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HARRISBURG ACADEMY GOOD FIT FOR ZACH COHEN

BY BRAD KANE

For all the moves Harrisburg Academy senior Zach Cohen shows off with a basketball, he saved his best one for off the court.

He started his high school career at Susquehanna Twp., a basketball hotbed where Cohen mostly sat and watched for two years. But then he made what turned out to be a fortuitous decision.

"I was at Susquehanna and transferred over to the Academy before my junior year, and was so happy I actually got to play," he said. "I was on the team but never played at Susquehanna, but the Academy was the right fit for me for both academics and sports."

Academy's strong academics are well known, and thanks to Cohen and his teammates, the Spartans are becoming known for their basketball program, too.

"Our team last year was really good," Cohen said. "We won our league [SIAC] and made it to the second round of districts, which is extremely good for our school."

This season, Cohen has teamed with fellow senior Adam Chernicoff (16.4 points per game) to lead the Spartans to an 8-6 record as of Jan. 17. Cohen is averaging more than 15 points a game, with plenty of double-digit rebound performances, too.

Last week saw Cohen 53 points in three games: Seventeen in a 39-32 loss to Lancaster Country Day, 18 (and 10 rebounds) in a 62-39 win over Dayspring Christian, and 18 more the next night in a 66-46 victory over Belleville Mennonite.

But it's not just the "C-and-C show" at Academy.

"We have a lot of good chemistry," he said. "The entire team contributes to a victory, there are no certain players."

The Spartans are in the thick of the District 3-A playoff race, and seem certain to make a return trip to the playoffs.

From here on out, it's just a matter of improving their seed.

Cohen's played basketball for as long as he can remember, starting when he was five or six. He's the youngest of four children, two sisters and one brother.

For college plans, he's willing to go away -- if only for one, simple reason.

"I want warm weather," he said.

That would mean schools like South Florida, Oregon or the College of Charleston.

But he realizes that basketball probably won't be in his future.

"I don't plan on playing basketball in college, as much as I love the sport," he said. "As long as I'm accepted to one of those schools, I'm happy."

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Zach's favorites

Nonsports hobby? Watching sports and being with my friends

Vacation spot? Aruba

Best way to spend a weekend afternoon? Depending on the season I'll watch college basketball, football or the NFL.

School subject? Math

Music artist? Lil' Wayne and Jay-Z

Favorite book? Kite Runner

Favorite Movie? The Shawshank Redemption

Who would you like to have dinner with? LeBron James or Jay-Z