

Regina-native Taryn Wicijowski has bright future in basketball

By Rob Vanstone, Leader-Post August 10, 2009



Taryn Wicijowski

Photograph by: Bryan Schlosser, Leader-Post

REGINA — What a month this will be for Taryn Wicijowski.

On Aug. 2, the Regina-born Wicijowski played for Canada in the bronze-medal final at the world junior (under-19) women's basketball championship in Bangkok, Thailand. She had eight points and 10 rebounds in a 58-51 loss to Argentina.

"It was an amazing experience," the 6-foot-2 Wicijowski said. "It was really good to show the world how much we've improved the last couple of years.

"The senior national team is ranked 13th in the world, so I don't think anyone expected us to end up where we did. There's a huge difference — nine places."

She is also becoming accustomed to new places. Having just returned home from Bangkok, she is to leave Aug. 19 for Salt Lake City. She is to attend the University of Utah on a basketball scholarship.

"I'm really excited to get down there and start training with the team," said Wicijowski, 18. "The coaches are really close with Canada Basketball and they run a lot of stuff that Canada Basketball does, so training with those systems all year will really help me."

As part of the Canada Basketball program, Wicijowski spent the 2008-09 season at the National Elite Development Academy in Hamilton. The Academy included the country's top 12 female players in her age group.

"It basically came down to improving in basketball," she said. "I knew if I went there, I'd improve that much more, especially with making this (under-19) team."

Wicijowski attended classes in Grade 12 at St. Mary's Catholic Secondary School from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each day, before turning her attention to basketball. She had played basketball for the LeBoldus Golden Suns before moving to Hamilton.

"It was really different," she said. "It was hard leaving my friends and family, but I became really, really good friends with my teammates and the people I was living with."

Any pangs of homesickness were eased by a handful of visits to Regina. Factor in the trip to Bangkok and she has certainly become familiar with airports of late.

"It was really interesting getting to travel like that," she said of the excursion to Bangkok. "Thailand isn't the richest country in the world. To see how different it is really makes you thankful for the things you have in Canada."

Wicijowski is also thankful for the fourth-place finish, even though she would have preferred a medal.

"It was really hard for our team to deal with right after the game, especially because we played Argentina and we had beaten them last year," she said, "but after a few days, we realized we had done a huge thing for ourselves and our country."

rvanstone@leaderpost.canwest.com