

Cali Cubel '20 Senior Story

Headline: Leaving Behind a Lasting Sports Legacy



“Looking back over my time at Whittier College, I think I’m most proud of the impact I’ve had on our basketball program,” says Cali Cubel '20. Cubel has had great success on the women’s basketball team. Not only was she the female Freshman Athlete of the Year or the first basketball athlete in ten years to score 1,000 career points at Whittier, she also helped recruit players and captained her team

from fifth to second place in the Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Tournament.

Cubel, who’s graduating with a degree in kinesiology, remembers what led her to the day she first stepped onto Whittier’s campus. Initially, she planned to go to a junior college and then transfer to a four-year college. The summer of her high school senior year, she played club basketball for fun while preparing for her next step. That was when Cubel was noticed by Women’s Basketball Head Coach Roy Dow, who had just been hired at Whittier.

“He reached out to me very late in the summer and we both went on a tour of Whittier at the same time,” said Cubel. “It was his first time on campus too. We were both just looking around. I was his first recruit and I thought to myself, ‘It’s a beautiful campus, it’s small and familiar—I want to go here.’”

Cubel and Dow gained a lot of respect for each other over the years, largely borne out of their combined efforts to recruit players for the basketball team and improve it’s profile. At some point, Cubel was as involved in the recruiting efforts as the assistant coaches. When she became team captain, Cubel strove to lead her teammates to victory.

“Outside of practice, I think my teammates would say I’m goofy,” she said. “I’m always laughing or messing around. But on game day, it’s a switch. I’m just the captain. I’m very strict. I don’t think anything is funny. I want to win.”

The team has come far under Cubel and Dow’s leadership. Cubel recalls a match they played this past year against Pomona College, one of Whittier’s fiercest rivals. Whittier had beaten them in a previous match, and many were anticipating that Pomona would avenge themselves in the rematch.

“I remember watching my teammates play, watching them run Pomona up and down the court,” said Cubel. I kind of just sat back and thought, ‘Alright, they’ve got this. They don’t need me anymore.’”

Cubel quite literally grew up with basketball. Her father, a retired marine, used to take pictures for all of the sports teams on his military base. As a child, Cubel would often spend the day with the women’s basketball team while her father photographed them. She said the girls on the team played a big part in raising her—taking her out to eat or to their barracks, letting her practice with them.

The camaraderie of sport has followed Cubel from her childhood to her time at Whittier. While she made a really great group of friends outside of sports, she has bonded the most with her team. Together, they’ve created lifelong friendships and memories, such as practicing every morning and hanging out every night during Winter Break.

“We could have easily gone to sleep because we had practice the next morning, but we’d all go to one of our dorms or apartments and talk or play games instead,” said Cubel. “They are some funny girls, some sisters that I will keep for life.”

Now, as a Whittier College graduate, Cubel is considering what she wants to do next. In the short term, she plans to follow her father, her grandfather, and other veterans in her family by joining the United States Marine Corps. In the long term, she’d like to serve her community as a police officer.

Is there room for basketball in her plan? Of course, Cubel said. One way she’d like to keep up with the game is by sharing it with others. In fact, she’s already had some practice in her current role as assistant coach for a kids club team in Orange County.

Like many who have a deep respect for the sport they play, Cubel values basketball just as much for the lessons it teaches as for the thrills and physical rewards it provides. For her young players, those lessons are the “real stuff” they can use outside of practice every single day.

“I really like helping kids, and I use sports to do that because it’s something my players and I have in common,” said Cubel. “Something I preach to my players is the importance of being a good teammate. I tell them, ‘If you’re a good teammate, then you’re a good person and you go out of your way to encourage others.’ So if they’re being a good teammate in practice, the idea is that they’ll be a good teammate outside of practice too.”