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Bannerman takes court time any way she can

StarNews Sports Department

Published: Monday, December 16, 2013 at 2:56 p.m.

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Cracking the starting five has long been a rite of passage for basketball players; the idea of hearing one's name announced as the lights dim surely fuels that extra round of jumpers in an empty gym.

But, given the choice between starting and averaging 14 minutes per game, or averaging 17 as a reserve, which would you choose?

Former Pender High School basketball standout Andrienne Bannerman is junior forward for Erskine who's putting up impressive numbers – off the bench. She hasn't bought into the stereotypes given to both starters and bench players.

"Honestly, I don't ever worry about if I start or not," Bannerman said. "It's always been about helping the team when I'm in the game, whether or not I started the game or not."

Bannerman's emphasis on team play has both her and the Flying Fleet playing at a considerably higher level this season. While she's only started one game, Bannerman has played 135 minutes, fourth highest on the team.

While Bannerman is hesitant to put a label on her team role, she recognizes the importance of having a sparkplug off the bench.

"Having [a high energy player] come off the bench is so important because it's their job to produce when the starters either need a break or aren't producing themselves," Bannerman said. "It's important to come into the game and match the level of play, or even raise it."

Through eight games, she's averaging seven points per game while shooting 40 percent and grabbing four rebounds per game.

For Bannerman, however, the only statistic of importance is wins. Last year, Erskine went 3-25. It was an experience that she described as eye opening.

"Going into this year, my goal was to never have a season like last year ever again," Bannerman said. "You can either be down about [last year] and bring back the losing ways, or you can take another mindset and start fresh."

Erskine has already surpassed last year's win total. At 4-4, the Fleet also have a signature win over Conference Carolinas preseason favorite Barton College.

"We've never beaten Barton while I was here, so it was a pretty big deal," said Bannerman. "They've always been good, so beating them definitely helped strengthen our mentality and focus."

The Fleet don't play again until 2014, but Bannerman plans to stay in shape by running every day and finding an open gym to put up some shots.

"I'll find some ways to stay in shape," she said, "and hopefully find someone to go shoot some hoops with. We've got to keep this win streak going."



Former Pender standout Andrienne Bannerman is a key reserve for the Erskine women's basketball team. Photo courtesy Erskine College