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Southeast's Harden signs to play hoops for Wichita State

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Southeast High School senior Alexandria Harden is one of the best track and field athletes in the state of Illinois. Three state titles in the long jump, two state titles in the 4x200-meter relay; one state title in the triple jump, and one team state title are proof of that.

Her talent on the track is unquestioned. But then again, so is her love of basketball. When it came time to make a college choice, her love won out.

Harden signed a letter of intent to play basketball at Wichita State University on Wednesday. She averaged 15 points, seven rebounds, six assists, four steals and two blocks last season, leading the Spartans in every category.

Harden started out with a pool of 15 to 20 potential colleges and whittled that list down to three — Wichita State, Illinois State and Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

"I just felt comfortable. I liked the coaches and players. The school would have been the same had I gone to Illinois State, and I just felt like I could grow and develop as a person at Wichita," Harden said.

Her college plans haven't included track for some time.

"Basketball is my love, and in college it's really hard to do another sport. I've known it for a long time, but I figured if a school wanted me for both, I'd probably do both," Harden said. "I know I'll have to give (track) my all this season in case I don't do it again."

The Spartans are less than a week away from starting the season. Harden made it a point to have this decision made before the beginning of her senior campaign.

"It just takes a lot of stress off. It's just a lot easier now," she said.

Montgomery signs with UIS

Sacred Heart-Griffin High School middle hitter Katie Montgomery will reunite with her former volleyball coach Angie Riggle next season at the University of Illinois Springfield. Montgomery signed Wednesday with the NCAA Division II volleyball program coached by Riggle.

"Angie coached SHG before and I really liked her," Montgomery said. Benedictine University at Springfield recruited Montgomery along with schools in Maryland, Maine and Tennessee.

Todd Engle can be reached at 788-1546.

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