

Butler senior Karen Nimo dons her Eastern Florida State College t-shirt while signing to the Cocoa, Florida junior college during a signing ceremony at Butler High School on Tuesday May 21, 2024. Staff photo by Teon Scott.

Date: May 22, 2024

BY GABRIEL STOVALL

One of the more unlikely stories on the local basketball scene came up with a happy ending Tuesday afternoon.

Butler senior Karen Nimo capped off her **one and only season playing high school basketball** with a college scholarship.

The 5-foot-10 Lady Bulldog inked her letter of intent to play basketball at **Eastern Florida State College**, a junior college in Cocoa, Florida.

Nimo chose ESF over **more than dozen colleges including five NCAA Division I schools**, including BYU, Morehead State, Austin Peay, Jacksonville State, Albany State and South Carolina State.

But for anyone who may question her choice to temporarily spurn Division I overtures for the JUCO route, Nimo has a message.

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“People automatically consider JUCO to be substandard whenever it comes to mind,” Nimo said. “Making a choice was difficult because of my 4.2 GPA. But I thought about a quote from Kobe Bryant that made me make my decision. He said, ‘We can all become masters in our craft, but that decision requires sacrifices.’ That decision to sacrifice was made.”

That means Nimo will sacrifice the immediate gratification of making a one-year jump from high school to D-1 ball so that she can fly under the radar a little bit longer in order to make the kind of improvements to her game that will help her accomplish her ultimate hoop dreams.

Nimo said there was no shortage of things to like at the school she considered. But ESF had intangibles that set itself apart.

“The environment is extremely competitive,” she said. “It’s filled with individuals who, like me, are far more serious about the game than average. For me, culture, surroundings and education are essential. Plus, the coaches made me feel warm, and they were welcoming. And they just seemed like good people, and good people are hard to come by these days.”

Nimo made the most out of her only year of high school ball while averaging 11.1 points, seven rebounds and 2.5 steals per game for a Butler squad that upset Thomson to capture the Region 4-AA title and came within a three-point loss to Murray County from playing in the Class AA Final Four.

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She's joining a solid program that finished this past season with a 27-5 mark overall and a 21-0 record in its conference. Nimo says it's the perfect place to continue her education for now, both in the classroom and on the court.

"For me, this is just another opportunity to increase my stock as a player while sharpening my skills in preparation for the big leagues," Nimo said. "Futuristically, I can see myself playing at the high-major D-1 level. Yes, I could've taken one of the D-1 offers I had. But realistically, they will always be there, along with all my other offers. And if a coach wants you, then they want you, no matter where you play."

She's set to leave for Florida "in mid-June," and said she's "eager to learn and extremely excited to get started" on her collegiate journey. "I've already begun to study my new team's offense, as well as the schools they play in their conference."

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Life after high school basketball for Karen Nimo begins with multiple college offers



Butler senior Karen Nimo has almost a dozen offers to play college basketball after just one season of high school hoops. Staff photo by Raquel Scruggs.

Date: February 29, 2024

BY GABRIEL STOVALL

Basketball season is over for the Butler girls' squad, which means Karen Nimo's one-year high school career has also come to an end. But her time in the sport is, perhaps, just getting started.

Butler fell to Murray County, 52-49 in Tuesday night's Class AA Elite 8 game in the GHSA state tournament. But the very next day, Nimo took to X (formerly Twitter) and started releasing her barrage of college scholarship offers — 11 in all as of Wednesday afternoon. The schools who have offered are Indian University of Pennsylvania (IUP), Fort Valley State, Albany State, Davis and Elkins College, Concord University, South Georgia Tech, Pensacola State, East Georgia State College, Central Georgia Tech, Tyler Junior College and Albany Tech.

It's quite the haul, considering **Nimo never played high school basketball on any level** before this season. To be considered to continue her basketball career on the collegiate level by any school is amazing, given her almost unheard of short stint in the game.

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Now, it's just about making the choice that can help her continue to develop her game.

"It's really situational for her now," said Darrin Shine of Shine's Hoop Grind Academy. Shine discovered her skill while Nimo was in his gym class while she was a junior still at A.R. Johnson.

Shine believes her skill set can translate into Division I potential with the right coaching environment.

"If she takes the JUCO route, she can get those two years to learn and get better and get to a D-1 level," Shine said. "Or you can go the D-II route, get into a good school there and then hit the transfer portal to a D-1 program in the next two years. Whatever it is, I just want her to pick the right situation and go from there. As she continues to gain understanding of the game, she's gonna have a chance."

Nimo had already been a solid performer for a Butler squad that boasted the Region 4-AA player of the year in junior Brayla Harris.

Nimo came into the Region 4-AA tournament averaging a shade under 10 points per game. She's scored at a 17.5 ppg clip during the six region and state tournament games the Lady Bulldogs played.



And while she'd, no doubt, rather still be competing for a state championship, the 5-foot-10 senior says pivoting toward life after high school basketball is easier because of the options she has. Still, Nimo won't be in a rush to make a choice. She currently has no time table to decide just yet.

"I'm really not sure," she said, "but I do plan to go on all my visits soon, which is going to help with my decision making."