

Holloway earns spot on Jayhawk cheer squad



Louisburg High School recent graduate Maddie Holloway found out in April that she was named to the University of Kansas Cheer Squad. Holloway will cheer at football, basketball, volleyball and other Jayhawk events.

When Maddie Holloway walked into the confines of Allen Fieldhouse for the first time two years ago, she was in a state of euphoria.

She couldn't believe the atmosphere of the old gymnasium on the University of Kansas campus. Holloway loved every minute of it.

As a sophomore in high school, Holloway attended her first Jayhawk basketball game and it was there she realized what she wanted to do in college.

"I looked down on the sideline and saw the cheerleaders and everything they did during a game," Holloway said. "I watched the stunts they did and what it was like to be a part of that game atmosphere. I told myself that is what I want to do and this is where I want to be."

So two years and a lot of hard work later, Holloway achieved her goal.

On April 20, the Louisburg High School senior found out the

news via video that she was one of the newest members of the University of Kansas Cheer Squad.

After a 3-day tryout earlier in April, Holloway was nervously anticipating the announcement. So when the team released the video online, she couldn't help but begin to wonder if it was even going to happen.

"They told us before that they were going to keep 16 or 17 girls and I counted as I watched the video and I saw 14 girls pop up and it was almost over," Holloway said. "I wasn't sure if it was going to happen and then I saw my picture come up. I have never been more excited in my life when I saw that."

It was a long road for Holloway leading up to that announcement.

Once she realized she wanted to cheer in college, Holloway put in the extra work it took to make it happen. Starting her sophomore year, she made the drive to Lawrence every Monday for open gym workouts with members of the Jayhawk cheer squad.

She learned different types of stunts and other things to help her prepare for what life as a college cheerleader would be like.

"It was definitely a commitment on my part and my parents too," Holloway said. "Either I, or my mom, would drive up there and do that every week. There were no guarantees with anything, but cheering at KU was something that I really wanted and I figured doing this would help my chances. It was a lot of fun and I enjoyed doing it."

Holloway's senior season at Louisburg wasn't exactly a smooth one as she suffered a concussion during football season and was forced to miss the final few weeks. It was a minor setback toward her overall goal of cheering in college.

Once she was cleared, she continued with her workouts in

Lawrence along with cheering during the high school basketball season.

As the tryout date neared, Holloway had gotten an offer to cheer at Wichita State and Holloway seriously considered it.

“Wichita State offered me a spot on their team and I wouldn’t have had to do tryouts and all the other things,” Holloway said. “But I really wanted to cheer at KU. So I kind of put all my eggs in one basket and hoped that I would make the team.”

Those hopes were nearly dashed just days before the KU tryout as she hit her head during an open gym workout. Holloway wasn’t sure if she would be healthy enough for the tryout.

“I had worked two years for this moment so I wasn’t about to have this ruin everything so I decided to push on,” Holloway said.

Everything went according to plan in the early part of the tryouts, but later the cheerleaders were asked to run around Allen Fieldhouse as part of a conditioning tryout. It was then Holloway started to feel faint.

“About 10 minutes or so everything just went black, it was pretty scary,” Holloway said. “I got to know the trainer at KU pretty well and everyone on the team came to check up on me. That is what I like about being a part of the team there is everyone there is like family. They were all texting me how I was and making sure I was ok. That really meant a lot to me that they would do that.”

Holloway was unable to do anything physical in nature for the final day of tryouts, but she still returned to give her interview.

“I just learned to make the best of a bad situation,” she said. “I just went there to kill the interview and hoped it

would all work out. That is all I could do.”

Then came the waiting and wondering. Holloway then clicked on the 1 minute and 30 second video that showed the newest members of the Jayhawk squad.

It seemed like an hour, but in the end, it all worked out.

“I have never worked so hard for something in my life,” Holloway said. “Then to see all that hard work payoff is the best feeling in the world. I am so excited to get started and get down there with my new family.”