

TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY SPORTS SPOTLITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SHANAMAN SPORTS MUSEUM

DECEMBER 2021 | VOL.2 NO.4



Kate Starbird played professionally for the Seattle Storm of the WNBA in 2002. Photo courtesy: Seattle Storm

KATE STARBIRD

The name lends to the affect, because if she was Ashley Smith or Jennifer Anderson, she might be easier to forget.

But that name does lend to the iconic feats of the woman who arrived in Tacoma as the hoops-obsessed daughter of an Army officer and author, and left as one of the most accomplished athletes in the area's history regardless of sport or gender.

Of course, when Kate Starbird graduated from Lakes High School in 1993 and enrolled at Stanford, she was just getting started.

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PLANNED GIVING

Your heirs would likely get along just fine if they received 90% of your estate. Your favorite non-profit organizations might not fare as well if your charitable support ends upon your "estate event."

A new collaboration of non-profit organizations, professional advisors and philanthropic individuals recently launched the Leave 10 South Sound initiative. This movement encourages people to leave 10% of their estate to charitable organizations.

In Pierce County alone, between 2020 and 2030, approximately \$48 billion of wealth is expected to move from one generation to the next according to a study commissioned by the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation. If charitable organizations doing work to improve the greater good of the community could participate in a small portion of that wealth transfer, it could lead to significant community betterment. All types of non-profits that support the fabric of the community could have more impact.

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SHANAMAN Sports Museum

The mission of the Shanaman Sports Museum of Tacoma-Pierce County is to recreate the history of sports in the community by chronicling the evolution of various sports through written, visual and audio mediums and to educate the public about our sports heritage.

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JOIN THE TEAM

The Shanaman Sports Museum honors the history of sports and the rich culture of athletics in Tacoma-Pierce County. To maintain that tradition, the board of directors is pleased to invite the public to show their support by becoming a member.

For more information, please visit our website:
www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/membership

THANK YOU RECENT DONORS

Brian Kamens
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 In Memory of Bev Zierman—by Dick Zierman

Your financial support is welcomed,
 visit our website to learn more:

www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/waystogive

COLLECTION SNAPSHOT



Born on Jan. 27, 1916 in Tacoma, Marshall Perrow played a significant role in the development of skiing in the Pacific Northwest.

THE LOCKER ROOM CHAT

www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/lockerroomchat



www.rainierasphalt.com

The Locker Room Chat is a video interview series that highlights athletes, coaches, officials, teams and great events and accomplishments in the history of sports in Tacoma-Pierce County. Upcoming episodes brought to you by our sponsor, Rainier Asphalt & Concrete.

Sunday, December 12, 2021

Mt. Tahoma High School T-Birds 1979 & 1980 State Champion Football Teams

Sunday, January 9, 2022

John Zamberlin, Linebacker for PLU & Kansas City Chiefs and football coach at CWU – Part 1

Sunday, January 23, 2022

John Zamberlin – Part 2

Sunday, February 6, 2022

Lloyd Blanuso-All-Star fastpitch softball pitcher with Irwin-Jones Dodgers team of the 1950s.

Sunday, February 20, 2022

Joe Stortini-1948 Soap Box Derby Champion, highly successful baseball player, national champion slowpitch player, Mt. Tahoma HS football coach and all-around athlete at Lincoln HS and CPS.

Sunday, March 6, 2022

Dean Nicholson—Basketball coach at Puyallup HS, Cheney Studs AAU team and CWU

Sunday, March 20, 2022

Marv Harshman---Star football player for PLC and the Tacoma Indians pro football team and successful and respected basketball coach at PLC, WSU and UW.

Sunday, April 3, 2022

Ken Still, Golf professional on PGA tour for 23 years, competitor on the Senior Tour, a member of the 1969 U.S. Ryder Cup team and longtime supporter and ambassador for Tacoma-Pierce County athletes.

Planned Giving, cont. from page 1

There are many large non-profit organizations that are working to solve big challenges and many small organizations – such as the Sports Museum – that need your support to establish long-term stability, carrying forward their mission in the community.

When you think about your estate plans, please consider naming the Sports Museum as a beneficiary of your IRA or life insurance policy. For other types of assets, such as cash, real estate or other investments, consider naming the Sports Museum as a recipient in your will.

Of course, you don't have to wait to make a meaningful impact on the preservation and storytelling of Pierce County sports history. You can make a gift while you are living so that you can see the impact and enjoy the contribution you've made to sustaining the legacy of athletics in our area.

There are many options for making donations to the Sports Museum. Please see the Giving Guide on our website to evaluate which options best fit your financial plans and charitable intent:

www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/waystogive/

Your donations will support the ongoing virtual experience of the Sports Museum while also allowing us to seek opportunities to return to a physical space as soon as possible.



These days she barely even gets recognized for her basketball past, but every now and again, somebody will meet her and flashback to the thin kid with the locked-on-you glare and sometimes sly smile she'd flash when her team was having a particularly good night. She and her teammates had more of those moments than typical teams and typical players, of course, but her two worlds rarely intersect these days and she's fine with that.

She's now proving herself every bit the power in academics that she once was on the basketball court, as co-founder of the Center for an Informed Public at the University of Washington. She is an associate professor in the Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering and director of the Emerging Capacities of Mass Participation Laboratory. It's the kind of work that isn't easily explained at class reunions, but is a combination of her undergraduate computer science degree at Stanford and her doctoral degree in Technology, Media and Society from the University of Colorado Boulder.

"I would say I work at a university and in information science and at the intersection of social society and the way online platforms shape their lives and lead to miscommunication," she said. "And if I wanted to have fun and enjoy the company of people I would probably end it there."

Starbird started studying Crisis Informatics as a way to understand how people communicated during mass-trauma events — earthquakes, floods, hurricanes. Her work eventually moved into human-caused events like mass shootings and then into studying and monitoring general misinformation. Her work took on its most high-profile platform around the 2020 Election and the public unrest on Jan. 6, 2021 when supporters of Donald Trump attempted to stop the certification of its results.

Starbird's work at UW and her educational credentials surely get her slotted among the "academic elites" often vilified in political circles as born into a life requiring little work or discomfort, but in the spirit of her professional work, that's untrue.

Starbird is — and has always been — a grinder.

She sharpened her game on the toughest courts Tacoma has to offer and probably some of the toughest on the West Coast. Those would be the local military pick-up games populated by tough-minded, physical servicemen and women, many of whom were accomplished high school players.

Starbird spent hour after hour in those games as a teenager living just across the parade field from Fort Lewis Jensen Gym.

"How I went from being a good basketball player to a great basketball player was competing against those soldiers ... and they barely let me in," she said. "I was out there learning to be aggressive, learning how to score and I had to prove myself every day. That was a huge part of how my game developed. They played hard but made sure not to hurt me, which was nice of them. That was the best prep for playing in the WNBA."

The South Puget Sound League didn't really scare Starbird after that and there was really nothing in the prep ranks that slowed her down. She was an exceedingly rare two-time Parade All-American, two-time Seattle Times Washington Player of the Year and left as the state's all-time leading scorer and top scorer in state tournament history as well.

She contributed immediately as a freshman at Stanford, starting nine of 32 games. She was a force for the remainder of her years. She never missed a start from then on out and listing all her accolades would be an endless task, but she was a three-time first-time all-conference performer,

two-time first team All-American and the James Naismith and United States Basketball Writers Association Player of the Year in 1997.

Stanford has a page dedicated to the most significant awards won by its most decorated performers and among the Jennifer Azzis, Val Whitings and Tara VanDerveers is an awful lot of mentions of Kate Starbird.

“My college career was idyllic,” she said. “Great team, great support, great coaching ... there was a great sense of team and I really cared about them. The success I had was about being in a great program with great folks and we had all the right pieces and all those pieces worked together for me to score a bunch of points.”



Starbird led Stanford to three Final Fours but — like at Lakes — never won a team title. Starbird said she felt a huge sense of relief when the Cardinal finally won a national title last spring, their previous win coming two seasons before she enrolled.

The VanDerveer-Starbird pairing might not have ended in national titles, but it was a case of a coach not trying to mess with a good thing. For instance, Starbird’s shot was unconventional but it seemed to constantly end in made buckets and that was good enough.

“We were not going to teach people coming in what she was doing. Her game was survival on the playground. She had a guy’s game,”

VanDerveer told the Seattle Times as Starbird started her professional career.

The pro game was the first time Starbird was slowed down. More physical defense and less frequent whistles were a tough combination.

“The way I played did not translate well and I could not figure it out,” she said. “I tried a bunch of different ways and enjoyed the experience, but really learned a lot about mentoring and helping others and that was part of my growth. I played overseas and that experience was great.”

In the end, Starbird wasn’t the pro she hoped to be, but she had a nine-year career with stops in the American Basketball League, WNBA and Europe. She wrapped her pro career in Ibiza, Spain where “I could throw a baseball from my balcony into the Mediterranean. And I really don’t have much of a baseball throwing arm.”

And then it was over and she started the next chapter, which has led to significant success, recognition and, she says, happiness. She’s been married to Melissa Marsh since 2009 and is a big sports fan, specifically of her nieces, but she’s never considered coaching and the closest she gets to a basketball court these days is rebounding as they shoot.

“Basketball is so core to my identity that when I had to quit it had a real psychological impact,” she said. “Basketball was wonderful but hard and even the hard (moments) helped me become who I am. I would have loved to have had a national title at Stanford and I would have loved to have had more success professionally. But it was good for me to stop playing and go back to school and I am happy to be doing what I am doing.”

Shawn O’Neal is a Spanaway Lake High School grad (class of 1991), works at the University of Idaho and is Senior Editor for Lindy’s College Basketball magazine.

ALANA PONCE



A 2017 Gig Harbor high grad, Alana Ponce began playing competitive polo at the age of four and currently is a volunteer coach at her alma mater where sister, Julia, is the head coach. Photo courtesy of Alana Ponce.

When you think of a water polo hotbed in this country, your mind would almost certainly go to swimming pools throughout the state of California. Collegiate national championship teams come from the Golden State, and most of the country's best players hail from there as well.

So the story of Alana Ponce and her success in the sport of water polo speaks not about location but about heart and passion, because it's those elements that made Alana into the player that she became.

Initially, Alana's water polo story did have a location element to it. She grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and got her start in the sport at the tender age of four. She tagged along when her father would drive her eldest sister, six years Alana's senior, from their home in Redwood City to practice in the Stanford University pool. "It was a big, beautiful pool and I would swim in the back with them," she recalled.

Moving from a water polo hotbed to Gig Harbor – hardly that – at age 10 didn't dampen Alana's enthusiasm for the game. Her only opportunity to continue playing for Seattle Water Polo, and it required trips to the King County Aquatic Center

for practices. "It was definitely hard on the schedule," she said. "We would drive out there late at night, like 7:30, 8 p.m., and wouldn't get back until like midnight."

Practices were inconsistent, however, so like any good athlete who wants to improve and excel, as she grew older Alana pushed herself with individual practice sessions at the Gig Harbor High School pool.

Playing for Seattle Water Polo did, however, afford her the opportunity to play in frequent tournaments. "Every weekend we would do a tournament somewhere, so I was flying most every weekend down to California," she said. Alana remembered as a 14-year-old flying by herself to the tournament locations, where she would join her team. "We had to do it," she said, in order to play in competitive tournaments. The team competed annually at the Junior Olympics and captured first place in the gold division during her junior year of high school.

Though Alana dabbled in basketball and volleyball in middle school, and even tried soccer and lacrosse for a season "just to try things out...once I got to high school I only swam and played water polo."

At Gig Harbor, she compiled a tidal wave of accomplishments, among them the following: four-time state champions; school record holder in goals (110) and steals (118); three-time first team All-American; league MVP.

Alana clearly was good enough to play at the collegiate level, and initially she turned her eyes to the UCLA program in the true water polo hotbed of Southern California.

"My dream, actually, was I wanted to go to UCLA. I went to a camp my sophomore year and I kind of realized that it was where everybody wanted to go. There were so many kids who wanted to play in college and so I didn't want to be that 28th kid on the team."

Instead, a Puget Sound area coach who had been named an assistant coach at George Washington, contacted Alana and invited her to join six Southern California recruits in D.C. The notion of getting as much playing time as she wanted appealed to Alana, so she headed east.

Alana ended up playing three collegiate seasons, highlighted by All-College Water Polo Association Division I first team honors after scoring 48 goals during her sophomore season. She scored 211 career points, 160 goals, 91 steals and 81 ejections drawn.

Though successful in the water, Alana says her third and final year at GWU “made me feel more and more like I was ready to let the sport go.” Part of that came about because the school announced the program was being folded after the following season.



Ponce was a four-time All-American at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. An offensive juggernaut, she holds the record at GW for most goals scored in a game (8).
Photo courtesy of George Washington University.

Alana, who had already earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree concentrating in real estate with a minor in sustainability, decided to move on.

Her only decision at the time was whether to play her final season while pursuing a master’s degree at another school – a route complicated by COVID, seek a graduate assistant position in an established collegiate water polo program, or move back to Gig Harbor and start working. She chose the latter and has found a passion for real

estate, working as an agent alongside Becky Schulte at Windermere in Gig Harbor.

But the water polo bug didn’t go away, and now the 22-year-old Alana finds herself as an assistant coach at Gig Harbor, where her sister Julia Vancamp is the head coach.

“I definitely missed water polo,” Alana said. “When I moved home, I wasn’t quite sure how I was going to fill that void. Coming back and volunteering at Gig Harbor was awesome. And some of these kids, I see the same thing that I felt when I was in high school, that want and that drive to be something more than just a high school water polo player. So it’s really fun.”

Gig Harbor is one of about 20 Washington high schools that compete in two divisions in water polo, which is not sanctioned by the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA). Still, as was the case when Alana played for the Tides, the teams compete for unofficial state championships in the sport.

If given a chance to be a head coach and compete against her sister, Alana said that she would strongly consider the opportunity. But that consideration would come with a caveat. “That would be fun,” she said. “I do love Gig Harbor, but if a head coach position did come open, I would definitely consider taking it. But I would want to stay in the Washington area.”

You see, not only does Alana have a passion for water polo, she also has a passion for this region. And while Gig Harbor and the Pacific Northwest might not be a water polo hotbed, it is for Alana Ponce a bit of water polo heaven.

Nick Dawson is the former Sports Information Director at Pacific Lutheran University and Evergreen State College. He enjoys soccer, softball and golf in his spare time.

