MARK ENGEN

I am the oldest of Keith and Sandy Engen's five kids. Growing up on the farm taught me the value of early mornings, hard work, fear of the Lord, and loving people. My dad and I played quite a bit of basketball when I was in elementary school, and he was always teaching me how to position my body, protect the ball, and shoot. It sure helped that, as I got older, I grew physically as well. I was 6'5" in ninth grade and eventually grew to 6'9". My height was definitely helpful, but learning from my dad—and from Coach Bryce Pack in ninth grade—how to drop-step, use my body, and hold defenders off put me in position for a lot of layups over my high school career.

My first year playing varsity, my cousin Kirk was a senior, and it was a blast getting to play with him. In general, my teammates were fantastic, and I loved spending time with them both on and off the court.

It wasn't until my senior year that we finally put ourselves in position to make some noise in the tournament. Our conference was tough, and our section was even tougher. It seemed like the State champion or runner-up came out of our section nearly every year for a long stretch of time. We ended up losing to the eventual state runner-up after leading them for most of the game.

My time at Red Rock Central was great. I had great friends, enjoyed school, and was involved in a bunch of extracurricular activities outside of the sports I played. I missed playing football, but after committing to South Dakota State following my sophomore year, I figured it was probably more important to focus on basketball—and avoid getting broken in half on the football field.
A couple of weeks after graduating, I moved to Brookings to begin my college basketball career. SDSU had just moved to Division I the year before, after being a dominant Division II program for many years.

I redshirted my first year to put some weight on. I gained about 25 pounds but could never consistently get past 230, despite waking up in the middle of the night to eat. Now that I'm almost 40, I sure wish I still had that metabolism.

We struggled during my first few years at SDSU as the program transitioned to Division I. We didn't have a conference right away and weren't eligible for postseason tournaments, but we had some incredible experiences along the way. We flew all over the United States playing games from coast to coast—from New York City, to San Francisco, and from Fargo, to McAllen, Texas. We also played the University of Kentucky for my first college game. I was redshirting, but I got to travel with the team, and that is an experience I'll never forget.

We played the Minnesota Golden Gophers four times during my career, which was especially fun because they were the team I grew up watching. We never beat them, but we played them tough a couple of those years. I didn't play very much until my senior year, despite starting the first game of my freshman year. That experience taught me many valuable lessons about being

a good teammate, working hard for something you might never get, and continuing to push yourself and those around you to get better both on and off the court.

After college, I stuck around Brookings. A couple of years later, I met my wonderful wife, Kayce, and we have now been married for 13 years. We have three kids: Audria, who is 10; Isaac, who is 7; and Sam, who is 7 months old. We live on an acreage a couple of miles southwest of Brookings. I have worked for Bayer CropScience for 10 years as a crop protection sales representative in northeast South Dakota. My wife and I also own three dog boarding and daycare businesses called Canine Country Club, with locations in Brookings, Aberdeen, and Watertown, South Dakota. We homeschool our kids and spend much of our free time riding horses, competing in Little Britches rodeos, and participating in local riding clubs. These days, my hobbies mostly consist of my men's group at church, chasing the kids around to whatever activity they are doing, and playing whatever sport they happen to be interested in at the time. We also enjoy traveling, although that has become a little more challenging lately since adopting Sam seven months ago.

I am very thankful for my years growing up on the farm near Lamberton, and I cherish my time at Red Rock Central. I still try to keep tabs on how the RRC sports teams are doing, although I don't recognize nearly as many of the names anymore now that it has been more than 20 years since I graduated. Playing basketball at RRC gave me the opportunity to compete at a higher level and earn a scholarship, helping set the foundation for the life I have today. Even more valuable, however, were the lessons I learned along the way. I still remember Dad giving me time to reflect on my actions during a game by having me walk the final three-quarters of a mile home on a winter evening. I am also grateful for the many conversations in which my coaches and Dad encouraged me to become more than I believed I could be.

I think of my teammates and coaches regularly and enjoy running into them on my trips back to Lamberton to spend time with family. I look forward to the day when I can watch some of my nieces and nephews compete for RRC!

Thank you to the RRC Hall of Fame Committee for selecting me for the Red Rock Central Hall of Fame. It is truly an honor. I wish I could be there tonight to see everyone, catch up with old friends, and enjoy the evening with you.

Thank you very much for this recognition.