

Mathiowetz setting standard at SD State

BROOKINGS, S.D. — For someone who played high school basketball for a small Class A school in Minnesota, the impact Madison Mathiowetz has made during her basketball career has been anything but small.

The Sleepy Eye St. Mary's High School all-time leader in career points with 3,762, Mathiowetz became a pioneer of sorts in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, as she accomplished the rare feat of playing Division 1 women's basketball with the South Dakota State Jackrabbits in 2022. While she had to wait patiently to get more playing time, she jumped into the starting rotation as a sophomore, led the team in minutes and averaged 11.5 points per game.

Now in her senior year at South Dakota State, Mathiowetz has reflected more on her time with the Jackrabbits, which has included a Summit League Tournament championship all four years she's been with the team. This year, the Jackrabbits defeated North Dakota State for their fourth consecutive title.

Mathiowetz also passed 1,000 career points in college earlier this season and sits at 1,229 for her career.

"I feel like I do a good of reflecting on my career as I'm going through it, but this year I feel like I've done a better job of kind of sitting and smelling the roses a little bit as we went," Mathiowetz said. "I just really come back to having so much gratitude for the place that SDSU is and the opportunities that it gave me and the people that I'm surrounded [by] here.

"I came here wanting to have success because I knew it was a successful program, I knew they just won a ton of basketball games, but I came away with not only that success on the court, but just a ton of amazing memories and experiences off the court. That's just truly what I'm most thankful for is the people I've got to experience it with."

Mathiowetz has plenty of college basketball memories, but she'll be looking to make more when the 11th-seeded Jackrabbits open the 2026 NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament at 1:30 p.m. Friday against the No. 6-seeded Washington Huskies at Schollmaier Arena in Fort Worth, Texas.

"With Washington, we're learning about them as we go here," Mathiowetz said. "We talked about [Monday], we had some film and talked about them in practice. They play a super, high-paced game of basketball. So, it's going to be really important that we try and slow them down, maybe control the tempo a little bit, make sure we take care of the basketball so that they can't get that transition that they like to do a lot, so that'll be a big part of it. Defensively, nothing will really change for us, we just need to do what we do at a high level."

The Huskies (21-10) are led by junior guard Sayvia Sellers, who is averaging 18.5 points and 3.7 assists per game this season. Sophomore guard Avery Howell adds 13.7 ppg and 8.3 rebounds per game for the Huskies, while senior guard Elle Ladine averages 10.4 ppg and 5 rpg.

The Jackrabbits (27-6) are led by 6-foot-2 senior forward Brooklyn Meyer's 22.4 ppg and 8 rpg, while Mathiowetz is averaging 13.6 ppg and 3.6 apg.

The Huskies are shooting 44.9% from the field and 34% from the 3-point line, while the Jackrabbits are shooting 48.4% from the field and 35.1% from beyond the arc.

At 5-foot-10, Mathiowetz said in addition to adapting to a college level of defense, she also had to adjust her game offensively due to her size. Her 3-point shooting is one key area she has worked on during her time with the Jackrabbits.

Mathiowetz shot 44.5% from the beyond the arc during her first year starting as a sophomore. She shot 37.6% from the 3-point line last season and is shooting 40.1% from long range her senior year.

"At Sleepy Eye St. Mary's I was able to score at all three levels a lot more, pretty much at will," Mathiowetz said. "Then I got to college and I'm a pretty undersized guard at this level, so I had to learn to shoot the ball really well and then always get to the rim as much as I did in high school.

"So, I had to learn that mid-range game, my pull-up game, which I'd say I had a little bit in high school, but as I got to college I think that 3-point shooting and mid-range game really had to elevate a ton to help me be successful in my guard spot."

Without a ton of experience back on the court this season, head coach Aaron Johnston and his young Jackrabbits team had to rely on Mathiowetz and fellow seniors Meyer and Ellie Colbeck to be more vocal and help develop the other players.

"We definitely had to be vocal as leaders," Mathiowetz said. "I would say AJ definitely pushed that out of our captains and our seniors, me, Brooklyn and Ellie. He really asked us to step up and make sure that we were not only leading by example, which was a huge part of it, but also making sure we were vocal and building that confidence in our younger players, reiterating what we expect out of our program, the level of play we had to play at, all those things.

"Definitely had to up it [from what] I have in the past, because we had some great senior leaders and captains all four years that I've been here, so this is probably the first year that I really had to step into that role and be a big part of helping the young, maybe inexperienced team, become a Summit League Tournament champion team and team that's going to be in the NCAA Tournament."

Last weekend, Mathiowetz was able to make a trip to Williams Arena in Minneapolis, not to play, but to watch her younger sister, Morgan, play with the St. Mary's Knights in the Class A Minnesota State Girls Basketball Tournament title game. There, the second-seeded Knights defeated the No. 1-ranked and No. 1-seeded Mountain Iron-Buhl to win the first girls basketball state championship in St. Mary's history.

Mathiowetz made it to the state girls basketball tournament as a junior in 2021 with coach Bruce Woitas, falling in the semifinals. Now, Mathiowetz was able to watch it all come together for her sister, Morgan, her aunt and Knights assistant coach Ashley Schieffert, her younger cousin Olivia Schieffert, and coach Woitas.

"We made a run in the state tournament, we were never able to get that championship, that definitely was a goal, so getting to see Morgan and our cousin Olivia play and their whole team ... I talked to them this whole season throughout it, they really wanted to get that done," Mathiowetz said. "They had some ups and downs, I know they only lost one game, but there were some close ones. Just getting to see them work so hard these past couple years, and I remember [Morgan and Olivia] talking about it when I was playing and they were just so little, getting to see them accomplish that together and with their team for our school was really, really special.

"Until you live it, I think it's hard to realize how much work it takes to get a championship and to play so well the whole season but then those three games in the state tournament, they had to beat some really, really good teams. They just did it so well and they carried themselves so well, represented our school so well, it was really fun to see."

Mathiowetz said after graduating from South Dakota State, she plans to return to Minnesota and attend chiropractic school in the fall at Northwestern Health Sciences University. Mathiowetz also wants to get into coaching and helping the next generation of girls develop as basketball has been such a big part of her life.

Until then, Mathiowetz and the Jackrabbits will look to raise eyebrows and make a run in this year's NCAA Tournament.