanderbilt. The Commodores started the new season 11-1, including a win over Duke and a narrow loss to Louisville.

Then – you guessed it – disaster struck. “I tore my hamstring and I was out again,” Dahlman said. “I just couldn’t catch a break. Not only could I not practice, I couldn’t even walk down the street because of the pain.”

She averaged 14.5 points per game in her first six contests, but the hamstring problems, combined with a sprained ankle and a concussion, caused her to finish with just 6.0 points and 1.9 rebounds per game.

To attempt to change her luck, she decided to transfer.

“I got my degree from Vanderbilt, and I decided to pursue a master’s degree in business,” Dahlman said. “I realized at that point I needed to focus on my career. I knew basketball was not forever, so I started to focus on a career path after basketball.”

Thanks for a second chance

DePaul women’s basketball coach Doug Bruno remembers the first time he traveled to Braham to watch Rebekah Dahlman play basketball.

“It was classic small-town America: The town was shut down because everyone was at the gym,” he said. “And Bekah was a magical player. I’ve seen hundreds of games, and when you see something special, you know it. And watching her play, I knew she was special.”

But Dahlman committed to Vanderbilt before she and Bruno made a connection, and the coach watched her ca-

reer from afar.

“I’ve learned that Bekah is a really unique and special young woman, and I mean that in a positive way,” he said. “I didn’t really get to know her in high school. In college, I remember watching her on tape play when I was scouting, but that was it. But I remember talking to her when she reopened her recruiting, and that was a lot of fun. She was older, and she had gone through a lot of things at Vanderbilt. ... And we talked about having one great senior year.”

Dahlman was immediately hooked.

“I had one of the best conversations I ever had with a coach,” she said. “Despite all of the things that happened at Vanderbilt, he believed in me – as both a player and a person. As soon as I got off the phone with him, I knew I wanted to play at DePaul.”

So Dahlman committed to the school, then spent the summer learning the team’s style and coaches and fellow players for one final, crowning season.

You know what happened next, right?

“In my very first game, I was going up for a rebound, and a girl undercut me,” Dahlman said. “I fell down hard on my hand – and I broke my hand. The bone was almost sticking out of my skin. ... I thought for a split second I would call it quits. But I knew I couldn’t end things this way. I hadn’t done anything at DePaul. I didn’t want to leave on that note.”

The hand healed in time for her to return to the court for the NCAA Tournament, and suddenly she faced another choice.

“The team was doing so well, they didn’t need me,” Dahlman said. “So coach and I sat down and talked; the choices were to play in the NCAA Tournament, then call it a career, or try and get a full year – but a sixth year – from the NCAA.”

There were no guarantees the NCAA would grant that final year, though. But Dahlman decided to appeal for the sixth



Braham’s Rebekah Dahlman drives to the basket in a DePaul contest against Wisconsin-Green Bay last season.

year; she wrote a letter to the NCAA, detailing the adversity she had faced over the previous five seasons.

“I missed basketball so much,” she said. “And I told them about everything, because I did not want my college basketball career to end this way. ... I wanted to show people who were injured that they could overcome.”

Finally, Dahlman caught a break: The NCAA granted her that final year.

Thanks for a final shot

Over the summer before that final season, DePaul’s team toured Europe, playing foreign opponents, sharpening up with extra practice dates, and seeing the sights in Rome and Paris.

“Right away, I felt it was going to be a great season,” Dahlman said. “And it was. We made it to the NCAA Tournament, and even though we lost in the first round, it was an amazing journey. I was so happy – I could never thank Coach Bruno and his staff, my teammates, and DePaul in general, enough for that final season.”

She joined a veteran Blue Demons team in 2018-19 and played in 34 games, averaging 6.5 points and 3.1 rebounds per game while finishing third on the team with 77 assists.

“She didn’t have the numerical season at DePaul I was hoping she would have, but she definitely had the impact we expected,” Bruno said. “For example, she was a great teammate. A magnificent teammate.”

“She was good for us every day in practice, and she was good for us at times in games as well.”

Dahlman was named DePaul’s Sixth Man of the Year and helped the Blue Demons to a 26-8 record that included winning the Big East Tournament title and earning an NCAA Tournament bid.

“Winning the Big East Tournament was the highlight of my college career,” she said.

Now Dahlman has given up basketball – well, sort of. She’s no longer playing competitively, but she hopes to remain in the sport on the business end.

“The ball stops bouncing eventually, and I wanted to get started on my career,” she said. “My angle, down the road, is to work for Nike. It’s one of the best sports companies in the world. I need to get experience, but I honestly believe I’m going to work my way up and eventually work for Nike.”

This past summer she worked with her brother, Noah, and with former Iowa State player Sherron Dorsey-Walker, offering basketball clinics and camps to interested future basketball players through Noah’s company, ND42.

“We traveled around the country, and even to Alaska,” Rebekah said. “It was great to explore the country, but it was even better to give back to kids, teaching them all the things that I learned in basketball.”

Bruno said he would love to have Dahlman on his DePaul staff if she ever wanted to coach.

“But I have no doubt she’s going to have a great career in whatever she does,” he said. “She’s a special human being, and I miss her presence every day.”

And while her college career did not match her dreams after graduating from Braham in 2013, Dahlman said she has no regrets.

“I truly believe that everything happens for a reason,” she said. “Even there were some terrible things that happened to me, none of the good things that came into my life without those bad things.”

So what advice would 25-year-old, seen-a-world-of-trouble Rebekah Dahlman give to that fresh-faced 18-year-old who traveled from Braham to begin her college basketball travels at Vanderbilt?

“Anything is possible,” she said. “And enjoy the time you have, because it flies by. Even when you have six years, it flies by. You have to enjoy every single moment of playing basketball, because you never know when it’s going to end.

“Cherish every moment. Cherish every friend you make. And know that you can fight through any adversity that hits you.”

Rebekah Dahlman

Birthday (age): Aug. 11, 1994 (25).

Parents: Nate and Kathy Dahlman.

Siblings: Brothers Isaiah, Noah, Jonah and Zach; sister Hannah.

Braham H.S. career: Dahlman led the Bombers to the Class 2A state title in 2011 as well as state appearances in 2010, 2012 and 2013. She was named First Team All-Minnesota all four years in high school. She was a two-time Gatorade Player of the Year in the state and was Miss Basketball in 2013. She also was a McDonald’s All-American that year.

State records: Dahlman holds the Minnesota high school girls basketball record with 5,060 points and is the only female player in state history to score more than 4,000 points. Her 1,165 points scored in 2013 is a state record; her 1,094 points in 2012 is fourth all-time, and her other seasons of 970 (2011) and 902 (2010) rank eighth and 12th, respectively. She scored 56 points in a home win over Ogilvie on Dec. 20, 2011, the school record and the third-highest single-game total in state history. She currently is second in Minnesota girls high school basketball history in career steals (908), 11th in career rebounds (1,509) and 14th in career assists (764).

Vanderbilt career: Dahlman played in nine games in her first year on campus and averaged 11.4 points per game. After redshirting after that season, she averaged 10.3 points per game in 2014-2015 and was named to the SEC’s All-Freshman team. She played in 31 games, including 12 starts, as a redshirt sophomore in 2015-2016, averaging 8.6 points and 3.2 rebounds per game. She played in 27 games in an injury-marred junior season, averaging 6.0 points and 1.9 rebounds per game. She was named to the SEC Winter Academic Honor Roll in both 2015-2016 and 2016-2017.

DePaul career: Dahlman transferred to the Chicago-based school but played in just one game in 2017-2018 before sustaining a season-ending injury. She played in 34 games, including 15 starts, in 2018-2019, averaging 6.5 points and 3.1 rebounds per game. She was named to the Big East All-Academic team in 2017-2018 and last season. She received DePaul’s Sixth Player of the Year Award in 2018-2019.

Worth noting: Dahlman is one of the three Dahlman children who held state basketball records at the time of their graduation. Isaiah Dahlman, who graduated from Braham in 2006, held the boys basketball career scoring record with 3,366; he currently stands fifth on the all-time list. Noah Dahlman, who graduated in 2007, held the boys career rebounding record with 1,434 and currently stands fifth on that list.

Small world: Dahlman’s grandfather, Naismith Hall of Famer John Kundla, coached NBA legend George Mikan with the Minneapolis Lakers. Mikan played his collegiate basketball at DePaul under Ray Meyer. Another one of Meyer’s players was Doug Bruno, Rebekah’s college coach with the Blue Demons.