

Christian Central Academy junior eclipses 1,000 points

by PATRICK J. NAGY
Reporter

Amie Stuitje moved into some elite company on the basketball court.

The 5-foot-5 junior guard became the second girl and sixth overall player in Christian Central Academy history to score over 1,000 career points.

Stuitje accomplished the feat on Jan. 31 in a regular-season road game against New Life Christian School at Rushford Middle School in the Cuba-Rushford School District.

Stuitje said she needed nine points to break 1,000 and achieved it with a breakaway layup in the first quarter. The game was stopped and Stuitje, who can play point guard and shooting guard, received a basketball signed by her teammates. Stuitje finished the game tied for season high with 26 points, as CCA won, 59-49.

Stuitje has 1,170 career points with another year left to play.

"It does kind of blow my mind," said Stuitje, who has played organized basketball since the fourth



Amie Stuitje, middle, became the sixth Christian Central Academy basketball player to score over 1,000 points in school history. Also pictured are her parents, Kathie, far left, and CCA girls coach Gerry, far right.

grade. "I've been given a gift, and I've always had teammates and coaches help me go with it."

One of those coaches is her father, Gerry, who took over as CCA varsity girls' hoops coach before the season. Coach Stuitje is not playing favorites when he

says his daughter is a leader on the court.

"Both as a coach and father I know how hard she works at the game," he said. "She's had a passion for basketball since she was very young. It's very gratifying to see that all of her hard work has

produced that kind of recognition."

Coach Stuitje said what has been most pleasing about his daughter's game is that she is not just a scorer. She was the team leader in points (483, 16.1 average), shooting percentage (47.2) and free-throw percentage (70.8 percentage) and also led the team in assists (190, 6.3 average) and steals (114, 3.8 average).

"She by far led the team in assists and does things that don't end up on the stat sheet," he said. "Many teams have tried to press her, but her ball-handling ability and the ability to see the court generally helped us break a press easily. She also has the ability to get the ball to teammates when they're open but not expecting it. Players have become ready when they're open because, more often than not, Amie will get the pass to them."

Amie Stuitje led CCA to a 27-3 record and the Independent Athletic Conference and Niagara Frontier Christian Athletic Association tournament titles for the second straight year. CCA also won both league's regular-season

titles and the NFCAA last year. She also has been an All-League IAC First Team selection the last three years.

She also plays year-round through AAU travel ball, playing once for the Niagara Police Athletic League and now with a team comprising players from Starpoint High School.

"It really does make you a better player," she said. "You get different coaches and you play with different girls. Everything is a level up from what you play (during high school season) because it's the best of the best."

"I'm pretty confident she knows more about basketball than I do," joked coach Stuitje. "It's kind of intimidating as a coach, but that's a product of the excellent coaches she's had in the past. Plus she's been to excellent basketball camps."

Amie Stuitje, who also has played sweeper the last two years for the CCA varsity girls' soccer team, helped the squad win the IAC title this past fall. She earned Second Team all-league honors.

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Bud Bakewell Bruins finish third in New York State

Despite several players missing from last year's roster, the Bud Bakewell Bruins Pee Wee Major, an underdog all season, was a win away from qualifying for nationals.

The Bruins not only qualified for the Tier II state finals with an 11-2-3 record but also went to New York City and beat top teams to finish third in New York State.

The Bruins opened play at the Chelsea Piers Sky Rink in Manhattan against the eventual No. 2 team, the Saratoga Blue Knights.

Saratoga opened the scoring, but Don Battista (Tonawanda) scored to make it 1-1 after the first period. Mike Naples scored early in the second from Battista and Kyle Gullivan (Tonawanda) to put the Bruins up 2-1. The Knights scored twice shortly after, and the Bruins never recovered.

Friday night's opposition was the East No. 1 team, the Westchester Vipers. The Bruins came out firing and took a 2-0 first-period lead. Gullivan opened the scoring on a feed from Naples. Reno Masecchia stole the puck and drilled one in for a 2-0 lead to close the first. Richard Brooks (Tonawanda) converted a turnover into a 3-0 Bruins' lead midway in the second period.

The Vipers scored a power-play goal, but Brenon Sarratori (Tonawanda) rifled a shot over the goalie's shoulder to shock the Vipers and give the Bruins a 4-1 lead. The Vipers tried furiously to get back in the game, scoring twice and outshooting the Bruins 27-5 over the final two periods, but Marc Mallare (Amherst) made several big saves to preserve a huge 4-3 win.

On Saturday afternoon, the Bruins and Camillus Cougars hooked up in a wide-open affair that saw both teams



The Bud Bakewell Bruins was a win away from qualifying for nationals, finishing third in New York State. Members of the team, pictured from left, are: front row — Reno Masecchia, Jesse Ciffa, Kyle Turk, Ryan Wigdorski, Marc Mallare, Richard Brooks, Brenon Sarratori, Don Battista; second row — Mike Iannello, Michael Naples, Peter Gottfried, Veikko Mielonen, Allen Reilly, Kyle Gullivan, Franjo Tabar, David DiMaria; third row — coach Tom Mallare, head coach Don Battista, coach Pat Gullivan.

fire 32 shots on goal. Battista opened the scoring early, and just over a minute later, Veikko Mielonen scored on a nice feed from Masecchia.

Less than a minute after that, Naples tallied on a great three-way passing play with Battista and Gullivan to give the Bruins an early 3-0 lead. Camillus scored twice in the second, but Masecchia drilled one home from Mielonen and Franjo Tabar to make it 4-2 after two periods. Mike Iannello (Tonawanda), David DiMaria (Tonawanda), Tabar, Allen Reilly, Peter Gottfried and Jesse Ciffa played strong defense and limited second chances.

Mallare stopped 30 shots and Gullivan scored midway through the third from Battista and Naples to give the Bruins a 5-2 victory.

A tie or win on Saturday night, against host NYC Cyclones, would

send the Bruins to the semifinals. The Cyclones came out strong and scored the first goal, but Battista answered shortly after on a feed from Naples.

The Cyclones scored again, but Gullivan responded on a nice pass from Kyle Turk to end the first period tied 2-2. The Bruins took control in the second as Turk scored on a rebound of Masecchia's shot after a blast from the point by Peter Gottfried.

Late in the period, Battista scored again on a rebound of a DiMaria drive from the point for a 4-2 lead after two. The third period saw the Cyclones rally, outshooting the Bruins 18-5, but Mallare was again up to the task and shut down the Cyclones.

The Bruins, with a 3-1 record, qualified for the state semifinals against top seed, and old rival, Niagara. The Bruins and Purple Eagles have played many great games over the years, and this was no exception. Gullivan opened the scoring on a nice feed from Battista for a 1-0 lead. Niagara countered twice, the last coming with 45 seconds remaining in the first for a 2-1 lead.

An early goal in the second put Niagara up 3-1, but the Bruins refused

to quit. They battled hard with some great forechecking and hits by Ryan Wigdorski, Sarratori, Mielonen, and Masecchia. It paid off, as Gullivan scored again on another assist from Battista, and the game was close at 3-2 after two periods. Mallare was strong again as the Bruins were outshot 25-8 after two periods.

The third period was a close struggle between the teams, but Niagara scored twice within a minute to provide the final margin of victory. The Bruins battled hard and came within one victory of reaching the national finals.

Offensively, Battista led the scoring with four goals and nine points. Gullivan had five goals and seven points, Masecchia added three goals and five points, Naples added four assists and five points, and Turk and Mielonen each had a goal and an assist. DiMaria, Reilly, Tabar, Iannello, Gottfried and Ciffa were solid on defense. Mallare was outstanding in the tournament with 156 saves in the five games.

North Buffalo Pee Wee Major Bisons capture title

The North Buffalo Pee Wee Major Bisons capped off a successful 2006-07 season by defeating the Tonawanda Thunder, 5-0, and winning the 15th annual Tonawanda Tournament last Sunday at Brighton Arena.

The week-long tournament began last week for the Bisons as they settled for a 1-1 tie against Tonawanda then defeated Grand Niagara, 3-1. Early on Sunday, North Buffalo completed round robin play by thumping Olean, 10-0. Making it to the scoring sheets were Marc Bezbatchenko (Amherst), Kyle Moslow, Jordan Rusek (Amherst), JC Grabenstatter (Amherst), Andrew Rampado, John Hettrick, Alex Laversa, Dean Arthur (Amherst), Max Capizzi, Oscar Ostendorf, and Rickey Wiorowski.

Andrew Weyrinski (Amherst) and Jim Basil (Amherst) played fantastic in net, allowing only two goals in the tournament. John Lenahan, Sean Basil, and Austin Kneer made sure the area in front of the net was cleared after any of their opponent's shots.

The title game before a packed house of 127 started quickly for the Bisons, when Mason Evans, from Rampado, fired a lightning shot from the right point that found the back of the net when the game was only two



The North Buffalo Pee Wee Major Bisons recently won the Tonawanda Tournament. Members of the team, pictured from left, are: front row — Andrew Werynski and Jim Basil; second row — Andrew Rampado, John Lenahan, JC Grabenstatter, Alex Laversa, Marc Bezbatchenko, Rickey Wiorowski, Josh Little, John Hettrick, and Jordan Rusek; third row — Mason Evans, Sean Basil, Kyle Moslow, Dean Arthur, Oscar Ostendorf, Max Capizzi, and Austin Kneer and coaches Rob Kneer, Pat Dwyer, and Joe Brown.

minutes old.

Josh Little opened the second period going coast to coast, shaking off a check, and burying the puck behind the startled Thunder goalie to make it 2-0.

Several minutes later, a scrum formed in front of the net and Arthur back-handed his shot and Buffalo took a commanding 3-0 lead. Basil started the game in net and Werynski

finished for the combined shutout.

Tonawanda needed to press to get back in the game and were caught with two breakaways, first by Moslow, and then by Arthur as the clocked ticked off the final seconds to seal the victory and the trophy for head coach Pat Dwyer, and assistants Joe Brown and Rob Kneer, and manager Jim Basil.

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