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Bryan's Grothaus grateful to return to competition after second ACL tear

By MICHAEL BURWELL sportseditor@bryantimes.com

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Bryan's Reese Grothaus hits a shot during her No. 1 doubles match against Maumee on Aug. 6 at Bryan High School.

Photo by Michael Burwell

Reese Grothaus has been through a lot of ups and downs so far in her high school athletic career, but her drive and determination to overcome setbacks hasn't wavered.

After recovering from her second ACL tear in the last two years, the Bryan junior is back to competing on the tennis court for the Golden Bears. Grothaus, a Division II state doubles qualifier a year ago and one of the top basketball players for Bryan, was cleared to play around three weeks ago and has already made her presence known this season in tennis.

"I don't want to miss a moment. Even in practice, if I'm dreading it, I'm hot, I'm sweaty, I'm like, 'I don't want to lose this again,'" Grothaus said. "I just play like I have nothing to lose and play like I want to be here each day, in basketball and in tennis especially.



"I just don't take anything for granted anymore."

Grothaus' skill and athleticism in her two sports has been on display the past two years. Her strong play at the net helped her and teammate Emilee Bassett earn a trip to the OHSAA Division II state tennis tournament at Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason last season. The duo finished fourth in a Division II district tournament to become Bryan's first state girls tennis qualifiers since 2008.

On the basketball court, the versatile 5-foot-7 guard was the leading scorer (10.6 points per game) through the first half of the season on a deep and talented Golden Bears' squad.

A second devastating injury, however, put Grothaus in an all-too-familiar position.

During the Golden Bears' Northwest Ohio Athletic League basketball game against Wauseon on Jan. 8 at Bryan High School, Grothaus drove to the basket with her left hand, put up a challenging shot and made it early in the fourth quarter. She injured her left knee on the way down, though, and had to be helped off the court.

The result was another torn ACL; she missed most of her freshman season with the same injury in her right knee.

"I definitely knew right away what happened because of my past with my other knee," Grothaus said. "I just knew the feeling exactly."

Grothaus sat on the bench the rest of the game with ice on her knee and had to be helped to the locker room afterward. She was visibly distraught and in pain, oftentimes putting her head down.

"I was just sitting on the bench in disbelief almost because I didn't expect it to happen again," she said. "I was sitting next to one of my coaches and I was apologizing for being weak in that moment because I was like, I know I need to be happy and be glad that my team's winning."

"It was just hard to go through."

Added Bryan girls tennis coach Mitchell Owens: "I remember getting the text from several of the girls on the team; 'Coach, Reese hurt herself, don't know what's going on.' And my heart just sunk."

Grothaus had surgery shortly after the injury and started rehab the next day with physical therapist Jodi Arnold, whose daughter Addie Arnold is one of her best friends and a three-sport senior standout for the Golden Bears.

Grothaus said going through rehab for the first ACL tear helped immensely the second time.

"I would say it helped so much more because the first time I tore my ACL, I was so afraid and I had no idea what I should feel, what I shouldn't feel, what's right, what's wrong," Grothaus said. "Just going through it again, I knew I needed to push myself through the pain because it's not going to get better if I don't."

"I just knew how to rehab better to the best of my ability and how to stay active and build muscle. It's helped a lot honestly having that past experience, so I'd say it's like honestly a blessing in disguise."

Despite playing just 10 games, Grothaus was named honorable mention all-NWOAL and all-Northwest District in Division II in basketball. The Golden Bears went 19-4 overall, including 6-0 in conference play, and finished Division II district runner-up to eventual state champion Napoleon.

"She's such a competitor. She wants to be out there in the worst way," Bryan girls basketball coach Todd Grosjean said. "... She's going to not miss a beat just knowing the kind of kid she is and the competitiveness in her. I think the best is yet to come."

Grothaus has gotten off to a nearly perfect start early in the 2021 tennis season. She has dropped just four total games in five matches — four victories with Haylee Wheeler at No. 1 doubles and a win at No. 3 singles — for the Golden Bears (5-0).

"It was definitely awesome," Grothaus said of her season-opening match against Maumee on Aug. 6. "It felt good to be back and especially not wearing hardware on my knee and just being able to move like how I used to. Just playing a sport that I love with my friends is so fun.

"I'm just glad I could come back for this season especially because we have such a great group of seniors, and I love playing with them. I just feel like even if you're having a quicker or slower recovery, it's just all about how you process it and how well you think you're doing. It's all a mental thing, honestly."

Owens, who has a solid group of seniors and more than 20 players on his roster, is excited to see what Grothaus and the team can accomplish this season.

"Reese is an athlete and she refuses to lose," Owens said. "She is so driven that she will do whatever we ask of her to improve because she doesn't expect anything but the best from herself.

"I think she expects more from herself than we do as coaches. You've got someone like that, you don't have to push them. You just have to guide them because they'll push themselves."

