

By George Browning    gbrowning@gbpnews.com    In a lot of ways Brigid Morrissey's college basketball career parallel her high school career.

She finished junior high at Highland Hills Middle School, then expected to play for Floyd Central Head Coach Joe Voelker.

Voelker stepped down and handed the reigns over to Kirk Hamsley and with the help of Morrissey and a talented crop of athletes, the two made history.

After Morrissey's senior year of high school, she accepted a scholarship to play basketball at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina.

A short time later, there was a coaching change and she ended up playing her career under a different coach than she had planned.

Just like at FC, Morrissey and Furman Head Coach Jackie Carson worked well together and helped make some history for the Lady Paladins.

Furman didn't make the NCAA tournament this year, but they did put together an 18-13 record and got an invite to the women's National Invitational Tournament.

Unfortunately Furman couldn't get past SEC opponent Auburn, but Morrissey said it was a memorable ride.

She said she isn't sure it wouldn't have been possible if not for the rebuilding job she was part of at FC.

"My senior season (at Floyd Central) really prepared me for college," Morrissey said. "I was able to contribute to building up the program at Floyd Central in my four years. Our record improved every year and we got the farthest we had ever gone my senior year. That's exactly what happened at Furman. This was our best season and I was able to be part of the rebuilding process."

When asked to pin-point what it was at Floyd Central that helped prepare her she said it was how much she learned.

"Coach Voelker, Coach Hamsley and Coach Maddie Richards, who helped out with us my senior year, always saw the big picture," she said. "There are things I hear our college coaches getting on players about that I was hearing my freshman year of high school.

"The size of Floyd Central is also pretty similar to Furman and the level of diversity is also similar. There are a lot of parallels between FC and Furman."

With playing basketball on a daily basis a thing of the past, Morrissey now sets her sights on graduation in May. Her Major is art.

She said she is surprised by how fast time has passed.

“It’s been a whirlwind,” Morrissey said. “It’s just like the cliché you always hear that it goes by so fast. That’s so true and you don’t even realize it until it’s over.”

Morrissey hopes to land a job in the field of Graphic Design. Her hope is to help develop ads for companies and organizations who are making a difference. She called her career of choice, “Social work with an artistic twist.”

Until then she has a long list of things she wants to spend her new found free time on. Number one on that list is rest.

Morrissey would also like to travel, possibly pursue graduate school and spend time with her family.

Besides the education, she said it’s easy to point to the most rewarding part of her time in South Carolina.

“My biggest take-away from college basketball will be the relationships,” Morrissey said. “The people you meet are great. I have met some of the coolest people. Plus basketball has taken me to so many places and I’ve gotten so many new opportunities. But above all that it’s the relationships I’ve built along the way.”

Some of her career highlights include a very successful senior season. She played in 31 games and started 27 of them. She averaged 30 minutes a game and averaged 6.3 points per contest. She had 191 assists and is near the top of that career list at Furman. Morrissey broke the record for most assists in a game with 13. She also broke the single season assist record. She also averaged 2.5 rebounds a game.

In her junior year, Morrissey saw action in 28 games, 18 of which were starts at point guard. She led the team in assists with 107 and was tied for the team lead with 40 steals. She averaged 2.4 points per game. As a junior she had two double digit scoring performances, registering 11 points at Troy and 10 points at Appalachian State. She also recorded a trio of double digit assist outings, including 11 against Western Carolina in both Greenville (88-83 OT loss) and in Cullowhee (46-45 win), and 10 versus UNCG in Greenville (67-48 win). At Western Carolina that year she also featured a career high nine steals, good for the third highest mark ever by a Paladin and she was named to the SoCon Academic Honor Roll.

Summing up her four years as a college basketball players was a difficult task. She said there were days when she would have done things differently and days where she would have took the exact same path.

“Playing college basketball was pretty amazing,” Morrissey said. “I always tell people it was the worst decision I could have made, but it’s also the best. I’ve had to sacrifice so much socially and then the things I’ve gone through physically with my body. There have even been

some sacrifices academically, too, because you can't put in as much time as you'd like to.

"I've learned more than a lot of college kids do in their four years just because basketball forces you to deal with certain situations and certain people that you might be dealing with if you weren't playing. Plus you learn to deal with adversity when you're playing basketball. The good has always outweighed the bad for me. It's an experience that no one can understand unless they've done it, as well."

Supportive parents

make college life easier

What is the key to spending four years as a D-1 College Basketball player? It takes athletic ability, mental toughness, the ability to manage time and in the case of Floyd Central alum Brigid Morrissey, a pretty awesome set of parents, Mark Morrissey and Mary Gesenhues.

"I have the most dedicated parents you will ever meet," she said. "They bend over backwards to make sure I am comfortable here and I am not home sick. They are so supportive."

Morrissey said the 31 games she played as a senior, her dad only missed one, and he had a pretty good excuse.

"My dad only missed one game this entire season and that's only because my sister got married the day before," she said. "I told him I am still mad at him for that, but that's OK."

"My mom has made several games, too, including driving to Auburn."

That's why after graduation, Morrissey said her top priority was to come back to Southern Indiana to spend time with her family.