She's MSU-Northern bound too

*Havre High star Peyton Filius signs to play basketball for the Skylights*

By Daniel Horton

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As of this afternoon, the Montana State University-Northern women’s basketball program will get another injection of Havre Blue Pony blue.

Skylights head coach Chris Mouat has announced the signing of Havre High senior Peyton Filius to an NAIA national letter of intent. Filius is currently a standout guard on the Blue Ponies where she has been a four-year varsity starter under head coach Dustin Kraske. And being a Havre native with deep ties to the Skylight program, and Northern as a whole, it seems like this signing was a perfect fit for all involved.

“We are very excited about this signing,” Coach Mouat said. “Peyton is somebody I have known since my first day on the job here. But, of course, I knew who her mom was because she made such an impact on the program here, and I knew who her dad was for the same reason. But that little girl has grown up to be quite the basketball player and leader and has done a fantastic job at Havre High. We are really excited.”

Filius is also glad the decision of where to play college basketball is now behind her, as her final landing spot has garnered a lot of attention from fans, fellow players, and numerous colleges and coaches around the state.

“It feels good to finally be able to give people an answer, and it really feels like the right decision,” she said. “At first I thought I wanted to get out of town because I thought that is what everybody does, but the more I thought about it the more I realized that I didn’t want to leave. Havre has great fans and always has big crowds, so I am excited to be staying around home and those hometown fans.”

And Peyton will hopefully be the next Filius in line to find success at the Frontier Conference and NAIA level while at MSU-N.

Scott Filius, Peyton’s father was a 2002 inductee to the Lights Hall of Fame for his efforts as a Northern wrestler. He was a four-time All-American, wrestling two years at North Idaho Junior College before wrestling his junior and senior seasons at Northern. In 1991, Scott achieved an individual NAIA national title (167 pounds) as Northern won its first-ever team title as well. Scott was also an academic standout while at MSU-N and has built a prep dynasty as the wrestling coach at Havre High.

Kari (Fike) Filius, Peyton’s mom, and Kim (Fike) Finn, Peyton’s aunt were also inducted into the Northern Hall of Fame in 2005 for their work and contributions on the hardwood. Kari and Kim helped bring an NAIA national championship to Northern in 1993. And as good as the duo was on the court, they were just as impressive in the classroom.
Both sisters earned Academic All-Conference awards for three years and Academic All-American honors in two. The two also played on four Frontier Conference Championship and four District Championship teams. Kari also scored 1,181 points at MSU-N.

“I think it is fun Peyton has a chance to add to that history,” Mouat said. “But we knew that we didn’t want to put too much pressure on Peyton for what her parents did here. This had to be her decision. But her parents were phenomenal athletes here, both Hall of Famers, and that can add some pressure to a kids’ life. That was the last thing we wanted to do, so we were respectful of that in the recruiting process even though she was somebody we knew we wanted in this program since she was eight years old shooting around in the gym. She is a good person, good player and a good student, and we’re really excited for her to be a part of our program.”

Her collegiate basketball career won’t start until next fall, but Peyton Filius’ prep resume’ is already extremely impressive.

As a four-year varsity starter on the Blue Pony basketball team, Peyton was named All-Conference as a sophomore and junior and Class A All-State last season as well as leading the Ponies in scoring. She also played volleyball for her first three years at Havre High, earning All-Conference honors as a junior. She ran cross country as a senior to stay in shape year round, but will also run track for all four years by the time she graduates. Last year, she placed in the top six at the Class A state in the 800-meters and has earned Central A All-Conference honors in events on the track the past three springs.

But the accolades don’t stop there as Filius was named Academic All-State for three seasons of volleyball, three seasons of basketball, three seasons of track, and her lone season of cross country, a season that resulted in the Blue Pony team grabbing a Central A championship and a fourth-place finish at state. Filius was also an All-Conference runner for the Ponies this past fall.

MSU-Billings was also a frontrunner to sign Peyton with all that she has accomplished, but like she said, Northern seemed like the best fit. And it was a close call on who was more excited, Peyton, or her parents.

“I was probably more excited, but not by much,” Peyton said. “My parents were both pretty psyched by my decision, too. And I didn’t really think about their success there, that didn’t play a factor in my decision. My parents had their time at Northern, and they did their own thing. But I have never felt like I had to live up to their expectations, just do my own thing when I got the chance.”

Currently, Peyton is a major component on the No. 5-ranked Pony squad where she is averaging more than 13 points per game and a team-high four rebounds per game. An outstanding outside shooter, who can also drive to the basket, handle the ball, make excellent passes and defend, she is also first on the team in made 3-pointers, third on the team in assists, and second on the team in steals.

And those outstanding numbers have a chance of going up even more this season. The Ponies have four more regular season games and are a clear favorite to win their third straight conference title and divisional tournament title. Last year the Ponies grabbed 14 wins and made the state semifinals. Currently the Ponies have 10 wins and Filius has high hopes of finishing off her prep career strong. An NAIA national title could be in the distant future, but right now a Class A state title sounds just as good.

“I haven’t thought that far ahead yet to have college goals,” Filius said. “I just want to be able to get better each year and help the team anyway I can. And I don’t even know what I would do if I were able to accomplish something as big and meaningful as a national title. Just to be a part of something like that would be amazing. But I still have this year to get...
through, and making this decision to play at Northern will hopefully help me and the team (HHS). I don’t have to worry about college, I can put all my focus into this season and getting better each and every weekend. Hopefully that will help lead to us having a great run at the state tournament as a team.”

Filius joins Blue Pony teammate Brandy Lambourne as part of a 2014 Skylight recruiting class which also includes Chinook’s Makhayla Farmer and Townsend’s Jacy Thompson. Filius, who hasn't decided on a major just yet, has a younger brother, Parker and younger sister, Sadie.