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Poke Ends Collegiate Career in Style

Senior Mandy Poke Leads Team to NSIC Championship



By Jake Loftus

On Saturday, Feb. 23, the Concordia University women's basketball team had plenty to celebrate. It was senior day and the final home game of the regular season. The Concordia team features only one senior, Mandy Poke (#13), who was playing her last regular season game as a Golden Bear. Poke was the team's only senior and realized the responsibilities that this brought. "Being the only senior on the team has been a great experience and opportunity," Poke explained. "It didn't hit me until preseason began that my given presence as a senior holds such a significant role. It

Photo Credit: Concordia University

was then when I decided to give meaning to myself and understand that I am accountable for all of my actions." Poke, who is an elementary education major, keeps very busy during the season on and off the basketball court. She spends most of the day student-teaching at College Prep Elementary from 8:00am to 4:30pm and going straight to practice and games after that. "It can get really crazy," Poke says of her schedule. "But having such great teammates that always have my back on and off the court, an understandable coach who is always accommodating to me and my sched-

ule and taking advantage of the moments you get to sleep have been key and made this experience all worth it."

Poke and her team had much more to celebrate on senior day following a big win. The Golden Bears defeated Sioux Falls 76-47, finishing the regular season with a record of 21-5, claiming the fifth NSIC Regular Season Division Championship in their history. "Winning the NSIC regular season title was incredible," says Poke. "At first we thought we were just celebrating senior night and then they had [Championship] T-shirts and everything for us. It was awesome. I honestly do not think it hit us going into the last weekend that we just won the conference. We have just been taking it game by game and trying to walk away with a win every weekend." The division title eventually led to two NSIC/Sanford Health Basketball Tournament wins at the Gangelhoff Center for the Bears in the first round of the tournament against Minnesota, Crookston, and in the quarterfinals against Northern State. In the Northern State game, Poke, in what may have been her last game at the Gangelhoff Center, was named player of the game. Though that's a good note to end on, Poke and the Bears plan on going a lot further. "It's not over," she says. "We want more!" Sounds like Poke wants to go with the Ray Lewis approach of ending a career, with a championship. Good luck to Poke and the rest of the Woman's team as they go forward.

The team earned an at-large berth with the third seed in the 2013 NCAA Central Region Tournament. The tournament will be hosted by the top-seeded Washburn University in Topeka, Kan. The Golden Bears will be taking on sixth-seeded Augustana. The bears lost to Augustana the last time the two teams met (55-43). The re-match will take place on Friday, Mar. 15. Good luck, Lady Bears!



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