

Martin excited about joining Cougars

Written by Jim Ecker

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Morgan Martin has big dreams.

She wants to play college basketball and is interested in attending one of the military service academies for the Army, Navy or Air Force.

She wants to take Advanced Placement classes in high school and might enter the medical profession some day.

For all those reasons and more, Martin is transferring from Quincy Notre Dame High School in Illinois to Cedar Rapids Kennedy for her junior year in high school.

Her family plans to move from Hamilton, Ill. to Cedar Rapids in mid-August. She might join the successful Kennedy volleyball squad and is thinking about track and softball, but most of all she's coming to Kennedy to play basketball.

Martin is 6-foot-2 and was a fifth-team pick on the Class 2A all-state basketball team in Illinois last season when Quincy Notre Dame won its second state title in a row.

Martin plays with four Kennedy girls on Team Iowa, an AAU basketball squad that's coached by former Iowa Hawkeye and current Cedar Rapids Prairie boys basketball coach James Moses. That's how the move to Kennedy got started.

Martin was looking for a bigger school, stiffer competition and more opportunities in the classroom. She talked to the Kennedy girls about their school and it's led to Martin and her family heading to Cedar Rapids.

"We do a lot of team bonding when we go to these tournaments," Martin said Saturday. "We were just talking about Kennedy High School. I heard from them that Kennedy is one of the

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best academic high schools and they have really great kids there."

Martin has become friends with Madison Meier, Jordan Holmes, Paige Hendrickson and Stephanie Botkin on Team Iowa. Now they'll be teammates at Kennedy.

"I'm really excited," she said.

Martin averaged 9.6 points and 4.7 rebounds at Quincy Notre Dame last season as a sophomore. She also played on the varsity as a freshman and helped Notre Dame compile a 64-2 record with two state championships.

Quincy Notre Dame defeated Linn-Mar, 56-29, this past season at a tournament in Dubuque.

Quincy Notre Dame has about 400 students, whereas Kennedy has more than 1,700. As far as basketball goes, Martin will be moving from Class 2A in Illinois (the second smallest of four classes) to Class 5A in Iowa (the largest).

"I'm hoping it prepares me for the next level," she said.

Martin has been one of the top students in her class and is looking forward to taking a challenging academic load at Kennedy. "They have more A.P. (Advanced Placement) classes, so I'm interested in that," she said. "I want more of a challenge academically."

Martin has been making the two-hour trip from her home in Hamilton, Ill., to Cedar Rapids this summer to practice regularly with the Kennedy girls basketball team. "A couple of dozen trips, I'd say. We've come up quite a bit."

She won't be the only new member of the team at Kennedy this season. Tony Vis, formerly the

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head at Harlan High School, has succeeded Dennis Roloff as Kennedy's new coach and two of his daughters, Brianna and Mariah, will be on the team as well.

"So I don't feel so alone when I go up there," she said.

Vis has made a favorable impression on Martin and her family. "We really like the new coach up there at Kennedy," said Sam Poe, Martin's father.

"He's real aggressive, and I like that," Martin added.

Sam Poe said he is retired. His wife, Denise Martin, is certified to teach math in the middle schools and will be seeking employment in Cedar Rapids. Denise Martin's sister, Diane Salat Harvieux, lives in Cedar Rapids.

Martin and her parents have rented a house a few blocks from Kennedy High School and will be here in a few weeks.

"We're excited about it," Denise Martin said. "Morgan has really established some close bonds with four of the Kennedy girls."

Martin is not sure if she'll play volleyball for Coach Michelle Goodall at Kennedy, but she noted Goodall will be one of the assistant coaches for the girls basketball team this season and figures Goodall might encourage her to play volleyball. "I may have no choice there," she said, laughing.

Martin said she hopes to develop as an all-around basketball player at Kennedy. "In the past I've had to play with my back to the basket in the post area," she said. "But knowing I won't play that position in college, I'm trying to expand my game more."

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Martin and Team Iowa won three straight games at an AAU event in Kansas City on Friday.