



ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT



Harrington Photography photo

River Valley's Breanna Alexander is a top player for the Mustangs' girls basketball team.

# Breanna Alexander:

Like daughter, like father

By ADAM KARNIK  
HP Sports Writer

It's not always easy to be coached by your parent, but Breanna Alexander has made it work her whole life.

"Whenever I was old enough to hold a basketball dad had one in my hands and we'd just start shooting," Alexander said.

The senior guard at River Valley first experienced her dad coaching her in youth basketball and now for her last two seasons at River Valley.

"It is hard on a lot of nights and it can be nerve wracking," said River Valley coach Jason Alexander. "We butt heads because I expect a lot out of her, especially being a coach's kid, sometimes you're a little bit harder on her than on the other kids. (But) I enjoy every moment of coaching her and I wouldn't miss this for anything in the world."

That early start and hard work allowed for Breanna to start at point guard right away for the Mustangs as a freshman.

"My freshman year was a little scary because there were three of us who were freshman starters," Breanna said. "But after that I got used to it and I've been playing with the same girls for the last three years."

Coach Alexander has seen a lot of growth and maturity out of his daughter.

"The biggest growth area with me is just her overall leadership, taking a lot of young players under her wing and teaching them some things," he said. "Being a freshman when she started, she turned the ball over quite a bit and we've worked on that each year and her turnovers have gotten less each year and she's increased her scoring as well."

That scoring was on display last week as Breanna scored 23 points in a 49-33 win over New Buffalo and eight points in limited minutes in a 47-11 victory over Grace Christian. Breanna has also begun her own coaching career working with the River Valley youth basketball program, the Mini Mustangs, coaching fifth and sixth graders.

Breanna is a member of the River Valley soft-

ball team, and was the manager of the volleyball team this year after playing volleyball each of the last three years.

While she has not yet decided on where to go to college, Breanna is hoping to play basketball in some capacity on the next level. Her top choice would be Grand Valley State University, but she is also looking at Lake Michigan College and Manchester University in Indiana.

Breanna would like to become a physical therapist after college and is currently taking a sports medicine class at Lake Michigan College. In the classroom she carries a 3.35 GPA.

**What is your favorite part about playing basketball?** Playing with all of my friends. Everyone is my friend on the team, but I have two best friends and they both start with me so it makes it a lot easier to play.

**What's it been like to have your dad as a coach?** I think last year was kind of difficult because I didn't know whether to talk to him as a dad or as a coach, but this year it got a lot better to where he's basically the same person. It's harder I think because parents always want to see their kid as the best so it's harder for sure but I really like it.

**What's it been like coaching the Mini Mustangs?** It's something brand new. It's harder coaching than playing because I have to explain stuff I do, but I don't even know I do it. It's harder, but it's fun to watch them learn to love the sport as much as I do. It's fifth and sixth graders that play against other schools like New Buffalo, Bridgman, and other local schools.

**What do you like about Grand Valley State?** This past summer the whole team went up there and we got to see a couple of games. I saw the players and I loved how they play and how fast they play and I really like the campus.

**What got you interested in physical therapy?** I think since I like sports so much that I want to help people rehab to get back into sports. We have a trainer at our school, her name's Jen Streffling, and she tapes my knees every game and I love how she helps me play basketball.

The Herald-Palladium's Athlete Spotlight, sponsored by Whirlpool Corp., appears weekly on Monday in The HP Sports section during the school year. Athletes are chosen by HP staff members. Suggestions for Athlete Spotlight are welcome. Email suggestions to sports@TheHP.com. Athletes are limited to one selection per school year.