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Healthcare field calling to Kunde

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Bridgman High School boys basketball player Dan Kunde is usually five minutes late for basketball practice.

His tardiness is excused by coach Mike Miller because Kunde is learning about the health field through his involvement with the Professional Health Careers Academy.

As part of the program, Kunde takes afternoon classes at Lake Michigan College that will earn him 13 1/2 credits toward college at the end of the year.



The Bees basketball standout is taking anatomy, medical terminology and holistic classes at LMC.

Involvement in basketball piqued Kunde's interest in the health field.

"Just because of sports I got involved in athletic training," said Kunde, who owns a 3.4 high school grade-point average. "Last year, I took an athletic training class at St. Joseph (MI.) High School."

Kunde wants to study more about medicine in college.

"I'd like to get a Master's degree as a registered nurse," Kunde said.

Do basketball teammates joke with Kunde about his future plans?

"Not really," Kunde said. "My teammates understand. A couple of other players also want to get into the medical field."

Kunde's basketball skills have helped Bridgman soar to the top of the Lakeland Conference with a 9-0 record.

The 6-foot-7 Kunde is averaging a little over 15 points and 11 rebounds a game to lead the Bees in both areas.

The relationship between Coach Miller and Kunde goes back several years.

"I've known him since the third grade when he was part of the mini-Bee boys basketball program," said Miller. "He's always been bigger than everybody else in his class."

Work this past offseason with Bridgman trainer Matt Mabry is paying off for Kunde.

"I've noticed a big improvement in his strength and agility," Miller said. "He's had a lot of dunks this year because of his increased jumping and strength."

Kunde has seven dunks this year after totaling only two last season. That flashiness is secondary to Miller, who appreciates the intangibles that his lone senior brings to the team.

"He's very unselfish and his unselfishness rubs off on everybody else," Miller said. "He hits the open man. That's why we've been so successful."

Bridgman, ranked No. 3 ranked in Class C, can take a huge step toward a second straight Lakeland Conference championship by winning at home this Friday against second place Berrien Springs (8-1). The Bees won the teams' first meeting this year, 63-49, behind Kunde's 24 points and 10 rebounds.

"If we beat them it will be a lot easier for us to win the conference," Kunde said.

"We did a lot of good things the first time we played them. One thing we need to improve on is our defense against their point guard, Matt Demler." Demler scored 22 points to lead the Shamrocks.
