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Lakin Susee, a Kennedy High School graduate and freshman on Chemeketa's women's basketball team this season, has made the transition to the college game look effortless.

# Chemeketa's Lakin Susee goes from unknown to star

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It wasn't so much that Lakin Susee was overlooked by college basketball coaches in the recruiting process, it was that she didn't try to get their attention.

Even when she led Kennedy High School's girls basketball team to the 2016 Class 2A state championship, Susee thought she was done playing the game in which she had been a star.

But as a freshman on Chemeketa's women's basketball team this season, she has made the transition to the college game look effortless, leading the team in scoring at 17.4 points per game and averaging 5.2 rebounds and 2.5 assists going into Wednesday's game against Clark.

That is remarkable considering she was virtually unknown by college coaches at this point a year ago.

"From the time we talked to her, watched her play, that was one of the things also that kind of drew us to her is her basketball IQ," Chemeketa coach Kevin McCarrell said. "I think the thing that got her overlooked was her size and that she was from a smaller school.

"That's always one of the mysteries is how the girls from the smaller schools transition into the collegiate level. Again, that's where the roll of the dice kind of happens. For us, it's turned out really well."

Susee, a 5-foot-6 freshman guard from nearby Mt. Angel, had talked to some basketball coaches from small colleges in California, but decided she would attend Western Oregon and not play a sport in college.

She had been a successful high school athlete by anyone's standards – she was a conference player of the year and first-team all-state selection in basketball and volleyball – and was fine with being done with playing sports.

But McCarrell saw what Susee had done as a basketball player and continued to work on her until she signed with Chemeketa last spring.

"I'm really glad I did because I couldn't imagine doing anything else right now," Susee said. "I really enjoy playing basketball here."

Chemeketa has been fortunate to have her.

When Susee scored 32 points in the Storm's season-opening 82-72 win against Blue Mountain, there might have been outsiders surprised that she would assimilate to the college game that quickly.

But those who knew her weren't. "I was surprised, but my teammates set me up with really easy fast-break lay-



Lakin Susee, center, a Kennedy High School graduate, practices with her women's basketball teammates at Chemeketa Community College in Salem on Tuesday.

ups or open shots so it was everyone contributing. In the flow of the game, it happens," Susee said.

"I didn't really expect to have that many points, and I didn't think I did."

Susee is No. 11 in the Northwest Athletic Conference in scoring and has scored in double figures in all but one game this season.

A dynamic perimeter player with the ability to blow past defenders off the dribble and range from the outside – she is averaging 28 percent from 3-point range and 78 percent from the free throw line – she is a deceptive matchup problem.

"You have to get out on her because she'll knock it down, but she can go by you so fast and you won't even know," said freshman Tori Swanson. "She has all these amazing moves."

Swanson was similarly overlooked as

a high school player, but for a different reason.

Playing for South Salem's two-time Class 6A state championship teams, she was a starter, but wasn't overshadowed by well-known as Division I bound players like Katie McWilliams, Jordan Woodvine and Evina Westbrook.

Now Swanson is averaging 12.3 points and 4.0 rebounds per game for Chemeketa and has become a vocal leader for the team.

"She was overlooked," McCarrell said. "We went to watch her and do some recruiting, we saw that the skill set was there. It was just a matter of how was she going to fit into our system, and would she accept that role in our team."

"Her and Lakin are probably our two strongest leaders on our team." Swanson admits that she had never heard of Susee before being paired with

her at Chemeketa.

Most of Chemeketa's opponents hadn't heard of her before she started lighting up scoreboards for the Storm, either.

She played AAU basketball in her youth, but once she stopped when she started high school.

Now options are opening up for Susee to play four-year college basketball.

"I'm enjoying playing here so I can imagine that playing somewhere else two years later would also be fun for me," Susee said. "How I see is it could help me, financially, too, if I can get scholarships that way."

"Doing something you love and getting school paid for seems like a major bonus."

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