



ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT



Photo provided
 Lake Michigan College's Kelsee Kinder shoots a free throw during a game this season.

**Kelsee Kinder:
 From ballett to basketball**

By **ADAM KARNIK**
 HP Sports Writer

Lake Michigan College featured 10 freshmen on this year's women's basketball team and that youth carried the Red Hawks all the way to the National Junior College Athletic Association's Division II national tournament in Kansas City last month.

One of those freshmen carrying the load was point guard Kelsee Kinder. She averaged 16.4 points per game, which was good enough to finish in the top 10 in the Michigan Community College Athletic Association and in the top 50 in NJCAA Division II.

Kinder took an unusual path to LMC. Originally from Dearborn, Mich., Kinder had committed to Davenport University but she kept receiving calls from LMC coach Jason Cooper.

"My dad thought we should check it out," Kinder said. "I said 'Dad, no I'm already committed, I don't want to go to junior college,' but he talked me into it."

The trip paid off. Kinder fell in love with the school and changed her plans.

That's not the only time her parents have talked her into a decision that would prove monumental, either. Kinder only tried out for basketball at Divine Child High School as a freshman because her mother made her.

Before that, Kinder had only practiced basketball in seventh and eighth grade and was a cheerleader in high school. She had also taken dance lessons for 14 years.

She now aims to play basketball for a Division I or II program, something she didn't think she could do before playing at LMC. In school she is studying to become a nurse's anesthetist. Kinder is the daughter of Paul and Lynda Kinder. She has an older brother, Paul, who plays hockey at Marian University and a sister, Kodi, who is in high school.

the way to Kansas City to play. When we got there, I was nervous because seeing all the other teams kind of freaked me out. Our team is pretty close, though, so we knew that since we got that far that we could do this. There was nothing to lose.

The first game was a little rough, I think we were just getting used to the gym and stuff. After the first game we started playing together more. It was pretty bad at first, but we ended up pulling it out. The third game we should have won, but things like that happen.

What made you pick LMC over Davenport?
 When Dad and I visited, we met Coach Cooper and his wife and we both loved them. And once I saw the girls play here, I saw how awesome it is here. I would never think to come here, but after visiting, I loved it. Coach Cooper does a good job of getting us together as a family and getting us to play together.

What has been the biggest difference between playing in college and playing in high school?
 I'd have to say just how much of a faster pace the game is and how much more you have to play as a team. If you don't play as a team, you won't win. In high school you can be selfish and win, but in college it's way different.

The other people have to know how you're going to play to win. There's a bigger emphasis on team.

What kind of dancing lessons did you take? I did a bunch of dances, ballet, jazz, tap, Hawaiian, modern, contemporary, basically ever different dance you could think of. When I was 2 years old, my mom and my godmother put me in it. I loved it. I quit going into my sophomore year for basketball. I miss competing, but I'm so in love with basketball I don't re-nurse's anesthetist. Kinder is the daughter of Paul and Lynda Kinder. She has an older brother, Paul, who plays hockey at Marian University and a sister, Kodi, who is in high school.

If you could play for any college at the next level, who would it be? UConn, obviously. They're just so good and amazing. I wish I could play at that level. I'll be there someday, don't worry.

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.