



Raupin' dimes

Varsity shooting guard is a scorekeeper's nightmare in her debut year

By Evan Pagano
staff reporter

The hum of a silent microphone reverberates through the gymnasium, and the chatter of arriving parents and students begins to hush.

As the night's PA announcer — social studies teacher **Nick Beckmann** — lists the lineup of the visiting Fort Zumwalt West varsity girl's basketball team, freshman shooting guard **Emma Raup** sits on the Spartan bench in anticipation.

The starting players for the Jaguars have all been read off, and Raup wipes the sweat from her hands. Each of her

fellow starters are introduced, and soon it is her turn.

"... The 5'6" guard, number 25 ..." is her cue. Her trot down the alleyway of her teammates starts with a spin and ends with a slight, humble grin as she gives a double low-five to her teammate at the end of the line.

Unknowing onlookers might pass the blonde-haired freshman girl off as a petite, possibly fragile player. Raup has made it a habit of proving them, as well as other doubters, wrong.

Only a freshman, Raup is defying common logic. Prior to this game against the rival Jaguars, she has played in each and every game for

the varsity girls basketball team in her debut year.

This is no small feat: from the season's first game, the scrappy shooting guard has shared the court with much bigger and more experienced players, and has not shied away from the physicality their experience brings.

"I play faster now," said Raup, speaking on how her game has changed since entering high school. "And I'm more aggressive because the older girls are kind of mean."

Her added speed and aggression shows. Each time the Jaguars add points, Raup blazes down the court

with her hand in the air, her white headband holding the whipping of her long, blonde hair to a minimum. Her white uniform whooshes past Head Coach **Brian Ricker**, perched forward in his chair, hands clasped, watching his budding star intently.

"When [senior guard] **Kristen Warncke** went down, I asked Emma to become more deeply involved in the offense," Ricker said. "I asked her to increase the number of shots she took and to be sure and attack the basket. Since then she has averaged double figures in points virtually every night."

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Warncke, who had her senior season cut short with a torn ACL early in the schedule, still attends every game she can. From their initial meeting, Warncke felt confident Raup would have success.

"I actually met her at our camp this summer for the younger girls," Warncke said of her fellow Spartan. "She definitely stood out right away... she's a really good ball handler and a really good shooter. You can just tell that she's way above her grade the first time you see her play."

Raup's striking talent has translated into points, especially since her role was expanded in the wake of Warncke's injury. In the nine games since Warncke's ACL tear on Dec. 22, Raup has averaged 13.4 points per game, a significant jump from her still respectable 7.9 average in the games prior to Warncke's injury.

Raup attributes a great deal of her success to the help she has received from Warncke. Not only did Warncke help her from a basketball standpoint, but she made her feel like part of the Spartan family.

"Kristen got me really comfortable with the team over the summer," Raup said gratefully. As the clock ticks on, this level of comfort shows.

Ricker leans back, one leg over the other, and contemplates a strategy as his Lady Spartans trail 17-11 at the end of the first quarter. Raup, frustrated by her scoreless start, drops down on her chair as Coach Ricker explains the plan of attack. Sweat and determination have coated Raup's face.

"She plays with a passion, with tremendous energy," Ricker said. "Emma loves basketball, plays hard and wants to improve."

That passion and energy is evident up and down the court as the second quarter gets underway. On the defensive end, she actively defends her side of the court, and smacks her hands together in approval with each Spartan score. Each time she gets her chance on offense, her mind is set on one objective.



photo by brittany thomson

Focusing on the basket, freshman Emma Raup lines up a free throw. With the injury to senior Kristen Warncke, Raup has embraced a larger role on the team, increasing her scoring average by more than five points per game.

"Shoot, score, dribble, drive," Raup said, explaining her duty as a shooting guard. She takes that job seriously: Raup has shot, scored, dribbled and drove her way to being a very close second on the team in points with 184. That total trails only senior Grace Wade, with 185.

Raup stares down the opposing point guard intently, crouching as the ball moves closer to the Spartan side of the court. She tenaciously defends the ball, swiftly gliding around the floor, until finally the Spartans gain possession. Raup is dished the rock, and her impressive ball handling is instantly on display. According to Ricker, this is one of her best assets.

"She can beat any defender off the dribble," Ricker said, emphasizing "any." "Emma, at times, is virtually unstoppable."

This skill may root from from

her practice as a child. Raup, who started playing basketball in the third grade, spent many an afternoon shooting hoops with her older brother, Henry. These hoop sessions, Emma says, helped her immensely.

"We played one-on-one and he just passed the ball and rebounded

for me when I shot," Raup said. "Going up against him one-on-one, he was bigger and I think it helped with my confidence."

Confident she is. After some nifty

moves in the paint, the freshman sees an opening. Just as she raises the ball for a shot, she is fouled. The silence in the gym is deafening as she steps toward the free throw line, a simple task in mind.

"Just arch the ball and get it in."

Raup accepts the ball from the referee. She dribbles once, digs her front foot in place, and dribbles once

more. The ball hitting the paint, the crowd's anticipation, and the opposing team's chatter may have made noise, but Raup's perfect shot swishing through the net did not make a sound.

Number 25 did not stop there. While the Spartans trailed for the majority of the game, Raup tirelessly added points to the scoreboard.

One point came from an additional free throw. Later in the second quarter, an aggressive route to the basket ended as a three-point play, as she capitalized on the foul with a swish. Late in the game, she hit a pretty mid-range jumper to the delight of the crowd. In addition to her personal success, however, Raup's teamwork shined bright.

"We all bond really well and stuff, especially me, **Grace [Wade]**, and **Katy [Gerler]**. We all know where we are on the court," Raup said.

That chemistry with her teammates has put Raup at second on the team in assists this season, with 23.

In stylish fashion, Raup capped off her ten-point showing against the Jaguars with a bang. After receiving the ball out on the perimeter, Raup made a move to her right, cut

back and saw an opening. Like she has on eleven prior occasions this season, she lofted an arching three-pointer directly through the net, never touching the rim. While the Lady Spartans hung their head in loss that night, things continue to look up for young Emma Raup.

"As a junior and senior, Emma could be one of the top one or two players in the conference and one of the best in the metro area," said Ricker. "Her future in basketball is unlimited."

Warncke offered similar remarks.

"The sky's the limit for her. She's already at a high level as a freshman and she's just going to get better every single year. If she keeps working hard she's going to be at an extremely high level and it's going to be really hard to stop her as a senior," Warncke said, confidently.

Raup, humble in her ways, is hesitant to compliment herself. She does, however, recognize that every point she scores makes a statement.

"Everybody looks down on me because I'm the freshman, but I go in there and try to prove that I am a varsity player," Raup said. "Because at the end of the day you're a varsity player like everyone else."

“She plays with a passion and tremendous energy. Emma loves basketball, plays hard and wants to improve.”

Brian Ricker (coach)