



Former Oberlin player helps boost college team

Basketball star helps Concordia win games

By JIM MERRIOTT

He may be gone from Oberlin, but he is not forgotten. Egan Grafel is making an impact in the Kansas Jayhawk Community College Conference.

The former Decatur Community High Basketball star is a sophomore at Cloud County Community College in Concordia on a basketball scholarship.

Grafel made his presence felt during crunch time in Colby on Wednesday when the Thunderbirds played the Colby Community College Trojans.

With 19.7 seconds left in the second half and the score tied 74-74, the 6-foot, 8-inch 220-pounder pulled down the winning defensive rebound against Colby's giant center, 7-foot, 1-inch, 282-pound Jorge Canedo. Grafel used his quickness and speed to outmaneuver Canedo, getting position under the basket.

With 10.3 seconds left, the Thunderbirds managed to work the ball inside to Grafel on offense to shoot the winning basket. Cloud County went on to defeat the Trojans 79-74.

"It feels pretty good coming back after being off three weeks," said Grafel.

He injured his shoulder last month



against Hutchinson Community College and wears a protective brace that has to be adjusted sometimes on the floor. Grafel has two scars where surgeons scoped and repaired his damaged shoulder.

Grafel is the son of Keith Grafel, assistant varsity basketball coach at Decatur Community High School, and Roma Grafel of Oberlin.

"I owe a lot to my basketball coaches," he said. "They helped me develop the correct work ethic. People don't realize just how good a coach Dick Ahlberg is. Oberlin is known for being a wrestling town."

Grafel said he is being looked at by scouts from four colleges from different parts of the country. He participated in the junior college "Jayhawk Shoot-out" in Coffeyville

at the start of the 2005-06 season. Anybody who is anybody in Division I and II coaching circles attends the event, including former University of Kansas coach Roy Williams, who won the NCAA national championship last year at North Carolina.

"I also owe a lot to my father, Keith," said Grafel. "You can't get a better relationship than a father-son coaching relationship. Dad was hard on me when I played in high school. At the time, I didn't understand that he was preparing me for bigger challenges."

Grafel is being looked at by Northern Illinois University, San Jose State University, Northwestern University and Gardner-Webb University. Montana State University, Western State University of Colorado, and Regis University in Denver attended the Colby game to look at Grafel.

"If I had one thing to say to Oberlin basketball players," he said, "it would be this:

"Don't get caught up in the high school comfort zone. Players should realize that they might be the big fish in their home town pond, but when you go to college, you are just another fish in a lake. Push yourself beyond what you think you are capable of doing. It will pay off."

OBERLIN NATIVE Egan Grafel, low post for Cloud County Community College, awaited a pass in a game against Colby Community College. Grafel pulled down the winning rebound and scored the go-ahead basket in the 79-74 win over Colby. — Herald staff photo by Jim Merriott

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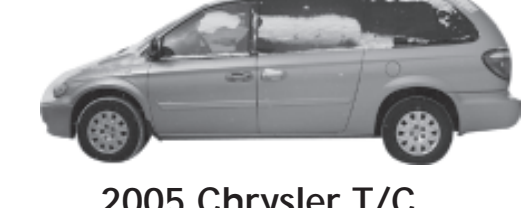
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