

SPORTS & RECREATION

A reflection on four years of women’s basketball at UMaine

Four years ago I committed to playing basketball at the University of Maine. As an international student you don’t really understand how much this decision will influence your future.

The past four years at the University of Maine were everything I hoped for and so much more. It is almost impossible to point out one single moment, one best memory that stood out over those last four years. Every year taught me something about my teammates, basketball, myself and life in general.

Four years ago eight freshmen stepped on the campus of the University of Maine for the very first time. They didn’t know much about the conference, the past seasons or what was expected of them. All they knew was they wanted to be a part of something special.

If I would have to describe the past four seasons in a couple of words, it would be exactly that — something special.

Was it easy? Absolutely not. Were there times when we thought about giving up? Plenty of times. Did we fail? Over and over again. But was it worth it? Absolutely.

I believe that everything happens for a reason. Winning only four games during our freshman year was painful, and at times even embarrassing. But it taught us so many things. It taught us about hard work. It taught us about commitment. Toughness. Getting back up after being knocked down. It taught us that no matter what happens we can always rely on each other, our coaches and our amazing support system.

Freshman year was the foundation upon we build the success of the next three years. I believe that we had to go through this to grow into the team we are today.

The goal never changed over those four years. The goal was to bring the program back to where it belonged — the top of the America East Conference.

Four years later we made it to the championship game. All the hard work we put in was about to pay off. All the ups and downs happened for a reason. We were exactly where we needed to be. We were exactly where Coach Barron promised we would be, when he recruited all of us four years ago. One more win and we would be cham-



LINDA COAN O’KRESIK | BDN  
Anna Heise (left) and Mikaela Gustafsson run drills at a reent practice. The Universtiy of Maine’s women’s basketball team is a very culturally diverse group of ladies with 7 of the 14 teammates from different countries. The team has a great chemistry both on and off the court .

pions, one more win and we would go to the NCAA tournament. Just one more win.

We didn’t win. We lost by one point in a game that can easily be described as the most important game of our four years here. Heart-breaking. No words can describe the disappointment each one of us felt. Falling short in what was supposed to be our moment. The buzzer went off and we just stared at each in disbelief. How could this happen?

It is hard to find the right answer to this question. We will feel a bitter taste whenever we think back to this game, but how foolish would it be of us to let this last game

define our careers here?

Yes, we fell short. Yes, we hoped our senior year would turn out differently. But there is so much to be proud of. So much to be grateful for. In the end basketball is just a game. What matters are the people around you. What matters are the memories you made during those past four years. What matters are the life lessons we all learned. What matters is that we brought Maine back to where it belongs — the top of the America East Conference.

Four years ago, most people didn’t know much about Maine, some might have remembered the historic win over Stanford in the first round of the NCAA tournament in 2004, but other than that Maine was just a school way up north. Four years later, people know about us. How could they not? Our defense is ranked third in the country. We ended our season on a 15-game winning streak, while going undefeated at home. We are one win shy of tying the all-time school record. We are back at the top, and nothing can change that – not even a heartbreaking loss in the championship game of the

America East Tournament.

Four years ago I committed to playing basketball at the University of Maine. Little did I know that it would turn out to be the best decision I ever made. Little did I know, that the University would turn out to be my second home, that I would have a support system that reaches far beyond basketball and that my team would turn into family.

Gratitude is what comes to mind when I get asked to describe those last four years. There will never be enough words to express how grateful I am for the memories, the lessons, the support and the endless opportunities. Even though my four years are slowly coming to an end, the memories will be with me forever.

Black Bear Nation, I hope we made you proud.

Anna Heise is a UMaine senior journalism student. She is a member of the Black Bear Women’s basketball team. She is from Germany, and when she’s not in the gym, she enjoys reading, traveling and trying out new food. Read more of her posts at [absolutelyanna.bangordailynews.com](http://absolutelyanna.bangordailynews.com).



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