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By Dennis Garcia
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Entering the NCAA portal can be a gamble.

When a collegiate athlete decides to leave the school they started out at, there are no assurances that entering the portal will have a positive result. Every year there are hundreds of athletes who realize that entering the portal turned out to be the wrong move.

And then there's the case of Brecken Snotherly. The Eastern Randolph High School graduate, who was one of the top basketball players in the state, played her first two years at East Tennessee State University. Although she had plenty of success, she said she realized the style ETSU was playing under a new coach just didn't mesh with her talents.

And she wanted to play closer to home. So she entered the portal, not quite sure how things would end up. Well, they couldn't have ended any better.

The junior took her talents to High Point University, about 30 minutes from her home in Franklinville, which allowed family and friends to visit as much as possible. That was a big plus in changing from ETSU to High Point along with what she experienced on the basketball court.

"There were a lot of things," she said on her reasons for using the portal after her sophomore year at ETSU. "I was homesick. I wanted to try and get closer to home. I entered the portal and got a list of schools DII, DI closer to home. When I was recruited by East Tennessee State University, it was by a different head coach and this new head coach's style just didn't fit the way I am used to playing."

Snotherly said some of her choices included, along with her top option High Point University, Elon, Catawba, Campbell and Appalachian State.

"When you get in the portal it's tough," Snotherly said. "All the coaches are looking to get the players from the Power 5 conferences who are transferring."

When she stepped on the HPU campus, she said she was hooked.

"The campus is gorgeous, they do not cut any corners for sure," she said. "The facilities were amazing and the coaches, you could tell they were having fun. We are serious, but we have fun and we enjoy each day we come in and practice. I was looking for coaches who can have fun and still get the job done."



Eastern Randolph graduate and High Point University junior Brecken Snotherly. Photos provided.



Snotherly with the Big South Conference Championship trophy on Sunday, March 8, 2026.

HPU had been well aware of Snotherly and watched closely after she entered the portal.

"We were aware of Brecken a couple of years ago, she was definitely on our radar," HPU Coach Chelsea Banbury said. "When she went into the portal, we had already known about her, seen her on film and had seen her work ethic. All that caught our eye. There was some definite interest to us and our assistant reached out "

Snotherly found a new home, a home in which she excelled in both on and off the floor. Especially on the floor. With Snotherly playing an integral role, the Panthers finished 13-3 in the Big South Conference, won the conference tournament and earned their second straight trip to the NCAA Tournament. The Panthers are 27-5 overall.

Snotherly played in all 32 games, starting 26, contributing 5.3 points and 4.5 rebounds per game. She scored in double figures six times, with a season-high 14-point effort against Charleston Southern on Jan. 28. She shot 46.9 percent from the floor and 71.8 percent from the free-throw line. She added 21 steals.

"Coming out of high school and playing college and living in Tennessee and trying to figure things out, I lost myself a little at ETSU," Snotherly said. "I lost my love for the game. At High Point University, I found my spark again. We have fun and enjoy the process."

The Panthers won the conference championship last year and were slated for the play-in game in the NCAA Tournament, falling 69-63 to William & Mary. This year, the Panthers earned a No. 15 seed and will meet second-seeded Vanderbilt Saturday in opening round action in Nashville.

"You know, it's been a dream I had since kindergarten," Snotherly said of playing in the NCAA Tournament. "This moment seems unreal. This is actually happening. We have such a good team who are encouraging and supportive of each other and that makes it better. I can do this with this team. I am so lucky to be a part of this. I am blessed. I am super excited."

As with most first-year players in a program, Snotherly said she felt she had to prove herself. The numbers and accolades earned at East Tennessee State University don't translate over to High Point. At ETSU, she played in 53 games in two seasons, starting 10 times her sophomore campaign. She scored 229 points, tallying a game-high 19 points against Tusculum her sophomore season. She scored 15 points in a win over Samford as a freshman.



"It's been a journey," Snotherly said of her basketball career. "Playing college basketball was a dream of mine. I had the opportunity to go to ETSU and play and I have not regretted my decision at all. There were a lot of experiences that shaped me into who I am today. The Lord has given me a great opportunity to be able to get to High Point."

Snotherly took great pride in coming off the bench to start the season for the Panthers.

"I took a lot of pride being that blue collar player, one who will come out and give you everything she has, the hustle plays," she said. "Play hard and let the rest take care of itself." But an injury to a player opened up a starting guard slot and Snotherly stepped in.

"At first, it took me a while to get acclimated," Snotherly said. But with the confidence of my teammates and my coaches, I started to get comfortable with my role.

"Every athlete coming in as a transfer feels they have to prove themselves a little," Snotherly added. "I always thought I was better than my film showed at ETSU. I can be a better player than that. I needed a growth period to reach that level."

Banbury said Snotherly provided everything the Panthers were looking for.

"I think she handled that really well," Banbury said of Snotherly moving into a starting position. "She didn't try to do too much. She filled her role, things she does best like busting her butt on defense. I don't want to be insensitive and I hate when people get hurt, but in sports it's the next man up mentality. She had worked really hard."

Snotherly's growth took shape in high school. She scored more than 2,000 points during her high school career, which included a stint at Winston-Salem Christian during the pandemic year. She returned to ER for her senior season and led the Wildcats to a third-round playoff appearance.

"Eastern Randolph is a tight community and I still have some of my biggest supporters from ER," said Snotherly, who had her ER jersey retired this past fall. "I know the doors are always open at ER, I know I have a gym to work out in.

"You build so many relationships playing sports," she added. "Sports teach you so much about life. Those are the things, as athletes, we cherish most."

Relationships and memories. Through basketball, Snotherly has made an abundance of both.