

Packed church bids tearful goodbye to Roundtree

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 29 September 2012 13:59 -

More than 400 friends, relatives and former teammates paid their final respects to Tasha Roundtree Saturday in a moving service at the Gospel Tabernacle Church in northeast Cedar Rapids.

Roundtree, 19, is the former Cedar Rapids Washington basketball player who was shot and killed in southwest Cedar Rapids last weekend.

The police are calling her death a homicide. No arrests have been made.

Roundtree was lovingly remembered as a charismatic young lady who will be sorely missed by everyone who knew her.

Washington girls basketball coach Frank Howell, one of many people to speak at the service, said Roundtree brought people together with her fun-loving personality and energy. He said Roundtree was the type of person that made everyone else better and the type of player every coach would want on their team.

"Everybody loved Tasha," said Howell, standing before the overflow crowd. "I wanted to have Tasha on my team even before I knew she existed."

Roundtree graduated from Washington last spring and had enrolled at William Penn University to play basketball, but abruptly left school earlier this month without explanation to her college coach. A few weeks later she was shot and killed.

There were few dry eyes during the two-hour service. Roundtree's body lay in an open casket at the front of the room, a basketball resting on the coffin and a jersey autographed by former teammates draped over the side. She was wearing a ballcap on her head.

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Several dozen friends and relatives spoke during the service, along with members of the clergy.

"She brought things to our basketball team that nobody else in the world could," said Brooke Foreman, a former teammate who returned from Drake University for the service. "We loved her so much."

Several friends and relatives broke down in tears while expressing their feelings.

There was a common theme during the public remarks about love, pain and a senseless loss of life. She's gone but not forgotten, several people remarked.

The service was filled with prayer, music, love, laughter and tears.

The printed program offered a moving farewell from Roundtree's sister, Tricey, and began with the words "My Beloved Sister."

"Dear Tasha," Tricey wrote. "I don't have the words to say how much I love you and miss you. You are my baby sister, my world."

"This all seems like a nightmare that I cannot wake up from. I can remember when I named you Latasha Nicole, so we both would have the same amount of letters in our names."

"I remember your first steps like you were my own daughter. I remember you used to tell me that you were my little big sister. All I was able to do was laugh."

"I am so sorry I wasn't there to protect you. I know you are in a better place, but that is a hard pill to swallow. I love you, may peace be with you."

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One speaker said Roundtree is now playing basketball on a court in heaven, with a great smile on her face.

Howell said he gets nervous before games, so Roundtree would make sure she was always the last player to leave the locker room to calm him down. "Don't worry, Coach," she'd say with a smile on her face. "We've got this game."

Howell said he's received numerous notes from high school teams, coaches and players. Many former teammates have contacted him, from coast to coast.

"If they couldn't be here, you know they wanted to be here," he said.

Roundtree was the point guard on the basketball team and was playing the game of her life in the Class 4A regional finals last February when she tore the ACL in her knee. As it turned out, that was the last game she ever played.

Police are not commenting on a possible motive in the case and have not announced if they have a suspect.

Burial Saturday afternoon was at Oak Hill Cemetery.