*(NATS: Senior night announcement for Abby Robison)*

Dream teams are built and cultivated over time, something the McCallum girls basketball team knows much about. Varsity captains Makayla Mason, Abby Robison and point guard Abby Soto have been teammates since freshman year and have grown together as both leaders and friends. (SHOW: Sequence of team preparing for game, HEAR: Team talking)

Robison: I was just like, scrawny. I didn’t look like a basketball player. And everyone just came in with like, open arms. *(SHOW: Shot of Abby playing basketball, HEAR: Low NATS of ball bouncing)* And of course, we all grew really close over the next few years.

Four years later, these athletes face the COVID-19 pandemic in their final season at McCallum where the varsity and freshman teams are combined due to a lack of returning players. *(SHOW: WMT Shots of girls basketball game, HEAR: Low NATS of players running)*

Soto: It was people we thought we were gonna come into senior year with and [we were] kind depending on some of them. *(SHOW: Shot of team circle, HEAR: Team talking)* But throughout time, I think we've adapted to it really well.

This has led the girls to step up as leaders for the new players on the team. *(SHOW: Shot of team running drills, HEAR: Low NATS of payers running drills)*

Girls Basketball Coach Laurie Campbell: They blend well with the freshmen and really do a lot of teaching. I think it has allowed the freshmen to ask a lot of questions. *(SHOW: Sequence of team discussing plays, HEAR: Low NATS of team talking)* It's a lot of sharing and trying to understand the game better.

And beyond just teaching, the seniors build community among all players, by supporting the newest members of the team *(SHOW: Team breaking their huddle, HEAR: Low NATS of their chant)*

Freshman basketball player Esme Barraz: Congratulating us and just being supportive and high fives *(SHOW: Shot of teammates giving high fives, HEAR: Low NATS of team talking)* puts everybody in a better spot and makes everybody more into the game.

Their role as leaders takes root in the experiences from their own time as freshman and the interactions they had with older players on the varsity teams. *(WMT shots of team talking with coach, HEAR: Low NATS of team talking)*

Mason: Our freshman year, the seniors didn't want anything to do with us. It was just such a horrible feeling. You just feel like you're kind of always in the way. *(SHOW: Shot of Mason playing, HEAR: Low NATS of Mason jumping)* I didn't want these freshmen to have the same idea of seniors we did.

They know the importance of having strong connections with the team and how it creates a more positive experience. As they look toward the future, they are hopeful that new basketball players find the community they did and are grateful for their past experiences. *(SHOW: Shot sequence of team cheering for each other during game, HEAR: Low NATS of team cheering)*

Robison: It's been my light at the end of the tunnel. This was my high school experience. This is what I’ll think of when I look back.

This has been Alice Scott Reporting for The Shield Online. *(SHOW: Team clapping for each other)*

*(NATS: Team chant)*