

Layoff can't ruin Archer

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Can Kim Archer still play basketball?

The question shadows the former Livonia Bentley great every time she steps onto the court for Michigan State University. It's a fair question. Archer, who started and excelled for the Spartans as a freshman, has been sidelined the last two seasons with a bum knee.

Before Friday night, Archer had started in all five MSU games. She averaged five points and four rebounds in those games. She's played well, the coaches assured. The knee is fine, Archer insists.

But is she still the same Kim Archer? Is she the same hell-bent player who set the standard of excellence for girls athletics in Observance during her prep career?

Witness MSU's 63-52 win against the University of Miami Friday in the opening round of the Felpausch-MSU Holiday Classic Women's Basketball Tournament at Jensen Field House.

FOUR MINUTES into the game, and crash, Archer is bashed to floor by the Hurricane's Maria Rivera. Offensive foul. Archer picks herself up and slaps five with her teammates.

Moments later there's a loose ball. Archer hurls her body into the pile of players on the floor and comes up with it.

Looks like the same old Kim Archer.

Look closer.

Watch as she tries in vain to catch up to her player in the open court. Oops. She stumbled and fell. No one was around her. She can't mask the look of frustration on her face. Oh, she just missed

picking off that cross-court pass. Maybe two years ago. . . . Man, she looks weary as she goes to the bench for a breather.

The first half ends. Archer has taken one shot. She has grabbed one rebound. She has made two assists.

IF YOU left the field house at that point, you went away thinking Kim Archer couldn't play basketball anymore. But if you stayed, you know without a doubt that she not only can play basketball, but play it well.

Kim Archer put on a clinic in the second half — a clinic on how to play intelligent basketball. Miami probably thought it had a mismatch with Archer defending speedy point guard Rivera. But Miami didn't figure on Archer's court sense.

In the opening moments of the second half the taller Archer took Rivera underneath and scored four quick points, helping the Spartans move out to a 15-point lead.

Archer went to the bench with three fouls with 14:02 left in the game. While Archer sat, Rivera got hot. She scored 10 points to pull Miami within eight with 7:23 left in the game.

At that point, Archer checked back in. Rivera didn't score a point in the final seven minutes. Archer blocked her shots twice and altered two others. MSU went on to win comfortably. Archer finished with eight points, three assists, two blocks and a steal.

"I KNEW that No. 11 (Rivera) was mostly looking to drive," Archer said. "So I said, fine, I'll just play off her and keep her from getting past me to the basket. I think my size might have intimidated her a little."

MSU coach Karen Langeland kind of smiled when asked to comment on Archer's defensive prowess. "The irony is, defense is not really her specialty. When she first came here, she didn't really play defense well. But she has developed into a good defensive player."

That's really the answer to the lingering question: Is she still the same Kim Archer on the court? No, she isn't. She's a more refined, more intelligent, more team-oriented basketball player.

"I'm a different player now than I was in high school," Archer said. "I'm more under control on the court now. In high school I pretty much did everything. I scored and rebounded and brought the ball up the court. And I was so out of control. But now I know my role and I like it. I'm happy to get the ball to our scorers and play defense."

Said Langeland: "Every game she plays better and better. She keeps getting closer to where she was in her freshman year. With Kim, it's not so much physical, but mental. She has not played for two years and it takes a while to catch up."

AFTER THE game, Archer was at the center of the media attention. The local television cameras were rolling, five or six reporters encircled her — the scene was claustrophobic.

Archer loved every minute. She joked with the reporters. She answered the firing "How's the knee?" question over and over. Kim Archer was in her glory, as happy as a little girl on Christmas morning. Her smile, after two years of painful, lonely rehabilitation, was heartwarming.

"I'm just happy to be playing again," she said.

Goldberg joins anti-drug fight

By Bill Parker
staff writer

Southfield High School Athletic Director Fred Goldberg is joining the fight.

Through Goldberg's inspiration, Southfield schools and Converse shoes are sponsoring a free clinic to help fight drugs, from 1-3 p.m. Friday, Dec. 26, in the Southfield High School gymnasium.

The clinic, titled "Say No To Drugs, Say Yes To Basketball," includes Michigan sports celebrities speaking to participants on the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

"I got the idea last summer when I saw Isiah Thomas (No Crime Day)," said Goldberg. "I thought he was on the right track but he needed another avenue. Kids need something to occupy their time. Something like basketball."

"In today's world, kids have too much idle time on their hands," he said. "Especially at this time of the year."

Participants also will be asked to sign a contract promising not to do any drugs or alcohol for the remainder of the school year. Anyone signing a contract will receive a free poster of a National Basketball Association star.

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Reeves' jumper beats Chargers

Merry Christmas, Tom Niemi.

The Plymouth Canton basketball team provided its coach with a warm holiday send-off. Friday night, the team won a 56-54 victory against Livonia Churchill.

"It was a nice Christmas present," Niemi said. "We played an excellent game. Good man, full-court pressure defense. In the second half we did a much better job on the boards. And we showed poise."

Tyrene Reeves played the hero role for the Chiefs. With eight seconds left in the tie game, he rebounded a Churchill errant free throw, drove the length of the court and drained a 10-foot jumper at the buzzer.

The Chiefs erased a 32-28 deficit with a 14-8 run in the third quarter. Reeves scored 20 points to lead all scorers. Roger Trice added 10 points

and seven rebounds. Brad Carey and Jeff Anulewicz tossed in eight apiece.

For Churchill (1-2 in the Western Lakes, 1-4 overall), Brian O'Leary scored 13, Brad Wylie 12 and Mark Beebe 11.

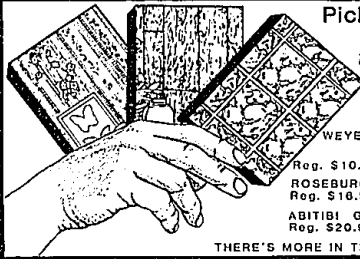
Canton will take a 2-1 league record into the holiday break, 2-3 overall.

PLYMOUTH CHRISTIAN 73, HURON VALLEY 66: The Eagles outgunned Huron Valley for their fifth straight win Friday night.

Pot McCarthy led the balanced Eagle attack with 18 points and 12 rebounds. Mike Wambler scored 14, Steve Windle 12 and Andy Stephens 12. Stephens grabbed 13 rebounds. Shannon Huettler scored 24 for Huron.

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