Ball State Women’s Basketball: Beyond the Scoreboard

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Chloe A. Barnes

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

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Expected Date of Graduation
May 2012
Abstract

The Ball State University Women’s Basketball program is known as one of the premier division one basketball programs in the state of Indiana. The program itself has experienced great success since its inaugural season in 1974. However, in collegiate sports it is growing increasingly rare that personal relationships and individual growth take precedence over physical performance on the playing field. It is now becoming a trend in a majority of programs for basketball to be treated as a business and for personal relationships to fall by the wayside. The Ball State University Women’s Basketball program however, is one of the few exceptions to this trend. It is the relationships that myself and others have formed by being involved with this program that have caused us to grow and have shaped us into the individuals that we are today. I will provide a brief history of the Ball State Women’s Basketball program through a statistical analysis and then use responses gathered from personal interviews along with my own individual experiences to put forth a more personal perspective on the history of the program. It is my hope that these stories and experiences will provide proof that the value of the program extends far beyond the numbers shown on the scoreboard at the end of regulation.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Audrey Spencer for advising me through this project. Her support and guidance throughout this entire process has been instrumental in the effectiveness of this thesis. Her help during this task and throughout my entire college career will never be forgotten and will always be appreciated.

I would like to thank Shane, Beth, Kramer, Gracie, and Kellen for pushing me to be my best and for helping me see that my value as a person lies far beyond my athletic ability.

I would like to thank my teammates, for loving me and supporting me during my most trying moments and for helping make this project a success.
Three years ago, I was an incoming freshman and I wasn’t sure what to expect from being an “honors” student. Would there be more homework? Would people judge me? Would I be able to balance being an honors student and a division one women’s basketball player successfully? All of these questions plagued my thoughts up until the day of my very first honors class, HONORS 201 (Humanities). It was in this class where I first realized that I had made the right decision when I decided to become a member of the Honors College. It was in this class where I was reaffirmed that my thoughts were important, my opinions were welcome, and my debating was encouraged. It was also in this class where I felt that for the first time in a long time, I was learning something valuable.

During my first semester at Ball State, I was told by a professor that one goal of the Honors College is to encourage deeper thought and personal growth in honors students. When I asked how that was supposed to happen, he told me that growth happens when you take what you believe to be true, analyze it, compare it with opposing viewpoints, and then look at the issue again from all angles. When students open their minds to the unknown and think outside of their comfort zone growth occurs. This professor may have thought his words were meaningless, but it was those words that described my entire experience as a women’s basketball player at Ball State.
The comments that were shared with me during that first semester never left my thoughts. As my academic career has drawn to a close at Ball State, I have seen first-hand how an open environment in which free-thinking is encouraged can help a person grow. I know this because I have grown as a result of this type of environment. Without the Honors College, my experience at Ball State would have been a much different one, and without a doubt a much less fulfilling experience as well. Therefore, for my Senior Honors Thesis, I thought it was necessary to draw attention to an institution that helped me and every person that was a part of it, grow into better individuals by challenging us physically, emotionally, and mentally. The Ball State Women’s Basketball program has a long standing reputation as being one of the premier division one basketball programs in the state of Indiana. It has had numerous winning seasons, countless academic accolades, and a handful of successful alumni that have gone on to do great things in the realm of basketball and beyond. This program has not only shaped my life, but has also shaped the lives of countless others. My thesis will explore the history of this program both on and off the court, and will shed a light on the memories, experiences, and lessons that comforted me, challenged me, and ultimately caused me to grow into the person I am today.
Part One: Cardinals on the Court

The Ball State Women's Basketball program has been around for half a century and has since gained a reputation as one of the premier programs in the state of Indiana. In 1974, the program first made its debut under head coach Rosalie DiBrezzo. During her inaugural season, DiBrezzo posted a 17-6 record making the Ball State Cardinals a new force in the women's basketball world. Di Brezzo followed her first season with another successful season during her 1975-1976 campaign. During this time the team posted a school high 67 rebounds against Cincinnati and they also set the school record for most points in a single game vs. Taylor University. DiBrezzo ended her two year career with a 30-12 record. Those two seasons together set the record for the fewest losses in school history with six total losses.

After DiBrezzo's time spent at the helm of the program, Debbie Powers began her four season stint as head coach. 1976-1977 marked Powers' first season as head coach where she accumulated a record of 5 wins and 8 losses. Jane Finding also set a record for best point per game average during this season by posting an average of 20.5 points per contest. After her first season, Powers stepped down and was replaced by Sue Tussey shortly before the 1977-1978 season was about to begin. On December 10, 1978, and again on February 14, 1978, the Cardinals set two new school records. On December 10th against Chicago State, the Cardinals grabbed 61 rebounds and on February 14th the team grabbed 62 rebounds to put them in second and third place for the school record for most rebounds in a single game. That same year, Jane Finding set the school record for most free-throw attempts in a game when she attempted 25
free-throws against Indiana State on March 3, 1978. Finding made 14 of these 25 free-throws, which also made her 4th in school history for number of free-throws made in a single game. In the same season, Finding posted a scoring average of 20.1 points per contest moving her into fourth place on Ball States’ all-time scoring average list. Following the somewhat successful season headed by Tussey, Powers regained her title as head coach before the 1978-1979 season and posted a 5-11 record. The years to follow posed the same mediocre results for Powers’ as she posted a 6-13 record in the 1979-1980 season and a 9-14 record in the 1980-1981 season. In fact, the only bright spot during that time was Jane Emkes setting a school record for number of assists in a single game at 14 when they played against Eastern Illinois University. 1981-1982 was Powers’ last season as head coach and was the first season Ball State played in the MAC Conference. In their MAC (Mid-American Conference) debut, Ball State posted a 3-4 record and ended their season with an overall 8-14 record. Debbie Powers ended her career as Ball State Head Coach with an overall record of 33 wins and 60 losses.

After Powers stepped down as head coach of the Cardinals, Karen Fitzpatrick stepped up as head coach and began her three year career with a 7-17 record on the season and a 3-4 record in the MAC. The 1983-1984 season was not as successful. Fitzpatrick posted a 5-13 record in the MAC and a 4-21 record overall. Fitzpatrick’s final season was slightly better as the Cardinals had a 2-16 record in the MAC and a 6-21 record overall. There were some bright spots in this season however as Anita Joliff Miller set the all-time school record for assists in a single game with 14 assists. That record was set on March 3, 1984 against Western Michigan and solidified
Miller as a Ball State record holder. Overall, this point in time was not a bright spot in the program’s history as Fitzpatrick only accumulated 17 wins over three seasons.

Marsha Reall was brought in to replace Fitzpatrick at the beginning of the 1985-1986 season. Reall only served one season as Ball State’s head coach. During that season however, a school record was set for number of assists in a single game. This record was set by the Cardinals on February 8, 1986 when they dished out 30 assists against Kent State. In addition, Emma Jones also set a record and became second in total points in one season behind Tamara Bowie when she scored 547 points that season.

After Reall finished her brief stint as head coach, Ethel Gregory took her place in the 1986-1987 season. During this time, the Cardinals posted a 4-23 overall record and a 2-14 record in the MAC. Due to the new coach, most chalked that season’s performance up to a “transition period.” The season held one bright spot, Emma Jones. Jones set the record for most field goal attempts in a single game when she attempted 28 field goals against Vanderbilt February 28, 1987. Gregory’s first season at the helm of the Cardinals was less than exemplary. In fact, the school set the record for the second lowest winning percentage in school history at .148. In 1987-1988, Gregory entered into her second season. Overall, the Cardinals record slightly improved, but the team as a whole struggled. The 1988-1989 season was the most successful campaign that the Cards have put forth in multiple seasons. That season, Jenny Eckert recorded the fifth leading amount of steals in a single season at 85. She also put herself in fifth place for the most field goals made in a single game when she made 15 at Texas A&M. This feat moved
Eckert to the 9th spot on the most points scored in a single game list at 33 points. The Cards finished the season with a 12-15 overall record and a 7-9 record in the MAC. The 1990-1991 season was less successful than the one prior, especially when the Cardinals lost to Providence. In that contest, Providence scored 116 points; the most any school has ever scored against the Cardinals in program history. The 1991-1992 season marked Gregory’s last season as head coach. Unfortunately, this season also marked a 19 game losing streak (the longest in school history) for the Cardinals. This season, Dianne McConnel tied for 11th place for most points scored in a single game when she scored 32 points against Hawaii on November 29, 1991 and again against Kent State on March 7, 1992. The Cardinals also set a record for most free throws made in a contest when they made 36 against Eastern Michigan. This season (5-22, 3-13 MAC) marked Gregroy’s sixth and final season as Ball State Women’s Basketball Head Coach. She ended her career with 51 wins and 112 losses.

After Gregory stepped down as head coach, Robyn Markey took her place and had one of the longest reigning stints as head coach in program history by serving seven seasons at the position. In 1992-1993 the Cardinals posted a 3-23 record overall and a 3-15 record in the MAC. It was one of the worst records in school history. However, that year Belinda Kunczt was marked down in the record books after she had six blocked shots against Chicago State on December 4, 1993. This same season, the Cardinals also tied the record for the third most assists in a single game when they had 27 of them in a contest against Western Michigan. The 1993-1994 season saw much of the same activity as the season prior. There was an overall record of 6-20 and a 6-
14 record in the MAC. During the 1994-1995 season, Jaimie Lehotsky scored the most points in a single game in Worthen Arena with 35 points against Chicago State on November 26, 1996. The '94-'95 team also tied for 4th place for the most rebounds in a single contest when they grabbed 60 rebounds against MAC opponent Bowling Green on January 25, 1995. The 1995-1996 season wasn’t that eventful either as the Cardinals’ overall record was only 6-20 with a 3-15 MAC record. Times began to change however during the 1996-1997 season when the Cardinals posted a 13-13 overall record and a 11-7 record in the MAC. At this point in time, the Cardinals really seemed to be hitting their stride and many thought that this was going to be the beginning of great success for Ball State. The 1997-1998 season showed the Cardinals experiencing much more success. Char Thomsen recorded the 5th highest number of blocks in a single game with 5 blocks. Thomsen also recorded the 3rd highest number of points in a single game with 39 points in the contest against Marshall University on January 29, 1998. That season ended with an overall 10-16 record and a 7-11 record in the MAC. The 1998-1999 season marked Markey’s last season as head coach for the program. During this time Markita Griffin secured the record for the second most free throw attempts in a season with 125 attempts. Amy Kieckbusch also set a record for most field goals made in a single season with 214 made field goals.

Brenda Oldfield replaced Markey as head coach before the 1999-2000 season. In her inaugural season, Oldfield posted a record of 16-13 overall and 8-8 in the MAC which was a significant improvement from the prior seasons. In 2001, Tamara Bowie made her first
appearance in the record books when she scored 512 points in a single season which made her number eight on the record list. During this same season, Shala Crook had 100 steals in a single season making her 1st in the all-time steals list. Then on January 27, 2001, Bowie set the BSU single-game scoring recorded when she scored 40 points against Eastern Michigan. Bowie later tied her own mark when she scored 40 points against Indiana State on March 21, 2003. Oldfield ended her career as head coach with a 35-22 overall record and a .614 winning average.

After Oldfield left the Cardinals, she was replaced in 2001 by Tracy Roller.

It was from this point on, that the Lady Cardinals began to become known as a force to be reckoned with in the Midwest. In her opening season, Roller posted the best season record to date (24-8 overall). In this season, a school record was also set for most field goals made in a single game. This took place when the Cardinals faced MAC foe, Akron University, on January 22, 2002 and completed 41 field goals. The record for most 3 pointers made in a single season was set as well when the Cardinals made 262 total 3 point field goals. The single season assist record was made at 553, in addition to the single season steal record (377), and the single season field goal record (905). Coming off of a successful season, the 2002-2003 Cardinals continued to progress as a team and continued to accumulate wins under Roller. During this season Tamara Bowie set the record for the most field goals made in a game when she completed 17 field goals against Indiana State (she is now the all-time leader in most completed field goals in one game). The Cardinals ended that particular season with a 12-10 overall record and a 12-4 record in the MAC. The 2003-2004 season saw no record breaking feats but did see the Cardinals post a 13-16
overall record and a 7-9 record in the MAC. From 2004-2007, the Cardinals were great competitors and posted winning records all three seasons (Ball State Women’s Record Book, 1-5). Then the 2007-2008 season rolled around, and things really began to change…

Roller ended her career by leaving abruptly during the 2007-2008 season. Roller left behind a 3-7 record and transferred the team to then assistant coach, Lisa McDonald. Roller left her legacy on Ball State Women’s Basketball and was the second all-time winningest coach with a win average of .617 wins. During this season Julie Demuth pulled down 19 rebounds when the Cardinals faced Toledo on February 14, 2007. Kiley Jarrett moved into the 7th spot in the record column for all-time assists when she had 12 assists against Central Michigan on January 23, 2008. Then Audrey McDonald solidified herself as all-time leader for most three pointers made in one game when she sank 9 3 pointers against Western Michigan on March 1, 2008. During this season as well, Porchia Green (who now plays basketball professionally) set a record for most minutes played in a season with 1,066. The 2007-2008 season was the end to Roller’s career and was the end to McDonald’s stint as head coach, but no one could have imagined the success that she would have groomed the Cardinals for. It was her influence that shaped these players to enter into the 2008-2009 season confident and ready to shock the world of women’s basketball.

After Tracy Roller resigned as head coach, Kelly Packard was hired to replace interim head coach Lisa McDonald. At this time no one knew much of what to expect from the new coach, or from the players for that matter. However, once things got going, the Cardinals were on their way to being a part of school history. The Cardinals started by posting the best home
record in Ball State Women’s Basketball program history with a record of 14 wins and 1 loss.

They also had the best showing in the MAC conference in program history when they went 14-2.

They also hold the record for the school's longest winning streak with 12 straight games. The 2008-2009 Cardinals also protected their MAC West Division Championship title for the third straight season. The winning of the title produced the Cardinal’s first NCAA tournament appearance in program history. To put it simply, the 2008-2009 Cardinals changed the way people across the country viewed Ball State Women’s Basketball; and they didn’t do it by their athletic ability alone (Ball State Women’s Basketball Digital Media Guide 2-3).

Part Two: Beyond the Scoreboard

As I mentioned in my introduction, it is quite often the case that women’s basketball programs get turned into a business. People seem to be more concerned with how many tickets are sold, how much memorabilia is purchased, and how many fans are in the seats. Personal relationships go by the wayside, and administration appear to be more concerned with “collecting” athletes than cultivating them. As time progresses, I hear countless stories from my friends and peers where visits to campuses are getting less and less personal, and once a player signs that letter of intent, the red carpet gets rolled right up and the player is just another number. In other words, basketball appears to have lost its character, its personality, but most of all its integrity. I chose to wrote this thesis in hopes to shed light on a program that is the not following
that trend. I chose to write this thesis in hopes to remind people that relationships and
camaraderie do matter, sportsmanship is still admired, and selflessness is respected. In the
second part of my thesis I will use the responses from personal interviews, along with my own
personal experiences to show how this program has shaped the lives of not one, but many people
who have had a part in it.

When I was making my decision as to where I wanted to spend my collegiate career,
there were many different factors that I considered. I wanted a place that had a great
environment. I wanted a place where sports were respected, athletes were cultivated, and the
facilities were elite. I also wanted a university that met my requirements academically (the
capability to be in an Honors College was a must), and being able to dual major in Fashion
Merchandising and Business was nonnegotiable. I went on visits to various schools and was in
between three when it came time to make my final decision. Columbia in New York City,
Creighton, in Omaha, Nebraska, and Ball State. I went on visits to other schools but no school
ever felt right until I came to Ball State. The girls were friendly and open, and I immediately felt
a part of the team. You could tell that they truly cared about each other and enjoyed each others’
company. When I went on my visit, they were in the middle of one of the best seasons in school
history, and yet I felt no different. It would be easy for a group as close as that one to be
overcome with selfishness and arrogance due to their success but there was no such thing. They
truly were a family and appeared to have the strongest relationships that I have ever seen
between a group of women.
When I interviewed Emily Maggert, a recent graduate and Ball State record holder, she said her reasons to come to Ball State were the same as mine. She chose Ball State because of the atmosphere that surrounded the team. She immediately felt welcome and secure in that environment, something that is very hard to do when you are meeting twenty new faces all at the same time (Maggert). It was this family atmosphere, this love and respect amongst people that drew people in. Ball State wasn’t perhaps the best school for me academically, and perhaps didn’t have the best record, but it was the place where I felt that I would be the most accepted and cared about, which was all that mattered to me.

It really is everyone believing in the same goal and being on the same page. I also believe that a successful program is built around communication and honesty. When we were the most successful we had the most open relationship among players and coaches. Everyone felt they had a voice and an opinion and everyone mattered. (Mueller)

This quote was taken from an interview that I did with Dana Mueller, an ’09 Ball State graduate who spent her senior season on the Ball State Women’s Basketball team that made history. During Mueller’s senior season, the Cardinals upset national basketball powerhouse, the University of Tennessee, which allowed them to advance to the second round of the NCAA tournament a feat which had never been done before. Anyone on the outside who saw the Cardinals experience that much success would think it was because of their superior athletic ability, or Coach Packard’s excellent play calling, but if you ask someone on the inside, they
would provide a different answer. Mueller claimed that the team was successful that year because of their relationships they had with each other. It was their chemistry. It was being open and honest with one another when things were difficult as well as being supporting and caring when times were great. It was being selfless and serving others before you served yourself. It was investing in one goal and trusting that the people around you would stop at nothing to achieve it (Mueller). When I began writing this paper, I interviewed multiple players, staff, and community members associated with the program and ironically enough, they all said the same thing about that historic season; it was the relationships that mattered, not the wins or the losses. Maggert said it well in her interview, “That year wasn’t so much about beating all those teams, or even the record that we had. It was the chemistry we had both on and off the court that made it an experience I will never forget (Maggert).” When I interviewed Audrey Spencer, a junior on the 2008-2009 team she agreed with Maggert when she said, “I have learned that chemistry and the relationships you build while getting to do what we do is by far the most important thing to take away (Spencer).” In the collegiate world of women’s basketball, things are often about numbers, and stats, and how many wins and losses are in the sports column at the end of the day. I am proud to say that I spent time with a program that does not adhere to those same motivations. Although winning is the ultimate goal, it is not always about being the best, or looking out for oneself that matters the most. I have learned through my time spent with this team that the relationships you have with other people matter! Wins and losses you will easily forget but the relationships that you made with people along the way Is something that will stay with you forever (Spencer).
As an Honors College student we were always asked to analyze passages and other literary works. After that was completed, we were then supposed to discuss how we felt about those particular topics and then asked to provide an answer to the question “Why does it matter?” In this day and age, the world is nothing short of opinion but what the world IS short of is reason. Why do things matter? What was the point of me talking about relationships? Or statistics? Or memories? Well it matters because being a part of the Ball State Women’s Basketball program changed who I am as a person, and quite honestly, changed my entire life. And isn’t that what college is all about? Growing? Changing? Taking what you know, challenging it, and being better because of it? That’s what the Ball State Women’s Basketball program did for me, it made me better.

Before I came to Ball State, I was sure of who I was. I was a smart young woman, I was on the Honor Roll, I was involved in the community, but most importantly, I was a basketball player. I had been dribbling a ball and playing sports as far back as I can remember. It consumed every part of my life. If I wasn’t at practice, I was at home running, or shooting in the backyard, or doing dribbling drills, or watching it on TV. In other words, it consumed me. A majority of my close friends were on my basketball team, and to be honest, the only conversations that my father and I ever had were about basketball. I didn’t come to realize until later that I placed my entire identity into basketball. I would later find out that living without it would be the hardest thing that I ever had to do. My entire high school career was spent trying to get a college scholarship so I could play basketball at a great Division One university. There were countless hours spent driving in the car for practices and games, there were countless high school events
missed because of basketball conflicts, there were endless sacrifices made, all in hopes that I would get to live my dream of playing college basketball.

The summer after I graduated high school I went immediately to campus to begin taking summer classes and working out with the team. The transition from being a high school athlete to a college athlete is one that can’t be described accurately in words. The demands from your mind, body, and spirit that are necessary to compete at that high of a level are astronomical and I felt it wearing on me. There were days when I would be homesick and would be down, but I could always count on my teammates to smile and cheer me up, I didn’t know it then, but they would be my support team throughout my next four years, they would be my family. Pre-season rolled around and the workouts became even more brutal. Then once school started I had to learn to balance that with a full academic course load and three to four hour practices. Needless to say, it was more than I could handle at the time. It was a huge struggle to adjust but the thing that kept me motivated was the idea of putting on a uniform and stepping onto that court and living my dream as a Ball State Cardinal.

When the season came around at the beginning of my freshman year, I was eager to play. I got in a few times each game, scored here and there but never really seemed to catch my stride. Then one game in December, we were playing the Evansville Aces and I played perhaps the best basketball I had played thus far. I wish I would have cherished it more, because that was the last game I would ever play when my mind and body were functioning at 100%. After the Evansville game, I went home for a few days to enjoy Christmas break with my family. On the
way back to Muncie however, I got into a terrible car accident. Luckily I didn’t break any bones, nor did I suffer any cuts or bruises, but I did come back to Muncie with a full blown concussion. Our trainer ran tests on me for a few weeks, but every time I tried to regain my footing and start participating in drills, I would get migraines and/or get dizzy which completely hindered my performance. Every time I tried to recover, it was like some alarm in my body was telling me no. In essence, my body was not keeping up with my mind and it was the start of one of the worst parts of my life.

The incessant migraines made it hard to focus in class, and school work became unbearable. When you combine those hardships with the fact that my teammates were getting to play and function normally while I sat helplessly on the sideline made things in my life even worse. Over the next year or so I tried multiple times to come back and play. I saw countless doctors, and traveled all the way across the state to see a neurologist who specialized in concussions but nothing ever seemed to help. The emotional and physical toll that the ups and downs of my injury had become too much to bear, and my doctor and I determined that it would be best for me to no longer pursue the sport of basketball. If anyone reading this has ever been so close to reaching a dream and then had it taken away, they can probably relate to the feeling. Feelings of regret and sadness plagued me for a really long time. I didn’t know how to act around my teammates, or the other athletes, and people in my family began to treat me differently. It was as if they didn’t know how to act around me now that I was no longer a basketball player, and the worst part was that I didn’t know how to act anymore either.
There was a period of time after I was declared medically ineligible that I wouldn't even walk in the arena, it hurt too much. I took alternate routes from class, avoided the coaches’ office like the plague, and just shut myself off from everything that reminded me of the one thing that I could no longer have. And it worked too, for a while. Then something started to eat at me, I became really depressed and was in desperate need of some guidance. I had lost my identity, and I didn’t know where to find it. Then, at about the semester mark of this year, something amazing happened. I got the courage to reach out to one of my teammates (Emily Maggert), and she encouraged me to go to one of the girls’ basketball games.

It was the scariest and saddest experience that I have ever witnessed; seeing my teammates on one side of the arena, with me on the other nowhere near where I thought I would be. I ended up leaving the game early because it made me sad to watch them out there without me, but then I received a text from Marcia Freeman, our team minister. When I interviewed Freeman for this piece she said she still remembers the text she sent me vividly, “It was great seeing you beautiful! We have missed you. Don’t be a stranger (Freeman)” It was in that moment that things started to look a little better, and it was the first time in a long time that I was thinking about basketball and I smiled.

After I got that text, I slowly came out of my shell and started to surround myself with some of my old teammates, I even stopped into the coaches’ office to say, “Hi.” It was all of their love and support that helped me get better and helped me realized that there was more to me than dribbling a basketball. It was in those conversations and moments I had with them that I
started to feel valued again. I was a human being, I was a great person, and most importantly, and I started to truly believe that my life was meaningful without basketball.

In any other program, or at least any other program that I am aware of, it would have been all too easy to forget me and not bother with me when I was declared ineligible and couldn’t produce physically on the court anymore. And it would have been even MORE easy to forget about me when I lost my way for a little while and wasn’t the person that my team knew. However, none of these things happened with the Ball State Women’s Basketball program and once I found my courage to move on with my life they were all waiting there for me with open arms. That type of genuine love and respect for one another is not something that comes along every day, and it is certainly not something that comes along with every woman’s basketball program. It is from this team that I learned the true value of relationships, and that I learned the true value of self-worth. It is not what you can do on a court, but how you treat the people around you that is what matters. Were you there for your teammate when she needed a ride to class? Were you there for your teammate when she was homesick and needed someone to talk to? Did you communicate openly and honestly with a teammate when there was an issue? Were you there for your coach, congratulating her when she won an award? Did you ever take the time out to tell your assistant coach that they did a great job? I have learned that it’s the little things that matter. It’s being selfless and reacting in a positive way when faced with adversity that determine what value you have as a person, not how many points you can score in a single game.

Everything happens for a reason and I could have ended up at any other university but for some reason, I ended up here. When things were hard, I used to wonder why I made the decision
to go to Ball State. Now, when all is said and done, I look back and realize that this is exactly where I was supposed to be, because without it, I wouldn’t have survived, and I wouldn’t be half the person I am today.

If you look at it realistically, basketball can only take you so far. There is a very small percentage of women that are able to play basketball at a Division One level, and an even smaller percentage of women that go on to play professionally. With that being said, it makes you realize that it’s not always about what the lights show at the end of regulation. Playing basketball is about more than that; it’s about character and integrity. In today’s society it is easy to get caught up in the business aspect of the game and forget that behind athletic ability and status, there are people with lives, hopes, wishes, and dreams that need to be cultivated. I don’t think that there are enough programs in this sport that recognize that and make it their priority to make sure that their athletes are not just good basketball players when they leave, but good people as well. The women’s basketball program is not the program on Ball State’s campus with the most wins recorded in the win column, nor are they the program on Ball State’s campus that brings in the most people to watch games, but they are a program on Ball State’s campus that is doing things the RIGHT way and that deserves to be recognized. During my time spent as a member of the women’s basketball program I have learned that virtue is still important, integrity is still important, respect is still important, and giving thanks to those things that inspire you and drive you is still important. I am incredibly thankful for my time spent as a member of the Ball State Women’s Basketball program and am proud to say that I was a part of it. This program has made a huge impact on my life and although I will never leave my mark in the record books, I will
leave this paper as proof that building healthy relationships matters and the lessons and experiences that came from being a part of this exceptional program were invaluable and truly did change my life.
Works Cited


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Author's Statement

I chose to make this poster as a representation of what my entire thesis was about, the importance of relationships. Whether or not the players represented on this poster shared time on the court together or not, they are all unified by the name across their jersey, Ball State. Not everyone has the opportunity to play basketball at an institution like Ball State. Nor does everyone have the opportunity to cultivate the relationships like the ones found within this particular team. I decided to make the pictures on the poster overlapping to represent the connectivity that players (both past and present) have with one another. Every person represented on that board has put on a jersey at some point and has sacrificed many things to represent Ball State in the best possible way. These things connect everyone on that board and I think that is something important to remember. This board is to remind all that see it that their ability to play and perform is a gift, and when they put on that jersey they represent more than themselves. When they put on that jersey they represent every single player that has come before them, and they set examples for all the players that will come after them. Being a Cardinal is a wonderful gift that shouldn’t be taken for granted and neither should the relationships that come along with it. I hope this poster instills a sense of pride in all those who see it and make them remember the joy and responsibility that comes with being a Ball State Cardinal.
Project: PRIDE Poster

Description: This is a photo of the front of the poster. This poster is now in the Ball State Women’s Basketball office on display....
Project: PRIDE Poster

Description: This is a photo of the back of the poster. This poster is now in the Ball State Women's Basketball office on display....