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By Dennis Garcia

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ASHEBORO - Before Nevaeh Staples began her freshman season for the Uwharrie Charter Academy varsity basketball team, she wrote down some long-term goals that may have seemed a bit ambitious

When entering a program, all players hope to leave some type of mark, an achievement that leaves the program better than when that player arrived, but setting a school record for career points and setting a single-game scoring record were certainly lofty goals that not many players are able to accomplish.

And when her freshman season ended with her scoring a total of 80 points while the school scoring record was being set by senior Ashara Spruill with 930 career points, her goals certainly seemed well out of reach.

But with hard work, a strong dedication to her craft and the help from many teammates over the next three seasons, Staples has indeed reached a goal that only the very best at each school can claim.



*Uwharrie Charter senior Nevaeh Staples.
Photo provided.*

With a 27-point effort in a 58-53 win over Pinecrest Wednesday night, Staples passed Spruill's career point total to become UCA's all-time leading scorer for the girls' basketball program. Her 27 points that game and nine more in Thursday night's 56-22 road win over Chatham Charter, gave Staples 958 points for her career entering action next week. UCA has a road game at Cedar Ridge Monday and will finish up the pre-Christmas portion of its schedule with an away game at North Stanly on Friday as she soon will certainly become the first female player in school history to reach 1,000 points for her career.

It's been a tremendous ride for the 5-foot-11 forward who grew up in Las Vegas before moving to Asheboro prior to her eighth-grade season.

"Going into that game, I had no clue about it," said Staples of breaking the scoring record last week. "It

was very interesting when he (UCA head coach Austin Davis) told me. It just goes to show the type of teammates I have had. They are willing to get me the ball inside."

Staples, who set the single-game scoring record last year with a 34-point effort against Eastern Randolph, said she remembers writing down those goals prior to her freshman season.

"I think it was a false hope my freshman year," said Staples, who still had three seasons to meet her goals. "I didn't play that much until after Christmas. The hope of reaching those goals didn't kick in until my sophomore year when I stepped into a bigger role. Being a starter, being a post player and seeing the numbers I was putting up. Once my junior year came around, that really kicked in."

As a sophomore, Staples averaged 11.7 points per game for the Eagles, who finished 16-12 after a 12-16 campaign the year before. In her junior season, she upped her scoring average to 13.4 points and chipped in nearly seven rebounds per game as the Eagles enjoyed their best season at 24-8 and a trip to the third round of the state tournament.

"I think the biggest thing I noticed when I watched her in eighth grade was she was raw, but she had a really soft touch around the basket and she had really good footwork," Davis said. "Those two things are a really good starting point for a post player."

"We have individual player meetings after every season where we talk about the reflection of the season and talk about next season and what we need from you and what you need to do to get there," Davis added. "I remember telling her I really believe you have the ability to be an all-conference player as a sophomore, which she was, and the ability to be an all-conference player every year. She has gone from getting spot starts her ninth-grade year to becoming a force. It's been fun to watch."

Staples has an incredible talent for her play down low on both sides of the court. Offensively, her footwork around the basket includes an array of drop-steps, turnaround shots and strong positioning.

"She is very creative," Davis said. "She's learned how to incorporate fake shots, up-and-unders and having that great footwork allows her to do that. She's got some strength to her. She's learned to have finesse and creativity."

The Eagles are off to another fast start as they won seven of their first eight games. Staples is averaging 16.1 points and 5.9 rebounds per game. She's also averaged 2.1 blocks and 2.1 steals per contest.

She's also shown incredible maturity as her career progressed.

"I definitely think the mental battles you go through," she said of the most difficult part of her career. "Knowing that if you aren't contributing in certain areas, you can't shut down. You have to go get it somewhere else. If something is not going well, go help in another area."

There haven't been too many times Staples hasn't contributed in every aspect of the game.