

Bouchard 'excited and honoured' by Hall of Fame induction



By Jeff Doner

Carolyn 'Cal' Bouchard is one of Aurora's brightest athletes and is being recognized for her achievements as part of the first class inducted into the Sport Aurora Hall of Fame this year.

'I was excited and honoured,' she told *The Auroran*. 'I knew from my high school coach, Steve Herlihey, and my parents that they nominated me, but the way my dad put it, there are so many great athletes and people from Aurora that have done great things. I was just honoured that I actually got inducted into the first class.'

Bouchard, 35, has an impressive resume highlighted by a string of OFSAA titles, championships and accolades while a student at Aurora High School from 1991 '96.

She was a star at the Canadian National Junior Basketball Championships in 1994, 1995 and 1996, winning a gold medal for team Ontario in those years.

When she graduated high school in 1996, she moved on to the greener pastures of Boston College on a four-year scholarship to play NCAA Division 1 basketball at a school known for its athletics.

'It was interesting because I wasn't highly recruited,' she said of her decision to go to the US. 'I thought I was a little bit of a dark horse because at the time not a lot of Canadians were going down to the States and I feel like I was at the age range where that picked up.'

'I don't think a lot of people really expected much from me, which probably helped, because I was able to go in there and move past everybody's expectations and start as a freshman and it was great.'

She wouldn't hold on to the dark horse label, as it wasn't long before she was attracting big attention from other schools and sports media. She was labeled as one of the 'Elite 11 Freshmen' by *USA Today* in her first season and went on to be an NCAA all-star and Big East Conference scholar-athlete of the year in 2000.

'I had a great experience at Boston College; I played in the Big East, which is sadly no longer, but it was a great conference. I had a great time and went to the NCAA, which I always watched as a kid and admired and hoped I would be able to play in it one day.'

As successful as Bouchard's days in the NCAA were, it was time spent with the Canadian National Team that she cherishes the most

From 1997 to 2003, Bouchard played in 81 games for the national squad, which led to a moment where she met one of her life-long dreams by making it to the 2000 Sydney Olympics as the national team's co-captain and starting point-guard.

'My proudest moment was representing Canada in the Olympics,' she said without hesitation. 'It was definitely something that I thought about as a kid growing up and dreamed about, so it was pretty special for that to be able to come true.'

She was the only Aurora athlete to compete in the 2000 Olympic Games. That same year, Bouchard was the first Canadian and first Boston College player ever drafted to the WNBA, being selected by the Detroit Shock.

Bouchard surprised few when she announced she would not report to training camp for the Shock, due to her commitments to Team Canada. It was a decision she said was not at all difficult.

'The Olympics had been my big goal,' she said. 'The WNBA was a great byproduct of it, but the Olympics was my big goal and I was pretty vocal about that even before the draft, so it was less of a controversy because it was just out there that there was no way I was going to training camp.'

'It just wasn't as important to me as being able to play for my country. It was a no-brainer for me, I'm sure some people didn't understand it, but I think most people did.'

Now living in San Francisco, CA, and working for The North Face jacket company, Bouchard still has close ties to Aurora. Her parents and friends still live here and she tries to make it back at least once a year.

When asked about her hometown and its role in shaping her career, Bouchard gave credit to Aurora as formative to her career.

'I remember leaving Winnipeg and coming to Aurora for me to start ninth grade,' she said. 'I was worried and thinking, 'Oh my gosh, I'm going to Ontario and they're going to be so much better than me,' I was kind of worried about it. My coaches in Winnipeg said this was an opportunity to play at a higher level of competition and to learn and that I would become a better player because of it, and I did.'

She looks back fondly to her days as a student and star player at Aurora High.

'Aurora High was a great program and we did really well and took it to the OFSAA tournament, which hadn't been done before,' she said. 'I met a lot of great coaches in Aurora and got connected to the Ontario team from there, so it was huge. It was a big turning point for me. It was like [coming to a] hotbed for basketball.'