

One on one with ...

Hazlewood's Amber Jones

Whether it's in the classroom or on the court, Hazlewood High senior Amber Jones is dedicated and determined to being the best she can be.

Two torn knee ligaments didn't stop her from exceling in basketball and juggling a busy schedule of athletics plus a full academic load. She will be the valedictorian of her class when she graduates in the spring.

A 5-foot-7 guard, Jones has been a key element in the success of Hazlewood girls basketball since she was a seventh-grader. The six-year varsity player plans to sign a basketball scholarship in April, and said she'll decide sometime in March between nearly a dozen programs that have been recruiting her, including Ole Miss, UAB, Tulane and Arkansas State. She ranks ninth on the state's all-time scoring list. She also holds several state championships in track, but basketball is her passion.

As easygoing off the court as she is serious on the court, Jones took time out at practice this week for 10 questions with *Daily Sports Writer* Brooke Milam:

Question: Is there anyone specific you model your game after?

Answer: Not really. I like to watch Whitney Boddie (current Auburn and former Florence High player) play. I played against her in seventh grade in a Thanksgiving tournament. It was like the second game I ever played on varsity. I had to guard her and it was very hard. I don't remember how many points she scored, but it's at home in my scrapbook.

Q: Who's someone you've been excited to meet through the recruiting process?

A: I've been to camp at Auburn, and I've met the head coach there. A lot of Division I coaches come to our AAU tournaments, but they can't talk to us there.

Q: What's something you're known for other than being a great basketball player?

A: I'm smart. I just found out the day before yesterday that I got valedictorian. Math is my favorite subject.

Q: What motivates you the most?

A: The fact that I hurt my knees. (She's torn both her left and right ACL). I just don't take basketball for granted. At the beginning of this year, the motivator was that this is my last year. (Thursday) could be our last game. This might be our last practice. I hope not. I really want to win a state championship. (Hazlewood has been the state runner-up three of the past four years).



Daily photo by Gary Cosby Jr.

Q: What about basketball comes the easiest to you, and what have you had to work the hardest on?

A: The easiest thing is just like the endurance part because I run a lot in track, so that comes easy. I've had to work on going to my right a lot. (She's left-handed).

Q: How would you describe yourself on the court?

A: My daddy calls me "The General." I just try to lead and keep everybody's head in the game.

Q: Is your off-court personality similar or different than on the court?

A: Off the court I'm funny, not serious. I like to play around a lot.

Q: Who's someone you can't usually beat one-on-one?

A: My cousin, Kiara Young (current Louisiana Tech player and former Lauderdale County High player). She always likes to post me up.

Q: Your team hasn't lost often in your career, but what's the best way to get over a tough loss?

A: Just come back and try to play the next game. It always bothers me to lose, but I'm not a sore loser. Like at the state tournament these past few years, I knew we played good, so I was proud.

Q: You've made a lot of special memories on the court during the years. What's your first basketball memory?

A: When we started little league ball. I was like 5. We lost one game to the other Town Creek team and after that in 6 and under, we never lost again.