

HANNAH JOHNSON SIGNS WITH DYERSBURG STATE TO CONTINUE BASKETBALL CAREER



Above: With her playing buddy since third grade, Sarah Cherry, in the background, Hannah Johnson scores another bucket for Crockett County. (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

Sarah Cherry has been playing basketball with Hannah Johnson since the third grade. So who's better qualified to tell us what Dyersburg State is getting after the Lady Cavalier senior announced Thursday she has signed a basketball grant-in-aid with the Lady Eagles?

"They're getting a great player, for sure," Cherry said at the signing ceremony held at CCHS Thursday. "But way more than that, they're getting a great person who will be a terrific teammate. Hannah cares so much for the people she plays with; she's always there as a friend to listen, without judgment, and she's always looking to lift you up."

Cherry said Johnson is much more than an exceptional scorer when on the court. "She's just as willing to make an open pass to find a better shot for a teammate if it's there," Cherry said. "And it's obvious to everyone who ever watched us play that she can shoot and rebound. But it's the great teammate aspect that people don't always get to see, because it's in the locker room or just around school."

Much of what Cherry shared validated the words of Crockett County coach Kayla Irvin, who hosted the afternoon ceremony in which Johnson's next step was celebrated by family, friends, and teammates.

"Hannah is so coachable and truly loves to be coached 'hard,' being challenged," Irvin said. "I never had to walk on egg shells around her; she's not a complainer, and she loves to prove people wrong who may say there's something she can't do." Another thing Irvin respects about Johnson is her attraction to the bigger moments.

"She wants the ball when the game's on the line," Irvin said, a point Cherry also made. "She can score the ball when the team really needs a basket, and never shies away from looking for that responsibility."

Irvin also loves the fact that Johnson can handle a little sarcasm, and dish it out as well.

"I knew we were going to get along pretty well when I saw that early on," Irvin laughed.

Irvin lauded several of Johnson's accomplishments while a Lady Cavalier: All-District two years, All-District Tournament three times, All-District Tournament Most Valuable Player, All-Region Tournament, Hub City Classic MVP, Warrior Award and Best All-Around Player at CCHS, and a 1,000-point-plus career scorer.

For their part, Dyersburg State head coach Nathan Daume and assistant Hanna Box issued the following statement: "From the moment we saw Hannah play her junior year, we were very excited about her. We are very happy that Hannah has chosen Dyersburg State as her home for the next two years. Hannah already has so much talent and potential to keep getting better. Our goal for her is to first have a great experience at Dyersburg State and then for us to help her improve her game as much as possible and go on to receive a four-year school offer to finish her degree and play ball. Hannah is a great fit for our program, and we are very blessed to have not only a great basketball player but a great person in our program."

Her new coaches' interest in her as a person was a key factor in Johnson's decision to select DSCC.

"The fact that they see me as more than just a player is very important to me," Johnson said. "I feel like Dyersburg State is a place where I can be myself. I want to be a player who can give them some scoring, but I want to be the best teammate I can be on and off the court." Johnson will be joining a trio of men's players who continued their hoops careers at Dyersburg State a year ago: Haydn Moten, Juwan McLemore, and Isaiah Claybrooks. She was also offered by Motlow State Community College, but decided being closer to home would be a better fit.

Johnson is the second female athlete to sign with Dyersburg State this season, following her soccer teammate Kristin Lewis.



Above: Lady Cavalier coach Kayla Irvin reflected on Hannah Johnson's career and character to introduce the signing ceremony Thursday. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Hannah Johnson's family flanks her at the Dyersburg State signing ceremony Thursday afternoon at CCHS. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Hannah Johnson listens to Coach Kayla Irvin's tribute to her career as a Lady Cavalier. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Hannah Johnson is surrounded by teammates from the basketball squad as the Crockett senior signs with Dyersburg State to continue her basketball career. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Crockett fans are going to miss watching that sweet stroke that helped Hannah Johnson accumulate more than 1,000 points in her career. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Right: Hannah Johnson -- with Coach Kayla Irvin watching intently behind her -- drives for the basket during a game this past season. (Photo by Ron Barry)