

Jenny Mowe

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Including plenty of good basketball teams and many good basketball players. They themselves were on the Powers team that won the 1941 state championship — at Mac Court, no less.

But, for everything these wise old guys had witnessed, they'd never experienced anyone like Jenny Mowe.

"Everyone else was just fair," Elmo says with a wide grin. "But Jenny was great."

A big, strong girl with an even bigger heart. The phenom with a great attitude who carried her Cruisers team all the way to the 1-A state championships and then, when the media and the crowds started showing up, always pulled teammates into the spotlight with her.

Once they caught on, college coaches clamored for Mowe's attention. Tennessee's Pat Summitt sent her assistants to Powers. Connecticut's Geno Auriemma called. The Cardinal's Tara VanDerveer was in the mix. And obviously, Jody Runge was there too.

"Runge promised me a season ticket if I could talk Jenny into going to Oregon," Elmo says. "She come down to Elkton for a game and I got to talkin' with her, and I told her I'd like to see her stay close where we could all go see her play. I said the only thing is if I could get season tickets. And she said, 'You got it, if she goes to Oregon then you've got a season ticket.' But since Jenny's been going there, [Runge] hasn't talked to me."

It's impossible to fault Runge or any of the coaches for their no-holds-barred pursuit because Jenny was the type of prospect that coaches dream of.

"The first play of the game, she gave a fake to the baseline, shot a big-time hook shot, and at that point I knew there was a big-time player in the state of Oregon," says Runge.

Things could have been different. Originally based in Newport Beach, Jerry Mowe, Jenny's father, followed his lifelong surfing passion and launched a 25,000-foot surfboard factory, with 40 employees and an average payroll of \$25,000 per week.

Yet he wasn't content.

"I just said, 'I can't take it anymore,'" Jerry says. "So I gave it up and said we're gonna sell everything and move out of here."

On arrival in Powers, Jerry constructed a new surfboard



Kevin Calame Emerald

(above) Jack Bushnell and Elmo Frye are two of Jenny's proudest fans. (Page 7A) The self-constructed Mowe family ranch is often a welcome respite for Jenny.

shop, significantly smaller than his enterprise in Newport Beach. This one was a small brick building with no windows, just to the west of Jack's Place.

As Jerry stands outside of the shop with Jenny's mother Patty, both turn their heads in unison and wave at a passing car.

"It's a place where, as you just saw, everybody knows you, everybody knows your business and you have to keep your nose clean," Jerry says. "It's a good place to raise your family, totally."

The Mowe family built their two-story house and ranch — home to cows, horses rabbits, dogs, cats and a guinea pig named Pumba — from scratch.

And on Saturday mornings, while most kids sat watching cartoons with a bowl of Cap'n Crunch in their laps, Jenny was out doing chores with her brothers, Brian and Jeremy.

"There was always Dad out there, 'OK, we're gonna go cut some wood,'" recalls Jenny, as she reclines on a stairway after practice. "You'd hear the tractor start up and be like, 'No.' We'd have to get up and take five-gallon buckets, walk around the pasture and pick up rocks and sticks."

Mowe's home workouts often consisted of a two-mile run up a steep logging road behind her house. She was usually accompanied by her dogs, whom she kept at a trot to set a pace.

Try picturing Shaquala Williams doing the same thing.

But no one in Powers ever gawked at the much-taller-than-average and particularly gifted Mowe girl.

"Growing up, no one ever teased me about being tall," Jenny says. "My friends were always cool with it. I think that's why I'm so secure with who I am. Just me being me."

Although the basketball being played in Powers wasn't near the caliber of that in Portland or Los Angeles, Jenny's environment cultivated other traits: self-confidence, devotion and work ethic, the latter of which lends itself perfectly to the blue-collar mentality of the Oregon program.

"We're one of the harder-working teams around," Jenny says. "We definitely have to work harder against some of those girls who can jump out of the gym. It's my style of team."

Aed with a new contract, back-to-back NCAA tournament visits and a deeper commitment to women's basketball from the university, Jody Runge began the [1995] recruiting season with her biggest victory: She snagged one of the top high school players in the nation, a broad-shouldered, six-foot-five powerhouse from a small town in Oregon ... Jenny Mowe became the cornerstone of the new Oregon team. Jody set her sights on something more than another invitation to the Big Dance. Now she was in it to win it. — That's how Lauren Kessler finished her book, "Full Court Press," the detailed account of a season in the life of Runge and her Ducks.

Jenny's decision to attend Oregon did resonate, helping attract the other highly qualified, highly touted recruits on Oregon's roster today. Players like Angelina Wolvert and Shaquala Williams.

"If Jenny Mowe wasn't here I wouldn't be here," Williams says. "Oregon should be thanking her for the fact that I'm here. If she wasn't here, I wouldn't even have answered the phone call."

That's nearly immeasurable impact.

But the road to greatness, like the one into Powers, is long. Jen-

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