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'Cat Tracks

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Doucette named Oregon's top athlete

All-America softball player Staci Doucette '13 was selected as the female recipient of the Ad Rutschman Small College Athlete of the Year Award at the Oregon Sports Awards Jan. 30.

She becomes the first woman from Linfield to receive the prestigious award and the sixth overall winner from Linfield since the honor was established in 2001. Other Linfield finalists for the Rutschman Award included Karleigh Prestianni '13, softball; Eric Hedin '12, football; and Kelson Brown '11, baseball.

Scott Brosius '88, Linfield baseball coach, and Chris Casey '82, Aloha High School football coach, were finalists for the Slats Gill Sportsperson of the Year Award, honoring the top coach or sports administrator from Oregon.



Calling the shots

Scott Twardoski '95 spends a good part of his work day looking up.

As an NBA referee, he stands 5 feet-9.5 inches tall and is usually the shortest guy on the floor.

"My neck gets sore having to look up to talk with people," he said. "But it's extremely fulfilling, working with high-level athletes and being involved in the game itself."

Twardoski is a full-time official in the Pac-10, Big Sky, NBA Development League and WNBA and is a part-time motivational speaker for Learning for Living Inc. A five-sport high school athlete, Twardoski began officiating junior high basketball games as a Linfield College student to stay connected to the game. In 1995, he met some NBA officials at a high school tournament and, after years of training, began working Division I games in 2001.

He's one of the few officials who referee year round – October through May with the NBA and through the summer with the WNBA. Last year, he spent more than 200 nights in hotels. And with the overlap of college and professional games, he spent only six days at his Phoenix, Ariz., home during December and January.

"This is a tough stretch of the year," said Twardoski, whose wife, Kimberly, frequently meets him on the road in cities ranging from Pocatello, Idaho, to New York City.

Days are grueling, typically beginning with a 6 a.m. flight, and later, meetings with the officiating crew to review team match-ups and points of emphasis before the game. After the final buzzer, the officials review the game to evaluate their own performance, including placement on the floor and calls they either missed or got right.

Winning on and off the field

Many Wildcat teams take home the nation's top sports awards, but now Linfield athletes have been recognized as top scholars, too.

Linfield athletes lead the state in athlete graduation rates and academic rankings, according to a recent survey from NCSA Athletic Recruiting.

"Linfield's success in football has been the bi-product of a culture that focuses first and foremost on developing successful life skills in our athletes," said Joseph Smith '93, head football coach. "This idea has been handed down from coach to coach for 55 years."

"When we recruit athletes we're looking for the whole package," said Scott Brosius '88, head baseball coach.

"Winning in academics is just as important as winning on the field," said President Thomas Hellie.

NCSA Athletic Recruiting ranked schools by averaging graduation rates, academic rankings provided by *U.S. News & World Report*, and the strength of athletic departments as determined by the Learfield Sports Directors' Cup ranking.

At 72nd place among all Division III schools, Linfield is one of only two Oregon schools that made the top 100 cut, and is ranked highest in the state.



Scott Twardoski '95, flanked by Memphis Grizzlies' Marc Gasol, left, and Phoenix Sun's Grant Hill, instructs coaches to step off the court during a double overtime competition Nov. 5.

Standing before 20,000 fans, Twardoski's every whistle blow is scrutinized. But he takes the pressure in stride.

"It's like a light switch," he said. "Once the ball is in play I forget about everything but my job on the floor. I do my best to make the best call."

And when the inevitable controversial call is made, Twardoski tunes out angry spectators.

"You've already made the call, now you have to be confident in the decision," he said. "The crowd goes in the background. And then the light switch goes on, the ball goes into play and I'm focusing on the game at hand and those 10 players."

Twardoski taught high school English in Washington's Kent School District for nine years, earning teacher of the year accolades from the district before stepping away to focus entirely on officiating.

"I loved being a teacher," he said. "I felt an amazing connection with the kids."

A Linfield English major, Twardoski played soccer, was a member of Theta Chi fraternity and served as ASLC president. He said Linfield's family connectedness impressed him from the start.

"The small community gave me a boost that wouldn't have happened if I was at a larger school without that family feel," he said.

After two decades of officiating, Twardoski admits he can no longer watch the game as a fan.

"I look at it through the eyes of a ref," he said. "It's engrained in me to look at things differently."

— Laura Davis

Tyler Huynh '11

Sport: Men's swimming

Hometown: Hickory, N.C.

Major: Finance

Minor: Music and mathematics

Why Linfield: To get a sense of adventure by being an out-of-state student.

Challenges: Swimming has a very long season. It starts in September and ends mid-February.

Achievements: Being able to improve my times every year.

Favorite memory: My first swim meet as a collegiate swimmer. It was at Whitman College swimming the pentathlon; it was then I knew I wanted to swim all four years at Linfield.

Future plans: I'm hoping to work in finance on the West Coast.

Learned from college athletics: It has taught me character traits such as time management, teamwork, perseverance and hard work; skills that I can take with me into the working field.

