

Craig makes history as BC3's first two-sport All-American

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Mackenzie Craig, a sophomore forward on the Butler County Community College women's basketball team, takes a shot while being guarded by Mercyhurst North East's Shaquoia McCray (20) and Cerenity Chambers (4) as Pioneers' teammate Carly Burdett (20) closes in during a Dec. 11, 2018, game at BC3's Field House. Craig has been selected as a National Junior College Athletic Association Division III All-American in women's basketball, following her selection in December to the prestigious post-season award in volleyball

(Butler, PA) Mackenzie Craig, who in the past four months set career rebounding and scoring records for the Butler County Community College women's basketball program, has become the first athlete in BC3 history to be selected as a National Junior College Athletic Association All-American in two sports.

The NJCAA has named Craig, a Karns City High graduate, as an All-American in women's basketball, a sport in which the BC3 sophomore scored 1,277 career points and grabbed 966 rebounds in two seasons, breaking records set by Julia Baxter from 2015 to 2017.

Craig in December was also chosen as an All-American in volleyball, a sport in which she helped to lead the Pioneers in 2018 to their third NJCAA Division III Region XX title in four years.

“This is overwhelming,” said Craig, a 5-foot-10 forward in basketball and a setter in volleyball. “It is crazy. I never even expected to play two sports when I came to BC3. It definitely was never in my mind that I would ever get the opportunity to do this.”

The NJCAA has awarded 27 All-American honors to BC3.

Craig becomes the 23rd BC3 athlete to receive the prestigious post-season recognition since Bob Wilson received his first of two All-American honors in cross-country in 1970. Megan (Smith) Nimmo in volleyball and Stefan Carlsson in golf were also two-time All-Americans for BC3 in their respective sports.

“I think you can see from how many All-Americans we have that it is not easy to make it in one sport, let alone two,” said Rob Snyder, BC3’s director of student life and athletics, and the Pioneers’ volleyball coach. “Each All-American we have had is a really big deal. It’s hard to put into words that can adequately express what an accomplishment this is. It takes an extremely high level of commitment to be that successful in two sports.”

Craig on Dec. 5 against Jamestown (N.Y.) Community College broke Baxter’s record of 680 career rebounds, and on Jan. 26 against Potomac State (W.Va.) College, Baxter’s record of 1,093 career points. Craig becomes BC3’s second All-American in women’s basketball, following Baxter in 2017, and the college’s seventh in volleyball.

“I came here from high school, where I was only all right in both of those sports,” Craig said. “I really didn’t excel in them. I didn’t think about numbers. I just worked hard, put my time in, and I think it shows. It definitely helped how my teammates were. That helped my chance even more by how great we did.”

Craig, Pioneers’ women’s basketball coach Dick Hartung said, “is more of a blue-collar type athlete. She grinds it out. That is her style, and it works. She maintains that effort, and that is her strength.”

Craig’s 19.6 rebounds per game average in 2018-19 was second-best among players on 88 women’s basketball programs nationwide in Division III of the NJCAA. Her 135 successful free throws were fifth-best and her 24.4 points per game average, ninth-best, in a season in which the Pioneers won their third Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference title in four years.



Mackenzie Craig, right, a sophomore setter on the Butler County Community College volleyball team, is shown during a Sept. 26, 2018, match against Penn State-Beaver in BC3’s Field House. At left is Penn State-Beaver’s Stephanie Stadjuhar.

She scored 20 or more points in 39 of her career 45 basketball games at BC3, and grabbed at least 28 rebounds in 20 games. Craig scored a career-high 41 points on Nov. 3, 2017, against Penn State-Greater Allegheny and had a career-high 40 rebounds on Jan. 24, 2018, against Pennsylvania Highlands Community College.

Craig, Hartung said, “has a nose for the ball.”

“I have always been the kind of person who thinks she can do better,” Craig said. “There is never a limit. When I come to practice, I treat it as if I am playing in a game. And I am there to get better every single practice. You can never be good enough.”

Craig had a Pioneers-high 561 assists and 77 service aces for BC3 volleyball squad that in 2018 finished 19-7 and with its 10th consecutive winning season. BC3 also captured its third Region XX crown in four years behind Craig, named the regional tournament’s most valuable player after recording 33 assists in the Pioneers’ 3-1 victory over Anne Arundel Community College, of Arnold, Md., in the championship.

She was also named in volleyball to the All-Region XX first team and the WPCCC all-conference squad after the Pioneers swept the Community College of Beaver County on Oct. 20 to win their fourth WPCCC crown in a row.

“Kenz has both height and mobility, two attributes that translate well into both basketball and volleyball,” Snyder said. “To play two – and now, three – sports shows Kenz is a good athlete.”

Craig this spring is also an outfielder on BC3’s softball team.

“It is significant that we give an athlete this opportunity,” Snyder said of BC3’s athletics programs. “Someone who can excel at multiple sports might not get that opportunity somewhere else. I think this says a lot about our athletic programs and the caliber of athletes that we get and how we develop them.”