

This Bohannon stays close to home at UNI

Written by Jim Ecker

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Gordy and Brenda Bohannon won't have to drive to Wisconsin or fly to Colorado to see their third-eldest son play college basketball.

Matt Bohannon is sticking close to home.

Bohannon, a 6-foot-4 guard at Linn-Mar, signed a national letter-of-intent Wednesday to play his college basketball at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, an easy drive from the Bohannons' home in Marion.

He signed his letter-of-intent during a ceremony at the school Wednesday afternoon.

"I feel like it's the best place for me and it's only 45 minutes away, so I don't think you can beat that," Bohannon said.

Bohannon did not pick the Panthers because they are close to home, however. He picked them because they have a strong program, he likes Coach Ben Jacobson and he's impressed that UNI upset Kansas and reached the Sweet 16 of the 2010 NCAA tournament.

"Anytime you see a team go to the Sweet 16 and you can say you're going to play for them next year, it's obviously a great thing," he said. "That helps quite a bit."

Gordy Bohannon, who played football at the University of Iowa, is delighted that Matt will be close to home.

"We're really happy about that," he said. "And Coach Jake is the perfect coach for Matt. The personality, the system he plays. And it is close to home. I couldn't imagine him going away further than UNI."

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It was a big signing day for basketball players at Linn-Mar Wednesday. Kiah Stokes signed to play at the University of Connecticut and Shane Benton signed with the University of North Dakota.

Jason Bohannon, the Bohannons' eldest son, finished his college basketball career at the University of Wisconsin last March and is currently a member of the Iowa Energy in the NBA "D" League. Zach Bohannon, the No.2 son, is currently a sophomore on the basketball team at the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

Matt Bohannon followed his brothers' advice in picking a school, and geography had little to do with it.

"They just said, 'Find the right fit for you. And when you know, you know,'" he remarked. "It sounds a little cliché, but it's true. Once I was up there on the campus and got along with the coaches, I knew it was the right place for me."

Bohannon, who averaged 17.4 points and 3.5 rebounds for Linn-Mar last season, committed to UNI this past July.

Jason Bohannon, a 6-2 guard, was Iowa's Mr. Basketball at Linn-Mar in 2006. He scored 1,170 points at Wisconsin and helped the Badgers win 105 games in four years, tying a school record.

"I think he started something special at Linn-Mar that a lot of kids at Linn-Mar want to replicate," Matt Bohannon said. "I know I'm one of them."

Zach Bohannon, a 6-8 forward, averaged 2.2 points and 1.1 rebounds at Air Force last season in 17 games as a freshman. His scholarship at the Air Force Academy is worth \$100,000 per year, according to his father. Matt Bohannon called Zach "an inspiration" to him in his basketball career.

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The Bohannons are now 3-for-3 in gaining basketball scholarships. There's another brother in the system at Linn-Mar with Jordan, currently a 7th grader.

Gordy Bohannon said it isn't just an accident that three of his sons earned scholarships.

"Every single one of our kids ... They planned it, they put the time in, they were shooting in the gym when noone else was," he said. "They went through the tears and the injuries and the adversity and overcame things."

Stokes averaged 19.5 points, 13 rebounds and 5 blocked shots last season when she led Linn-Mar to the Class 4A state title with a perfect 26-0 record. She helped Linn-Mar reach the first round of the state volleyball tournament Wednesday in Cedar Rapids and will take a few days off before joining the basketball team on Monday.

Stokes wore a UCONN women's basketball shirt to the ceremony. "Hopefully you'll fly out to Connecticut and watch me play next year," she told the crowd.

Benton averaged 7.2 points and 2.6 rebounds for the Lions last season as a junior. He wore a North Dakota T-shirt Wednesday and set his sights on having a good season at Linn-Mar before heading to college.

"We've got a big year coming up," he said. "Let's get it done."