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# Taylor's Turn

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# Taylor's

With Stacy Frese and Desirée Francis in the WNBA, the pressure is on the star guard of ISU women's basketball.

Almost no one had ever heard of Megan Taylor when an ISU scout showed up in the rural town of Roseau, Minn., population 2,500, on a hint that the high school junior might have something special. That was, of course, before the clutch three-point shots, before the Big 12 championships, before an ISU women's basketball team that could barely get spectators to come to Hilton Coliseum on game day became the hottest attraction in Ames.

Former ISU assistant coach Brenda Oldfield (who's Stacy Frese's older sister) traveled through a snowstorm to Roseau, a town 10 miles from the Canadian border, to watch Taylor play basketball in a small gym. Iowa State was the only big university to look at Taylor. "Minnesota never really recruited me, and their basketball program was in a lot of trouble then. I'm from a small town in northern Minnesota. I don't think anybody had even heard of me," Taylor says. Women's basketball head coach Bill Fennelly adds: "She was a long way off the beaten path. No one even knew she existed."

That has changed. Twenty-one-year-old Taylor, who was the all-time leading scorer for her high school when she left Roseau, has achieved a laundry list of accomplishments since her arrival at ISU. She's been an honorable mention for All-American, scored more than 1,000 ISU career points, been Big 12 player of the week, and she may become ISU's all-time leading scorer and rebounder this season. Taylor was always a fan favorite, but now she's one of the few in the spotlight since Monica Huelman, Desirée Francis, and phenomenon Stacy Frese graduated last year. Besides having the opportunity to break records, Taylor is one of the team's three senior players.

Because Taylor has started every game of her career, Fennelly says many people act as if it is her fifth, sixth, or even seventh year playing. She has the air of a veteran, but that doesn't mean she rests on her laurels. She is always the last player to leave a practice.

"Megan plays as hard as any player I've ever coached. Every day she works hard, and her will to win goes a long way," Fennelly says. Her role as team leader isn't because of her speed or height,

by Stacy Nicks

## Highlights in Megan Taylor's career

• captures Minnesota career scoring record with 3,300 points at Roseau High School

1997

• recruited by former ISU coach Brenda Oldfield





# Turn

because neither attribute is as impressive as her work ethic. In short, she's intense. "When Megan is off the court, she is easy-going, but when she steps into a gym, she is a whole new person with a different mindset," notes teammate Kelly Cizek. "Sometimes during warm-ups, we would all just be shooting around, taking easy shots, and then out of nowhere comes Megan driving in hard for a lay-up."

On the court, the 5'10 Taylor is pure aggression. She likes to get the ball when the time's running out and the pressure's on. One of the criticisms that gets thrown at her is that she doesn't always deliver in those moments — think last year's NCAA tournament game, when she missed what would have been the game-winning shot in the last few seconds. "A lot of people have criticized my inconsistency because I'll be on one game and off the next game," she admits, "but I guess they all average out."

Even with the high-profile misses, Taylor doesn't shy away from the challenges. "I like having the ball in clutch situations. It's happened to me a few times, and a couple of times I haven't made it. It hurts, you know, but I do like to have it cause it lays on your shoulders whether you win or lose the game."

Often times, though, Taylor was the hero of the game. As a freshman, she put down two free throws with eight seconds remaining to garner a victory over the then-No. 14 Alabama Crimson Tide. "I remember that game because I just missed two free throws to lose the last game and coach Fennelly really got in my face," she says. His lecture stuck. The following year, Taylor downed a game-winning three-pointer that became Compaq's Most Dramatic Play of the Week.

Her contribution to ISU women's basketball's success story includes a career average of 14.1 points per game and a three-year total of 1,391 points. She's been named to the All-Big 12 Conference team every year. She's got to top Jayme Olson's 1,799 to become Iowa State's all-time leading scorer. She has the second best free-

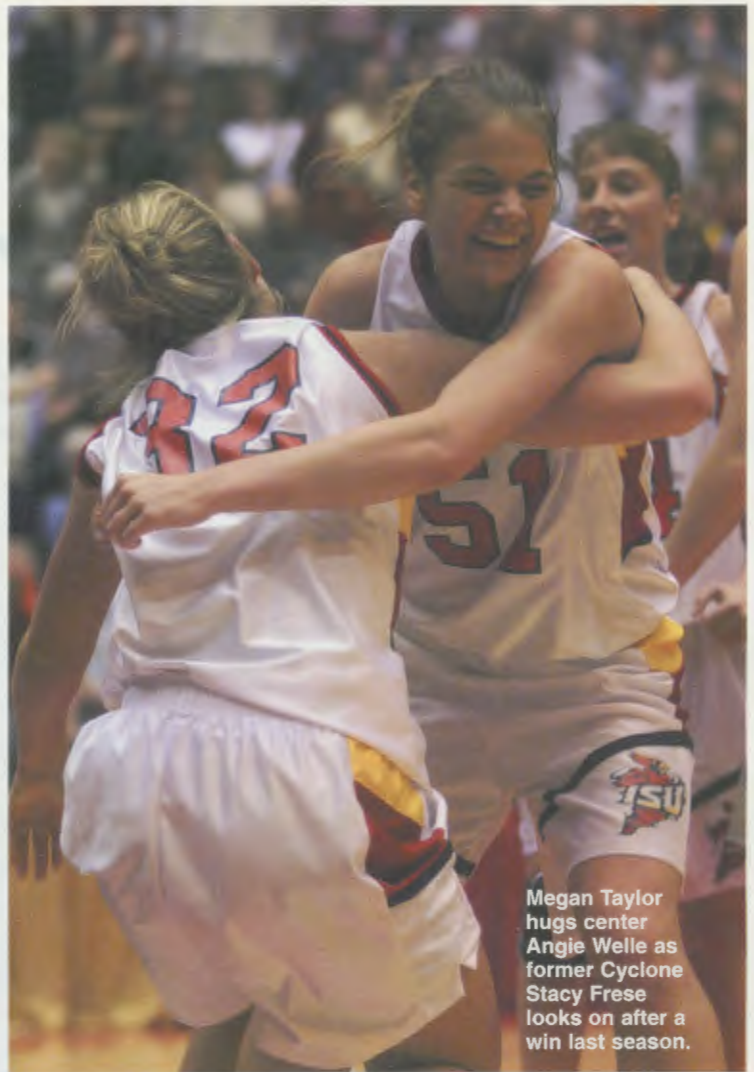
throw and three-point percentages, behind Stacy Frese, which isn't too shabby.

For ISU women's basketball to continue to be successful, "even players who stepped it up last year will have to pick it up even more," Taylor notes. Taylor wants to get the team into Final Four territory. As for her playing, "I would like to get my rebounds up again. The points are going to come; I just want to get a better shot selection and not force things as much this year," she says.

It's this maturity that makes Taylor the team leader. She says she sees player Lindsey Wilson taking over Frese's position at the point, and Erica Junod will have to be one of the younger players who starts becoming one of ISU's future superstars. There isn't a younger player becoming the next Megan Taylor yet — she's got some time to work on her legacy.

As for Taylor's life after ISU, Fennelly thinks she has a terrific shot at the WNBA, like Frese and Francis before her. "Megan is definitely good enough for the pros. I'd like to see her try and give it a shot with the right team. I know they've seen her play and like her already," he says.

Taylor's still got a year and half of an internship left after this semester before she graduates with a degree in exercise and sport science. However, having to leave ISU is something that sticks in her mind. "On an ideal day I would be playing basketball. I think that's why I'm going to miss it so much because it's been a part of my life for so



Megan Taylor hugs center Angie Welle as former Cyclone Stacy Frese looks on after a win last season.

long," she says.

Taylor, of course, will never truly leave ISU, even after she graduates. Her legacy will be felt when a young fan asks a player for an autograph or when the next ISU star makes a three-pointer in the final seconds of a game. She says more than any other accolade, she simply wants to be known as a player "who worked hard every day." Whether or not she breaks any more records or carries the team to an NCAA championship, her wish has already been granted.

*Stacy Nicks is a senior in journalism and a senior editor. When she's not kicking it with the Ethos crew, she can be found spiking volleyballs and punishing opponents as part of ISU's volleyball team.*

• leads Cyclones in rebounding and free-throw shooting during freshman season

1998

• named Big 12 Rookie of the Week five times

• plays overseas on Big 12 All-Star team during the summer



• finishes sophomore season as team's top rebounder and second-leading scorer

1999

• scored 25 points, including two key free-throws in the final seconds, at Kansas



• scores 1,000th career point Nov. 21

• averages 13 points, 4.3 rebounds, and 3.7 assists in three Big 12 Tournament games en route to conference title

2000

• chosen honorable mention All-American by Basketball Journal after junior season that saw ISU set a record for number of wins

• named to preseason All-Big 12 team before senior season