

# Former Durant star coaching at Ar-We-Va

By Lauren Callison

A former Durant graduate who played college basketball is now in her first season as head coach of a high school girls' varsity team in western Iowa.

Janey (Botkins) Stoelk, a 2016 graduate of Durant, took her basketball talent to the collegiate level at Simpson College. Now she patrols the sidelines in West-side, coaching the Ar-We-Va Rockets.

In her time at Durant, Stoelk broke three records: most three-pointers in a game (8), season (80), and career (220). She is also a member of the 1,000 point club.

She now shares the first record with senior Savannah Meinert, who drained eight three-pointers in a game against Camanche at Cornell College in 2023.

Former Durant girls' basketball coach Mr. Doug Frett named Stoelk team captain all three years he coached her.

"Her knowledge and experience was like having another coach on the floor," said Mr. Frett.

"She led by example with hard work and discipline. She was always on the floor at both ends taking charges and diving for loose balls. She would put extra time in the gym to make herself better at the game."

Stoelk was an all-around athlete, not only dominating in basketball, but also

qualifying for the state cross country meet three times.

The girls' basketball team went 18-6 her senior year of high school and 16-8 her junior year. Stoelk was the leading scorer her sophomore, junior and senior year.

"We had the representation that we were a good basketball program which came with high expectations," said Stoelk.

"Every year of my high school career, we were a competitive group with the ability to win every game."

However, her high school career ended with a heartbreaking loss to West Branch in the regional finals 44-42.

"Unfortunately, I remember the way my senior year ended," she said. "We lost by a late buzzer beater to West Branch. My competitive self will never let that down."

It was no surprise Stoelk wanted to continue her basketball career after high school.

"I couldn't imagine not continuing to play the sport I put so much time and energy into for 18 years and loved so much," said Stoelk.

Her decision process was difficult because she had over 20 schools interested in her. She knew she did not want to just walk on to a team, and getting playing time

right away was important to her.

"Coach [Brian] Niemuth at Simpson had been recruiting me since the summer after my freshman year," said Stoelk. "He was there watching me at nearly all my AAU tournaments across the country, along with my all-star games in high school. I had complete respect for him, and he had all the confidence in the world in me."

Stoelk decided on Simpson late in her senior year of high school. She played three years for Simpson before graduating early.

"I was someone who never settled in my craft," she said. "I knew he'd [Coach Niemuth] push me to be better, and he did just that."

At Simpson, she averaged 7.7 points per game her freshman year, 8.1 points per game her sophomore year, and 8.6 points per game her junior year. She broke Simpson's record for most three-pointers scored in a career in only her second season and was named Newcomer of the Year for all sports at Simpson her freshman year.

Stoelk's competitive nature makes her a great coach for the Ar-We-Va Rockets. She served as a volunteer assistant last season before taking the reins as head coach this season. She also married Austin Stoelk in August.

She has her master's degree in kinesiology and is currently working as a health coach assistant and fitness instructor. Her goal is to work as an exercise physiologist in a cardiac rehab setting.

However, coaching wasn't just another play drawn up for Stoelk; it's something she's always wanted to do.

"I knew from a young age I wanted to become a coach some day," she said. "I love the sport too much to not stay involved with it."

As a competitive player, Stoelk has had to adjust to her players and how they handle situations on the basketball court differently.

"Sometimes I have to remind myself that some kids did not have the same coaches I had growing up," said Stoelk.

"For instance, my AAU and college coaches used to get up in my face and scream if I made a mistake. I could take it because I'm thick-skinned. But some kids do not react well to yelling. In addition, some kids are not as competitive and simply go out for basketball because it's the sport in season or because their friends go out.

"That being said, you have to find a fine line of pushing them to be better, but also helping them have fun along the way."

Stoelk has learned the importance of instilling confidence into her basketball players.



Photo contributed by Janey Stoelk  
Coach Janey (Botkins) Stoelk walks the sidelines during a recent game for her team, the Ar-We-Va Rockets.

"Confidence is one of the most important factors in the game of basketball," she said.

"You have to believe each shot is going in, know you can get every rebound, take a chance on getting a loose ball or steal, etc."

Instilling confidence, inspiring young basketball players and building their basketball IQ is what she aspires to do as a coach.

"There is no better feeling than watching a player get better each game, knowing your influence could have potentially been a small part of that growth," she said.

Back in her high school basketball days, Mr. Frett saw her coaching potential, saying her understanding of the game was "far beyond her age."

"With the amount of time she spent on the game growing up, she is a natural to become a coach," he said.

"She has such a passion for the game of basketball."



Photo contributed by Janey Stoelk  
Former Durant graduate Janey (Botkins) Stoelk talks with two of her players during a timeout.

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Junior Mariah Alpen, who is a member of the Durant Wildcats basketball team, has been playing basketball since the first grade, and she got into the sport because her dad played for many years as well as her older sisters. What she enjoys most about the sport is getting the opportunity to play and make memories with her teammates.

Alpen

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Eighth grader Owen De-Long, who is a member of the basketball team, has been playing the sport since the first grade. He got into the sport because of his dad. What he enjoys most is getting to play the sport with his friends. His goal this season is to win.

DeLong

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Sophomore Kaden Sickels, who is playing for the Durant Wildcats basketball team, has been playing the sport since he was in fourth grade. He got into the sport because his family members would play basketball. What Sickels enjoys most about the sport is that he has more time with his friends.

Sickels

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Freshman Jocelynn Richardson, who is a member of the Durant Wildcats wrestling team, has been wrestling for three years. She got into the sport because she has participated in judo since she was seven years old, and her mom thought wrestling would make her faster in judo.

Richardson

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Sophomore Aiden Aldermann, who is wrestling for the Durant Wildcats, has been in the sport for seven years. What got Aldermann into wrestling was encouragement from his friends, and he ended up loving the sport.

Aldermann