

The Twin-interview: Shooting questions with the Bensons

by MARIE BUCKLIN

Sophomore twins Madison and Nick Benson have made their mark at Chadwick, on and off the basketball court, since arriving as kindergartners. Engaging, funny and athletic, they sat down recently between classes for a chat about their basketball careers, life and the future.

How long have you guys been playing basketball and what positions do you play?

Nick: I've been playing since I was about 3 or 4. I've been playing center my entire life. It would be better if I started working toward being more of a forward.

Madison: Yeah, three or four years. I've played every position.

How do you think the position you play reflects your own personality and strengths?

Nick: For center, it's like a bigger position and I'm a big guy, I guess. It's a big position, but you also need to be in control. It translates to my life because it helps to be in control in life, on and off the court.

Madison: You can make an impact from any position, and carry the team. I think that being a reliable player is important in difficult situations. Basketball is a team sport, and if you give your all and try your best, your teammates should be able to depend on you. I am a reliable person on and off the court.

What are the best parts of your sibling's game?

Nick: She is really physical, and not afraid of hitting other girls and going up for a basket or taking a charge. And that is something really important in basketball. That's what helps her be such a great player.

Madison: He can jump up super high, and I've always been envious of that. He does not like taking s--- from other players. He won't let them push him around, so he will push back whether or not he gets a foul. He will protect himself and make his presence known on the court.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MADISON BENSON

Nick and Madison Benson have helped each other thrive on and off the court.

Do you guys want to play basketball beyond high school?

Nick: I've thought about it before, but I still don't know what I want to do with my life.

Madison: If I can play basketball in college, then I will play. It is not the end of the world for me if I don't. I realize that basketball will end eventually, and that I have to explore other interests.

How do you think you have influenced your brother/sister? How has he/she impacted the way you play basketball and your life in general?

Nick: We have helped each other become better basketball players. We used to play each other more when we were on the same teams, and she would play with the boys. She has made me a better person in life because she makes sure I don't do 'stupid s---'. She monitors how much dumb stuff I do, and if I do something dumb on or off the court... 'OK, shutup!' She is the first to be on me. She helps me make better decisions.

Madison: In terms of basketball, Nick helps me get better because he is bigger and stronger than I am, so it helps me go against bigger and stronger opponents when I encounter them. I'll ask him for advice. I try to help him not do stupid stuff when he does not know what he is doing. I think of myself as the logic and reason part of the brain in our relationship, and Nick is more of the academic brain.

From where you were a year ago, how do you think you have improved your games?

Madison: I think I have improved. My ballhandling skills have gotten better. They are still not where I want them to be, but they have gotten better. My shooting form has gotten better. My leadership on the team has increased, and my relationships with my teammates have gotten better. Now they look for me on the court and they trust me.

This season was an especially hard one because we have lost a lot of players due to injury and stuff, and we played with a lot of freshmen. They tried their hardest, but they haven't played basketball ever, so it was quite frustrating for me at times and I think I have grown in that aspect as a player... in how to tolerate and be patient with my teammates as they go through the learning curve. And Coach Mo [Moniquee Alexander] has helped me and talked me through it about how to not be as mean.

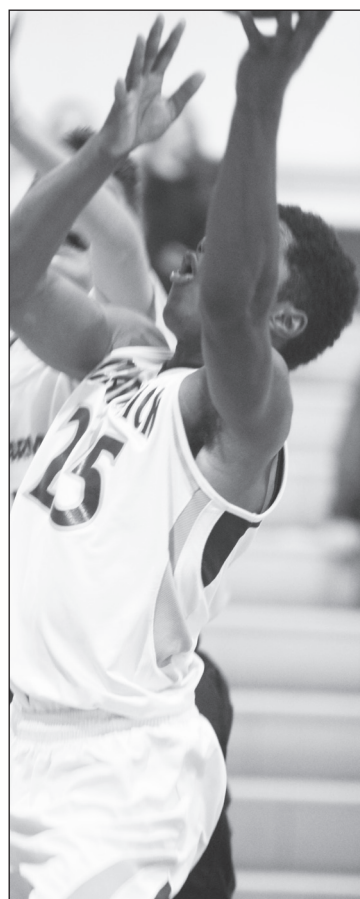


Nick: I think I have definitely improved as a post player from JV last year because this year Steve [Norberg] has coached me and given me advice on what I should do as a player in the post, which includes posting up and boxing out people for rebounds.

I have learned more post skills and how to be a better post player.

Who are your biggest role models in basketball?

Nick: I guess my Dad because he is the one who got me in it in the first place, and he is the one that tries to get me to work as much as possible. He makes me a better player.



Taking a road less traveled into professional sports



by MARY DAWSON

Most 18-year-olds are preoccupied with playing for their high school teams, acting in a high school play, getting A's in classes, or just finding dates to school dances. There are some teenagers out there, however, whose minds are preoccupied with competing with athletes twice their age and getting drafted by a professional team.

This past weekend, an 18-year-old girl, Su Oh, won the Australian Masters LPGA tournament. This was only her second professional start. Su Oh beat out veterans such as 32-year-old Katherine Kirk and 33-year-old Suzann Pettersen. What's even cooler than an 18-year-old winning the Australian Masters is that she was not even the only teenager competing. Other teens in the event included 18-year-old Charley Hull, who tied for second, and 17-year-old Lydia Ko. While some teenagers may be dreaming of becoming first in their high school class, Ko dreamed and achieved the goal of becoming first in the world. Yes, you read that correctly: 17-year-old Ko is

currently the No. 1 women's golf professional in the world right now.

Have you heard of Aaron Ekblad? No? Well, you should have. He's 19 years old, currently plays for the Florida Panthers, and ranks first in the NHL in scoring among rookie defensemen. Ekblad grew up in Belle River, Ontario, Canada. He was granted "exceptional player status," which allowed him to play in the Ontario Hockey League a year earlier than normal. The Panthers used their No. 1 overall pick to select Ekblad in the 2014 NHL Draft when Ekblad was only 18.

Professional hockey and golf are two sports where it is not rare for young athletes to have oppor-

tunities to compete at the highest level. In the NHL, the rule is that any player who will be 18 on or before Sept. 15, and not older than 20 before Dec. 31 of the draft year, are eligible for selection for that year's draft. For other sports, the eligibility age is a little older. For example, you have to be out of high school for at least three years before you can enter the NFL Draft. This rule makes pretty decent sense, as it's hard enough for junior and senior college players to make the transition from college to the NFL.

To be eligible to play in the NBA, you have to be 19 during the calendar year of the draft. There is much controversy surrounding this rule. Some people find it

too young, others don't think it's young enough. The LPGA Tour has an age requirement of 18, but it waived that requirement to allow Ko to enter the LPGA at 16.

In the past, players under 18 have successfully competed in the LPGA and PGA, but because of their age, they were still not considered official members of the tours. Even though they couldn't be considered official members of the LPGA or PGA, these young players still got the chance to prove themselves and play at a higher level.

It's an interesting concept: Let the talent triumph their age. Maybe other sports will—and maybe they should—try this model out.