

## Chelsie Schweers -The Path Less Travelled

Women pursuing their dreams in basketball; female role models in the sporting arena and women playing with a competitive passion are some of the regular comments people make about what they'd like to see. Chelsie Schweers covers all of that and so much more and will return to the Eltham High School in 2020 for NBL1. Just the second female American player in 20 years for the Wildcats, left an impression on the basketball community that demanded she be returned!

There's something about watching Schweers play that tells you she's a fighter, that she hasn't taken the easy path, but the road less travelled and come out the other side with an international basketball resume glittering with awards.

Maybe that competitive edge and passion with which she plays stemmed from her beginnings? As a 5 year old, Chelsie was introduced to the game at her baby sitter's house. As the only girl, her older brother Justin and two other boys would beg Chelsie to play basketball so they could play 2 v 2. It was in this backyard in Virginia Beach where Chelsie fell in love with the game.

From 9 years of age until she was 17, Chelsie was a regular on the AAU basketball circuit; best described as club competition, but in a more flexible, multiple tournaments type circuit. It was in this system when Barb Smith coached Chelsie Schweers, someone she admires as her first non-family mentor "From the time I was 9, she instilled in me to give 100% effort every single time I stepped on the court, she accepted nothing less."

Attending Hickory High School in Chesapeake, Virginia, Schweers amassed 1,604 points across her career. Staying close to home and true to Virginia, Schweers took the unusual step of going to a Division III College -Christopher Newport University (CNU). "To this day I still get a lot of backlash about playing Division III. CNU is a great university, where I played four great basketball years and earned my Bachelor degree in Communication." Certainly, Chelsie finished her four-year career with the 'Captains' as a bona-fide star accruing a stable of records and achievements:

- CNU All-time point scoring leader (male or female) with 2,869 points
- CNU All-time leading 3 point shots made with 415
- CNU Highest career 3pt shooting percentage -46%
- CNU Highest career free throw percentage -82%
- The only 4-time All American in CNU history

National and Conference recognition:

- Second highest career points in NCAA DIII history
- 2011 NCAA DIII National Player of the Year
- 2011 NCAA Championship All-Tournament team
- 3-time Conference 'Player of the Year'
- 3-time Conference 'Tournament MVP'
- Conference 'Rookie of the Year'
- 4-time 'All-Virginia DII-DIII Player of the Year'
- CNU retired her playing number
- In 2017 she was inducted to the CNU 'Hall of Fame'
- Later in 2017, Chelsie was inducted into the 'USA South Conference Hall of Fame'

It would be fair to say that Chelsie Schweers took full advantage of the opportunities provided to her in her time with Christopher Newport University!

Playing at the Division III level with CNU was a platform that allowed Chelsie to be recruited internationally, something that people said wouldn't happen; but she has gone on to prove them wrong. Signing for multi-sport giant Panathinaikos in Athens, Greece was her first professional contract back in 2012, an impressive addition to the basketball resume coming out of College.

NBL1 2020 will be Schweers' 8<sup>th</sup> year as a professional player having played internationally travelling back and forth between Europe and Australia. After her rookie season in Greece, Chelsie's first taste of Australian life was playing for Toowoomba in the Queensland Basketball League (QBL) in 2013, where her scoring dominance returned, averaging over 28ppg. From the tropics of Queensland, Chelsie headed to Iceland where a 54 point game highlighted her time there, before returning to the Sunshine state to play for Ipswich in 2015. It was in 2015 when Schweers won the QBL Most Valuable Player award, a league which featured a number of Australian WNBL and international stars. A return to Iceland saw her with an average of 31ppg!

Chelsie had ambitions for a higher league though and going into 2016, signed for Hobart in the then SEABL competition. You wouldn't be surprised if you were told the SEABL scoring champion would you? Chelsie Schweers of course!

Continuing the link between Australia and Europe, Chelsie took an opportunity in Portugal. However after copping a broken nose during the season and being away from home for so long, it was starting to take its toll. "I thought I was over it, ready to give up" Schweers said of her playing career.

A desire for coaching and sharing the game, Chelsie took a Director of Basketball Operations job with William & Mary thinking her post-player career had begun, but as the year away went on, the itch returned and then an offer from Sutherland in the Waratah League of NSW was made available. Schweers was back! As if she'd never stopped, Chelsie took out the League MVP averaging 29ppg, 6 rebounds and 4.4 assists per game.

The opportunity to work out with Sydney University Flames was a shot at the WNBL for the 2018/19 season and she took that on working under Cheryl Chambers. With the emergence of NBL1, Schweers knew where she wanted to be, back in Victoria, in the best winter league in Australia. Despite multiple clubs wanting the services of Chelsie, she selected the Eltham Wildcats.

Schweers took on the new level in Australian basketball as she averaged over 23ppg, but it was the passion she demonstrated and the time she spent with young girls from across the club, that led to the 'Schweers Fan Club' at every home game and most away matches!

Young girls want local heroes, players they can get to know and support and that's exactly what Chelsie allows to happen within the Eltham community. "I want young players to see me and know that with hard work and determination, basketball can take you as far as you want to go."