

Family Tradition

Kate Benson was one of the greatest athletes in South history leaving a legacy carried on by her children

Story by *Levi Robertson*

Every time senior Ben Allen enters the main gym he can look up to the north end of the gym and see a familiar name on the wall.

“The first thing that I saw when I walked in this gym when I was in the kid camps was Kate Benson everywhere, and I was like, ‘wow,’” Allen said. “I was shocked because I didn’t know my mom was this good, but she’s on steals, she’s on field goal percentage points, season records. She’s like, everywhere and she’s in single game scoring multiple times. It’s just crazy to me.”

In 2010 John Johnson, who was the athletic director at the time, started the South Hall of Fame to recognize student athletes and coaches for their accomplishments. One of the first athletes Kate Benson was a member of the first class of inductees.

“She was probably the best basketball player in the history of the school male or female,” Johnson said. “She was the most dominant player in the history of Kansas basketball up to that time and to this day she still holds school and state records.”

Benson graduated from South in 1995 and achieved accomplishments that are still remembered during her four years as a Raider.

Benson started her basketball

journey in third grade coached by her father, Steve Benson who graduated from South in 1969. He saw her potential from a young age.

“I knew that she [Kate] might be a good player,” Steve said. “It’s like the first or second game as a third grader, she gets a rebound, she starts dribbling down with her right hand. Down the court. There’s a defensive player in her way, she makes a quick crossover and goes to the left hand for about half of the court and shoots the layup, and I thought oh that’s a little different for a third grader.”

Originally, Kate wasn’t supposed to go to South, but she chose to transfer.

“My wife went to South. I went to South. The kids that she [Kate] played basketball with on rec teams were going to South. They’re all in that district. So that’s, that’s part of the reason they all wanted to stay together and so, that’s what she did,” Steve said.

Benson still holds the 6A girls basketball all-time scoring record with 1800 points. She was also a standout in volleyball, leading her team to four consecutive state semi-finals as well as an 88-match winning streak, winning the 1993 6A state championship.

“We were so lucky to have incredible talent in both sports,” Benson



Kate Benson, sr., said that though the team was quick, there was always room for improvement. She said that one improvement the team has made is to step up defensive intensity. Photo by *Amy Everett Patriot Photographer in 1995*

2010 was the inaugural class for the hall of fame. Along with Benson, Steve Little class of ‘74 and Clint Johnson class of ‘80 were also inducted. Every year since 2010 three former Raiders have been inducted into the hall.

Kate Benson and Alli Chonko, srs., celebrating with the rest of the team, hold up the state trophy for everyone to see. The girls congratulated each other as tears of joy filled their eyes. Photo by *Jeni Appleyard Heritage photographer in 1995*



careers.”

Kate’s efforts on the court led to numerous awards. She was 1st team all-State for all four years in basketball, Greater Kansas City Sports Commission’s 1995 Kansas Female Athlete of the Year, and Miss Kansas Basketball - 1995.

With those accolades, Benson left a legacy at the school that is remembered to this day.

“The name Kate Benson is known by anyone who knows anything about Kansas high school basketball, but more than just her accomplishments, she’s known for having great sportsmanship,” Johnson said. “She respected the game and her opponents and competed in a way that brought honor to her and her team.”

Kate’s legacy is very much still living on in the halls of South with two of her kids going to the school. 2024 graduate Luke Allen and senior Ben Allen both followed in their mom’s footsteps on the basketball court.

“My mom growing up taught me the basics of the game,” Ben said. “With playing right now there will always be a little added pressure just because any time I look up in the gym I see her records there, but that just makes me work harder so I can continue to grow and be the best player I can be.”

Kate enjoys watching her son compete and follow in her footsteps but also enjoys seeing him become his own player and have success. Last year, Ben helped his team to the #1

overall seed in the Kansas state 6A playoffs and was named 3rd team all-Sunflower league.

“It’s awesome to see him [Ben] enjoy the game the way I did,” Kate said. “I see so many similarities between the level of talent on his team and the level of talent that I got to play with and I really enjoy that he’s not just playing with great players, but great humans as well.”

Kate Benson will always be remembered at the school for not just her accomplishments, but for elevating women’s sports at South.

“Kate was the first real female athlete, that just kind of moved women’s sports up at South, and maybe moved it to another level. There were good players. I’m not saying there weren’t any good players before her, there were, but she was first team all state all four years in high school, and all-Metro and all-league and Kansas Player of the Year and all this,” Steve said. “It’s kind of like that of South. She just kind of raised the level of women’s sports at the school, maybe got more kids involved, or thinking about it, and put it on the map.”



Senior Ben Allen makes a pass against St. Thomas Aquinas on Tuesday Dec. 9. Photo by *Sebastian Aburto*

said. “So many collegiate level athletes on those teams. It was an awesome experience to get to play at that high of a level, and many of them went on to be very successful in their college