

Florida Gulf Coast, UNI looking at Lassen

Written by Jim Ecker

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IOWA CITY -- Matt Lassen has developed a special interest in Florida Gulf Coast during the NCAA men's basketball tournament, but it has nothing to do with his bracket for March Madness.

Florida Gulf Coast, which has stunned the college basketball world by reaching the Sweet 16 of the tournament, is recruiting Lassen and has invited the Linn-Mar senior to visit the campus in Fort Myers, Fla., once they are done playing.

The University of Northern Iowa also wants Lassen to visit once the Panthers are finished playing in the CollegeInsider.com Tournament.

Lassen, a 6-foot-5 swingman, originally committed to Albany (N.Y.), but changed his mind in February and began looking for a different school.

"Two days after I de-committed from Albany, I got a call from Florida Gulf Coast. And now they're blowing up the tournament," Lassen said Wednesday after playing in the Eastern Iowa All-Star Game in Iowa City. "Pretty ironic."

Until then, Lassen had never heard of Florida Gulf Coast.

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"No. Not at all," he admitted.

Florida Gulf Coast upset Georgetown in the first round of the NCAA tournament, then beat San Diego State in the next round to reach the Sweet 16. It's the first time in NCAA history that a No.15 seed has reached the Sweet 16, and Lassen has been following them closely on TV.

"Oh, yeah, it's been a lot of fun," he said.

Lassen filled out his bracket for the NCAA tournament once the pairings were announced, but like most people he did not pick Florida Gulf Coast to beat Georgetown.

"No, I did not," he said, smiling. "Don't tell them that."

Florida Gulf Coast will face Florida in the Sweet 16 on Friday night.

Marty Richter, an assistant coach at Florida Gulf Coast, is from Waterloo and knew about Lassen from his connections in Iowa. Richter played basketball at Simpson College in Indianola and worked as an assistant coach there from 1999 to 2001.

Lassen de-committed from Albany and two days later Richter was on the phone from Fort Myers. "He was the first call I got," he said.

"It was weird, because they said they read an article about me and the article said I wanted to stay close to home. I'm not going to burn any bridges at this point."

Lassen would like to stay close to his family while he attends college, but the Lassens might be

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able to make that happen if Florida Gulf Coast offers a scholarship. "My parents told me, if I went to Florida they would move down there too," he said.

Florida Gulf Coast has not offered a scholarship at this point, but Lassen is hopeful. "They told me they're interested," he said. "So it comes down to how much they're interested."

Lassen is also interested in Northern Iowa, which already has Matt Bohannon of Linn-Mar on the team along with several other former Cedar Rapids Metro players like Wes Washpun of Washington, Matt MacDougall of Prairie and Max Martino of Kennedy.

"I have a lot of friends up there," he said.

"It feels awesome to have these opportunities and I just want to make the best of it," he said.

Lassen scored eight points for the North team in an 87-79 loss to the South in the all-star game on Wednesday in Iowa City. Jimmy Roth of Linn-Mar scored seven points, Trey Sampson of Xavier scored three points and Jace Hanna of Prairie had two points. Ky Kramer of Jefferson scored six points for the South.



Courteney McCrary of Prairie scored 15 points as the South lost to the North, 68-65, in the girls all-star game. Abby Herb of Washington scored eight points for the South squad and Maddie Ko olbeck of Jefferson had two

points.

Ashley Stulken of Xavier scored seven points for the North. Mykaela Brandt of Linn-Mar scored three points.

GIRLS BOXSCORE

NORTH (68): Logan Lynch (Wahlert) 0, Madison Weekly (Benton) 10, Kelsey Ernst (Bellevue) 5, Naomi Phillips (Waverly-Shell Rock) 15, Ashley Stulken (Xavier) 7, Mykaela Brandt (Linn-Mar) 3, Madelyn Welty (Western Dubuque) 9, Daneshia Snitker (Waukon) 13, Aftin Phyfe (Waverly-Shell Rock) 6.

SOUTH (65): Danielle Moore (Assumption) 16, Kristi Feldman (West Liberty) 4, Corteney McCrary (Prairie) 15, Mallory Boyle (North Mahaska) 1, Hailey Schneden (Assumption) 5, Abby Herb (Washington) 8, Hannah Haynes (Van Buren) 8, Mickey Hansche (Iowa City High) 5, Traci Keller (Central Lee) 3, Maddie Koolbeck (Jefferson) 2.

BOYS BOXSCORE

NORTH (79): Klint Carlson (Waverly-Shell Rock) 5, Domen Zevnik (Wahlert) 15, Matt Lassen (Linn-Mar) 8, T.J. Lake (Western Dubuque) 9, Trey Sampson (Xavier) 3, Jimmy Roth (Linn-Mar) 7, Jace Hanna (Prairie) 2, Josh Weeber (Dubuque Senior) 12, Trace Heyer (North Fayette) 4, Jobe Ellison (Maquoketa Valley) 14.

SOUTH (87): Steven Soukop (Danville) 3, Jeremy Morgan (Iowa City West) 5, Myzeah Battie-Gaddy (Iowa City West) 20, Billy Daniel (Assumption) 9, Bryan Forbes (Lone Tree) 3, Ky Kramer (Jefferson) 6, Michael Soukop (Danville) 5, Matt Vonderhaar (Assumption) 8, Faith Pope (Mount Pleasant) 12, Vaclav Bujnoch (Sigourney) 16.

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