



Friday, May 30, 2003

Former OU athlete wins European title

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

After the 2002 women's basketball season, former Oakland University forward Sarah Judd went overseas to play professionally. After a season on the European courts, she returns home a champion.

BV Lely, Judd's team in the Netherlands' first division professional women's league, won the league championship May 21 by defeating the Perik Jumpers, the league titleholder, 70-57 in Amsterdam. The championship is the culmination of a very successful basketball career for Judd.

In 2002, her fourth and final year of collegiate eligibility, Judd became the first women's player in OU history to score 1,000 points, have 750 rebounds, 250 assists and 200 blocked shots. The high-scoring forward also led OU with 38 points – a career high – in the final game of the Mid-Con Tournament, taking tournament MVP honors and the Golden Grizzlies to their first-ever NCAA Tournament appearance.

Coaches and teammates alike describe Judd as a versatile and intelligent player and a respected student off the court. She knew she had more basketball in her and took a hiatus from academics to pursue a spot on a professional women's team in Europe — "I just couldn't go to college and sit a year out without playing," she said.

Judd first tried out for a team near Cologne, Germany. When a roster spot didn't materialize, she was invited by a former Valparaiso player to join her team – BV Lely in Amsterdam. Judd liked the coaches, joined, and began her professional career. She routinely led the team in scoring with double-digit figures in most games, and **BV Lely** finished fourth out of 10 teams.

Where Judd really shined was in the playoffs. BV Lely advanced through the early rounds to face Perik in the best-of-five finals. Judd scored 28 points in the first game and made the winning shot with 20 seconds remaining in a 72-70 win. BV Lely won the second game 74-56 despite Judd spraining her ankle. The team had a sub-par effort in the third game, losing 60-54, but Lely and Judd rebounded to win the fourth and final game in front of an enthusiastic home crowd.

"It was really great that it all worked out," Judd said after returning to her parent's home for the summer. "My team wound up losing the championship to Perik the year before, so it was nice to win the final game in Amsterdam. The whole team had a good playoff run, and we became more motivated as we had a championship for a goal – that helped everyone pick up their game."

Winning the championship also provided a nice conclusion to a year where Judd experienced a fair amount of culture shock.

"In Germany, it was hard to communicate with the language barrier. The coach there didn't even speak English," Judd said. "In Amsterdam, everyone spoke English, which made things a lot easier. All the players spoke Dutch among themselves, but in practice they and the coach (Robert Nagel) spoke English. Jill Campbell, who had played for Valparaiso, was the only other American on the team. The rest of the players were from the Netherlands.

"Playing in the Netherlands was really different from my OU experience. The games were less intense and a lot more laid back. We practiced three nights a week and played just once a week. Most of the other European players were going to school and everyone seemed to be studying on their three days off. It was hard to keep busy when I wasn't playing. I wound up seeing the entire city when I was off."

As Judd grew more comfortable with her new teammates and surroundings, she also became more aware of the rivalries that exist within the women's league.

"I enjoyed the playoffs because it carried more meaning," she said. "At first, it was hard to know who our rivals were because it was all new to me ... But by the time we got to the playoffs, I could say 'Yeah, I remember playing that team earlier. We need to beat them.' As a team, we became more motivated when there was something to play for."

After one season, Judd has decided to end her professional career and finish her general studies degree at OU. Even though she's leaving basketball, Judd says her year in Europe was a gratifying experience.

"I'm totally done with basketball now," she said. "It was nice to win my last game and a championship. My year abroad was a great learning experience. It was a lot more than just basketball. It was very interesting just to see how other people live as well as what they live without compared to Americans. I'll finish my degree in the fall semester and then perhaps go into graphic design. I'm still thinking about my future."

No matter what her future holds, if Judd applies the same kind of enthusiasm to her profession, she'll be as successful in life as she is on the basketball court.

SUMMARY

After the 2002 women's basketball season, former Oakland University forward Sarah Judd went overseas to play professionally. After a season on the European courts, she returns home a champion. BV Lely, Judd's team in the Netherlands' first division professional women's league, won the league championship May 21 in Amsterdam. After one season, Judd has decided to end her professional career and finish her general studies degree at OU.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, May 30, 2003

Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, May 30, 2003

Article Start Date: Thursday, October 16, 2003