

100 ATHLETES ON COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

ROCKFORD
HEAT
BASKETBALL



2022

The Rockford Heat AAU Basketball Organization would like to **THANK YOU** for your donation in the past years. Rockford Heat has officially completed our 8th senior class this season and now has over **100 players** that are going to fulfill their dreams of playing college basketball while getting their education. In the last 8 years our athletes have surpassed over 8.5 million dollars in Academic and Athletic scholarships. Rockford Heat averages 12 athletes a year that earn scholarships to continue to play basketball while earning a college degree.



As you lay out your donations for 2022, we humbly request your financial support to help our players. Your support is not just another donation, but an investment in our youth and our community. Through our experiences, we know that young athletes who have strong support networks and opportunities – such as Rockford Heat Basketball – at an early age tend to graduate from high school and make better personal choices, in the present, and in the future. Our goal is to develop young athletes not only into excellent basketball players, but also into outstanding student athletes that – because of their participation in our program – have higher chances of being selected to play and succeed at the collegiate level.

Being part of the AAU Basketball Organization provides the opportunity to travel around the Midwest for highly competitive tournaments. Currently, we are seeking sponsorships at various levels. Through your generosity, we will be able to provide uniforms, tournament fees, travel (hotels, food, etc.) and other accessories for student athletes who would otherwise be unable to purchase these items. The ROI (return on investment) for your donation is unprecedented; for every **\$1,000** donated, the return averaged **\$101,500** in college scholarships resulting in these young women being able to live out their dreams for the Class of 2022.

We have multiply levels designed for your consideration:

**Championship-\$5,000, Runner Up-\$2,500
3 Point Play-\$1000, Jump Shot-\$500, Lay Up-\$250**

Rockford Heat Foundation is a 501(c)3, EIN 82-5321774
*Member of NICNE

Your sponsorship at ANY amount will help our program to achieve our goals. I would honor the opportunity to discuss any portion of this request with you and provide actual data on athletes.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Penney
Rockford Heat
815-871-4112
John.penney@rockfordheat.com
www.rockfordheat.com

**Checks can be sent to: Rockford Heat Foundation
4692 Chandan Woods Dr.
Cherry Valley, IL 61016**

For Additional Information...

815-871-4112
John.penney@rockfordheat.com
www.rockfordheat.com
f Rockford Heat
t @RockfordHeat
i -rockford_heat

Rockford Heat has officially had our 9th senior class this season and now have over 100 players that have fulfilled their dreams of playing college basketball on scholarship while getting their education. In 8 years our Varsity athletes have surpassed over 8.5 million in College scholarships. Feel free to check our Alumnae page on our website as more seniors commit to different schools. There are several Rockford Heat Athletes playing at the collegiate NCAA, NAIA, and JUCO D1, D2, and D3 levels all over the country!

WE WANT YOU!

For high school girls, we have proven to be the BEST in the area and proud of the amount of athletes that are considered to be top players in the region for their respective schools. Here is a list of Rockford Heat Alumnae that will continue to grow.

	Erin Stroberg *	East High	Regis University(NCAA D2)	2021	
	Noelle Lavery*	Rockford Christian High	Hillsdale College(NCAA D2)	2021	
	Alison Murdoch	Hononegah High	UW Stout (NCAA D3)	2021	
	Madison Harter	Boylan Catholic	High North Park University(NCAA D3)	2021	
	Mary Clare Brown	Boylan Catholic	High Elmhurst Collegge(NCAA D3)	2021	
	Khatia Edwards	Jefferson High	Rockford University(NCAA D3)	2021	
	Madison Smith	Rockford Christian	Olivet Nazarene (NAIA)	2021	
	Hannah Malcomson**	Hononegah	High Alice Lloyd College (NAIA D1)	2021	
	Kyleigh Thomas	Guilford High	Trinity Christian College(NAIA D1)	2021	
	Latonia Lacy	Freeport High	Kishwaukee College(JUCO D1)	2021	
	Brooklyn Sellers	Freeport High	Kishwaukee College(JUCO D1)	2021	
	Madison Diercks	Belvidere	North High Regis University (NCAA D2)	2020	
	Noelle Lavery	Rockford	Christian Colorado Mesa University (NCAA D2)	2020	
	Mardaeja Cross**	East High	Chadron State (NCAA D2)	2020	
	Isabella Aguirre	Auburn High	Illinois College (NCAA D3)	2020	
	Myliaha Ezeofor	Guilford High	Stephens College (NAIA D1)	2020	
	Nya Taylor**	Auburn High	Culver Stockton College (NAIA D1)	2020	
	Samantha Harris**	Hononegah	High Univ. of Northwestern OH (NAIA D1)	2020	
	Shian Galbreath**	South Beloit	High Univ. of Saint Mary (NAIA D2)	2020	
	Kabrea Jamerson	East High	Seward County (JUCO D1)	2020	
	Olivia Lambrigtsen	Oregon High	Kishwaukee College (JUCO D1)	2020	
	KK Bald	Aquin High	Highland CC (JUCO D1)	2020	
	Abby Barr	Aquin High	Highland CC (JUCO D1)	2020	
	Mariah Hill	Auburn High	Rock Valley College (JUCO D3)	2020	
	Brianna Jackson	Harlem High	Rock Valley College (JUCO D3)	2020	
	Jaila Brown	East High	Rock Valley College (JUCO D3)	2020	
	Brielle Shaw	Harlem High	Rock Valley College (JUCO D3)	2020	
	Abby Lundquist***	Rochelle High	Daemon College (NCAA D2)	2019	
	Brianna Lake	Belvidere North High	Benedictine University (NCAA D3)	2019	
	Sydney Erwin	Auburn High North	Central College (NCAA D3)	2019	
	Kaiya Albert	East High	Lakeland University (NCAA D3)	2019	
	Sydney Lindquist	Lena High	Augustana College (NCAA D3)	2019	
	Sydney Miller**	Auburn High	William Penn Univ. (NAIA D1)	2019	
	Madi Hecox**	East High	Southeastern Florida (NAIA D1)	2019	
	Crystal Mathis**	Guilford High	Governors State University (NAIA D2)	2019	
	Madison Davis*	Lutheran High	Indiana Wesleyan University (NAIA D2)	2019	
	Maggie Bald	Aquin High	Highland CC (JUCO D1)	2019	
	Riley Kleckler	Freeport High	Highland CC (JUCO D1)	2019	
	Nya Taylor A	uburn High	Black Hawk College (JUCO D2)	2019	
	Kai Terra Ross	Guilford High	Gogebic College (JUCO D2)	2019	
	Hannah Malcomson	Hononegah High	McHenry College (JUCO D2)	2019	
	Marissa Kershner	Hononegah High	Rock Valley College (JUCO D3)	2019	
	Madison Davis	Lutheran High	California Baptist University (NCAA D1)	2018	
	Erin Stroberg	East High	McKendree University (NCAA D2)	2018	
	Mckenzie Brown***	Boylan Catholic	Newman University (NCAA D2)	2018	
	Natasha Marcus	North Boone	Rockford University (NCAA D3)	2018	
	Olivia Hagerty	Guilford High	Augustana University (NCAA D3)	2018	
	Andrea Kruckenberg	Lutheran High	William Penn University (NAIA D1)	2018	
	Niaja Taylor**	Auburn High	William Penn University (NAIA D1)	2018	
	Raquel Mills	DeKalb High	McHenry College (JUCO D1)	2018	
	Bryanna Johnson	East High	Kankakee College (JUCO D2)	2018	
	Serenity Potter	Auburn High	Rock Valley College (JUCO D3)	2018	



Samantha Harris
Brandi Fier**
Ashlei Lopez
Kailyn Strawbridge
Kayla Steward*
Kaleia Monterio
Neve Yerker
Sammi Russell
Logan Mund
Shamara Glover**
Jayla Penney*
Isabelle Shiaras
Shian Galbreathe
Elizabeth Bankole
Mardaeja Cross
Victoria Malone
Alicia Limones
Crystal Mathis
Ellie Provo
Madi Hecox
Olivia Cattage
Catlin Paluzzi
Abby Woollacott
Ellie Welsh
Baillie McGirk
Mikinzie Cull
Niaja Taylor
Hillary Dietahin**
Samantha Lambrigtsen*
Maddie Williams
Taylor Hilliard
Caryn Donahue
Katlyn Fiorucci
R'ionna Brocks
Sydney Miller
Emily Gorsch
Haley Kershner
Jayla Penney
Kayla Steward
Natasha Adames
Tiana Thomas
Karley Gassman
Brandi Fier
Sierra Riley
Linzy Keller
Shamara Glover
Jackie Lindquist
Cynthia Santiago
Shelby Kline
Samantha
Kea Whittington
Renee Martin
Cassidy Derus
Hillary Dietahin
Catlin Derus

Hononegah
Hononegah High Univ of N Carolina
Lutheran High
Lutheran High
Boylan Catholic
Guilford High
Belvidere High
Winnebago High
Pecatonica High
Guilford High
Rockford Christian
Dixon High
South Beloit High
Jefferson High
East High
East High
Belvidere North High
Guilford High
Dixon High St F
East High
Lutheran High
Guilford High
Lutheran High
Hononegah
Lutheran High
Durand High
Auburn High
Guilford High
Oregon High School
Winnebago High
Stillman Valley
Hononegah High
Christian Life
East High
Auburn High
Hononegah High
Hononegah High
Rockford Christian
Boylan High
Auburn High
Hononegah High
Durand High
Hononegah High
Rockford Christian
Christian Life
Guilford High
Rockford Christian
Belvidere High
Hononegah High
Lambrigtsen
Beloit Memorial High
North Boone High
Durand High
Guilford High
Durand High School

High Rock Valley College (JUCO D3) 2018
Greensboro (NCAA D1) 2017
Morehead State University (NCAA D1) 2017
Loyola University-Chicago (NCAA D1) 2017
Maryville University (NCAA D2) 2017
Lincoln College (NCAA D2) 2017
Rockford University (NCAA D3) 2017
Rockford University (NCAA D3) 2017
Clarke University (NAIA D1) 2017
Robert Morris University (NAIA D2) 2017
Grandview University (NAIA D1) 2017
Sauk Valley College (JUCO D1) 2017
Sauk Valley College (JUCO D1) 2017
Lincoln College (JUCO D2) 2017
Iowa Central College (JUCO D2) 2017
Lincoln College (JUCO D2) 2017
Ellsworth College (JUCO D2) 2017
Parkland College (JUCO D2) 2017
rancis University (NAIA D2 Soccer) 2017
Rock Valley College (JUCO D3) 2017
Wartburg College (NCAA D3) 2017
Rock Valley College (JUCO D3) 2017
Northern IL University (NCAA D1) 2016
High Michigan Tech University (NCAA D2) 2016
Michigan Tech University (NCAA D2) 2016
University of WI-Whitewater (NCAA D3) 2016
Kirkwood College (JUCO D2) 2016
Central State Univ (NCAA D2) 2016
Hawaii Pacific Univ (NCAA D2) 2016
University of WI-Lacrosse (NCAA D3) 2016
Edgewood College (NCAA D3) 2016
University of WI-Eau Claire (NCAA D3) 2016
Rockford University (NCAA D3) 2016
Lake Region State College-ND (JUCO D2) 2016
Rock Valley College (JUCO D3) 2016
St. Xavier University (NAIA D2) 2015
Northern Michigan University (NCAA D2) 2015
Clarke University (NAIA D1) 2015
Eastern IL University (NCAA D1) 2015
Clarke University (NAIA D1) 2015
Chicago State University (NCAA D1) 2015
Edgewood College (NCAA D3) 2015
IL Central College (JUCO D2) 2015
Olivet University (NAIA D2) 2015
Univ of Dubuque (NCAA D3) 2015
St. Louis College (JUCO D2) 2015
Carthage College (NCAA D3 Volleyball) 2015
Rock Valley College (JUCO D3) 2015
Beloit College (NCAA D3) 2015
Oregon High School Loyola University (NCAA D1) 2014
Clarke University (NAIA D1) 2014
St. Francis University (NAIA D2) 2014
Clarke University (NAIA D1) 2014
Joliet College (JUCO D2) 2014
University of Dubuque (NCAA D3) 2013



UW-WHITEWATER



* Transfer

** JUCO Athlete Graduate, then signed to 4 year school (with scholarship)

*** Rockford Heat Recruiting Services Only

John Penney, Club Director, Recruiting Coordinator

PLAYER SUCCESS

Brandi Fier

Hononegah High School 2015
Illinois Central College 2017
University North Carolina-Greensboro 2020



When did your passion for basketball begin?

My passion for basketball began when I joined Pryme Tyme AAU team in the 6th grade. My best friend at the time, who I played travel soccer with, told my dad and me about the team, we decided that I should try out and it was the best decision we ever could have made. This particular Pryme Tyme team, was coached by John Penney and Darrin Golden, and would soon turn into the first Rockford Heat team and that was

the start of the journey for me.

When did you know that basketball was your path to a brighter future?

I recognized basketball was my path to a brighter future throughout high school. I knew I could use my talent to receive a scholarship for my education and live the dream of being a student-athlete.

How did Rockford Heat assist you in obtaining your goals?

Rockford Heat assisted me in obtaining my goals, by providing me with outstanding coaching that prepared me into a college athlete. Coach Penney always took the time and energy to be there for all his players, so that we could achieve the skillset to play at that next level. On the recruiting side of things, John used his resources to email college coaches with our information and get our film to them. He did this for my first school, Illinois Central College and my 2nd school, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Without Coach Penney and the Rockford Heat, I would not have had the resources or support I needed to make it to the next level.

Can you share your favorite Rockford Heat memory?

My favorite Rockford Heat memory cannot be narrowed down to just one memory, for me it is all 7 years of being a part of this program. When you are a part of something for that long, you cannot imagine what your life would be without it. I spent thousands of hours with my team and my coaches from practices, games, tournaments, hotel stays, car rides- the whole thing was my favorite part.

What has been your biggest highlight or accomplishment?

The biggest highlights of my career would be, being the All-time Nic-10 Assist Leader at Hononegah High School, placing 2nd in the National Tournament at Illinois Central College, and lastly playing at the Division 1 level at UNCG to end my career.

How has basketball been more than a game for you?

Basketball has been more than a game for me because it shaped me into the person I am. With all the lessons the game brings you, it only translates into the real world and teaches you how to deal with real life problems. Basketball brought me joy, pain, tears, frustration, happiness and because I have had all those emotional experiences, I know that whatever life throws my way I will get through it because I have done it before.

How do you see yourself paying it forward?

I would love to pay it forward by getting involved with our youth and coaching them in the game I love.

Do you have any words of wisdom for the upcoming athletes?

The advice I have for upcoming athletes is to use basketball as a vehicle to take you where YOU want to go for college and do not get caught up in college divisions. Personally, I have played at a junior college and a division 1 college and they were both great. What matters the most, is that you play for a school that you love and that has coaches who care because your college experience is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Enjoy every second of it because you never know what life is going to throw at you when you are there. Throughout my college career, I dealt with 2 ACL tears, so you want to be somewhere where you will be happy with the team, school, and city even if basketball was not a part of it.

Enjoy the process, enjoy the game, let it take you somewhere, but do not have it be the only reason why you are there. You have the ultimate control of your life, use basketball- do not let it use you. That would be the best advice I could give.

Degrees:

Associate in Arts from Illinois Central College
BFA in Studio Art with a minor in Business from UNCG

Career Status:

Account Executive at Rush Innovation Inc. in Greensboro, NC

PLAYER SUCCESS

Hononegah High 2016
Michigan Tech University 2020

Ellie Welsh



When did your passion for basketball begin?

I am the youngest of four, and all my siblings all played sports, so I grew up watching them and started playing as soon as I could. Although I tried out many sports, basketball was always different. Other sports were fun, but something in me from very early on knew that basketball was more than a game.

When did you know that basketball was your path to a brighter future?

I didn't realize how much basketball could give me until my final years of high school. I always loved basketball but never thought I would be able to play at the collegiate level. It didn't truly hit me until after I was done and had realized everything I have today is because of basketball.

How did Rockford Heat assist you in obtaining your goals?

John Penney is the reason why Michigan Tech reached out to me. I still remember the moment I received a text from John. I was standing in the cafeteria line at my high school waiting for my lunch, and John texted me asking if I had ever heard of a school called Michigan Tech and to give it a look. I had not, and I google it to find this school in the UP of Michigan which ended up being my home for the next few years. That one text completely changed my life!

Can you share your favorite Rockford Heat memory?

Playing in the Nike tournament in Chicago. It was my last AAU tournament, and my last time playing with some really awesome people. Outside of our games, we all went to restaurants and explored the city together.

What has been your biggest highlight or accomplishment?

My biggest highlight was winning conference my junior year of college. We had lost 6 seniors and got an entirely new coaching staff that year, so no one expected anything out of us. It was amazing to beat our rivals, Northern Michigan, and win conference, especially when no one expects it.

How has basketball been more than a game for you?

Basketball has taught me more lessons than I can count, but more importantly, it introduced some really amazing people into my life. All of my best friends came from playing basketball, and I am very thankful that this sport brought us all together.

How do you see yourself paying it forward?

Sports gave me everything, and I want to be able to pay it forward by helping with the next generation.

Do you have any words of wisdom for the upcoming athletes?

Be thankful for every moment. Not every moment is fun or exciting or good, but it is worth it in the end. Even sitting the bench, running suicides, film sessions, and ball handling drills on Sunday nights. Every experience is preparing you for your opportunity. If you let those moments slip because you aren't getting the results you want, you aren't doing justice for yourself. Keep working, and everything always works out in the end.

Degrees:

Bachelors of Math and Finance

Career Status:

Financial Advisor, Northwestern Mutual

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PLAYER SUCCESS

Auburn High School 2015
Clarke University 2019

Natasha Adames



When did your passion for basketball begin?

My passion for basketball began when I was in 5th grade. I started playing with some friends in a Northwest league. It didn't take me long to realize that it came very naturally and as I began to learn more about the game my passion began.

When did you now that basketball was your path to a brighter future?

I knew that basketball was my path for my future when I got to high school. One of my teachers commented on my skill level and IQ and stated that I could play in college. Coming from a single parent household, I knew that I couldn't afford to pay out of pocket to go to college. Basketball became not only my passion but also my ticket to a college education.

How did Rockford Heat assist you in obtaining your goals?

I started playing for the Rockford Heat my junior year of high school. The organization helped me obtain my goals in many different ways. We practiced fundamentals every day, defense and communication on and off the court. I became more disciplined as a player, my IQ for the game increased and I learned how to communicate better with my teammates and coaches. Not only did the organization help me improve my skills on the court, but we got exposure to college coaches right away. Every tournament we were in front of different college coaches from all over the country which helped increase my chances of getting a college scholarship.

Can you share your favorite Rockford Heat memory?

My favorite Rockford Heat memory was our trip to Washington D.C. for the USJN tournament. It was my first car ride across the country. 13 long hours in the car with my teammates and coach. Every game we played was in front of 100's of college coaches at a time. In between games and on our off days we were able to tour the Capital visit monuments and museums.

What has been your biggest highlight or accomplishment?

My biggest accomplishments would be receiving All Conference honorable mention my junior year for my conference, scoring 1000pts and getting a Bachelor's degree all while playing basketball.

How has basketball been more than a game for you?

I learned many skills through the game of basketball such as communicating with others, being a leader, how to take constructive criticism and time management skills.

How do you see yourself paying it forward?

I see myself paying it forward by mentoring young women who want to go to college and use basketball as an avenue to get there.

Do you have any words of wisdom for the upcoming athletes?

Use basketball don't let it use you. Give your all to the sport to achieve your end goal whether it be to get an education or wanting to continue playing in the future BUT take care of your body, academics and your mental health. There comes a time when you will eventually have to hang up your shoes, have a plan to fall back on.

Degrees:

Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Career Status:

Registered Nurse: Step Down ICU OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center

PLAYER SUCCESS

Oregon High School 2014
Loyola University Chicago 2014-2016
Hawaii Pacific University 2016-2019

Samantha Lambrigtsen



When did your passion for basketball begin?

I come from a basketball family and have had a passion for the game for as long as I can remember. My parents were putting a basketball in my hands as soon as I could walk, and they were coaching me in games as soon as I was old enough for organized sports.

When did you know that basketball was your path to a brighter future?

My mom played collegiate basketball at Rockford University and I realized I wanted to be like her when I was in elementary school. Whenever college basketball was on TV I would be watching with my parents. I thought there could be no better way to go to college than by playing basketball.

How did Rockford Heat assist you in obtaining your goals?

Rockford Heat chooses great tournaments that give players the opportunity to be seen by a wide variety of college scouts and the experience of playing against great competition. Rockford Heat also spends a lot of time on the fundamentals in practice, something that isn't focused on enough. I can definitely say that my time with the Rockford Heat made me a better, more experienced player.

Can you share your favorite Rockford Heat memory?

My first year with the Rockford Heat, I was blessed to have my mom as my head coach. We were already a tight knit group of girls, but my favorite Rockford Heat memory is a bittersweet one. I remember the practice that my mom announced to the team that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer. To see my teammates and friends so upset, yet so determined to make the AAU season the best it could be for my mom and to play every game for her was something that is hard to put into words. I'll never forget that summer and the comradery that we built through that trying, difficult time.

What has been your biggest highlight or accomplishment?

My biggest accomplishment has been coming back from injuries. I have torn both of my ACL's, one at each college. To be able to push myself to get healthy so that I could enjoy the game again instead of letting it get the best of me is what I am most proud of, because anyone that has had a major injury knows how devastating it can be.

How has basketball been more than a game for you?

The forever bonds I have made with past teammates and coaches are what makes basketball more than a game for me. You celebrate successes together and get through the impossible together as a family and it is so rewarding to be a part of it. The sense of unity this game creates is amazing and means more than any rings or awards that I have gotten.

How do you see yourself paying it forward?

I have already begun paying it forward by continuing to be around the game of basketball. I helped my younger sister become the collegiate athlete she deserved to be, and I still help past teammates who have yet to graduate any way I can, because college sports are anything but easy. I will always support the game that I love, and will continue to share my advice, experiences, and knowledge with basketball minds that surround me.

Do you have any words of wisdom for the upcoming athletes?

Understand that there will be ups and downs with this game, both on and off the court. Both are inevitable and essential. My basketball experience in particular had so many downs that I often questioned if it was worth it. Now that my playing days are over though, I look back and do not wish that anything happened differently. Basketball has a great way of shaping who you are, and I owe this game a lot for everywhere it has taken me, and all it has taught me about myself and life.

Degrees:

Bachelors of English

100 ATHLETES
ON COLLEGE
SCHOLARSHIP

PLAYER SUCCESS

Jayla Penney

Rockford Christian High 2015
Clark University 2017
Grandview University 2019
Drake University 2020



When did your passion for basketball begin?

My passion for basketball started when I began playing in the 4th grade with friends from school in the Art Sadler league, I discovered how competitive I was, and I knew I wanted to become the best player out on the court.

When did you know that basketball was your path to a brighter future?

I knew I wanted to play basketball at collegiate level in the 8th grade. I had

the privilege of having my father as my coach and he continually educated me on how basketball could pave the way for a college education.

How did Rockford Heat assist you in obtaining your goals?

Rockford Heat helped me with my goals by showing me how I could use basketball as a vehicle to obtain a four-year scholarship. They put me through intense practices to prepare me to play at a collegiate level and then provided me with the exposure necessary, by playing in front of college coaches all over the country. They also helped me understand the importance of being successful beyond basketball and encouraged me to have educational goals as well.

Can you share your favorite Rockford Heat memory?

I have too many memories to narrow it down to one, for me it was the whole experience.

The people that participated in this program are what made it so special for me, from the coaches, players, and families. We all traveled across the country every summer and the coaches made sure that everywhere we went there was team/family activities for us all to enjoy and have fun.

I loved so many small moments as well, like practices and I looked forward to them because we worked hard but we always found laughter.

What has been your biggest highlight or accomplishment?

My biggest highlight was surpassing the school record and becoming the Leading Scorer of All Time at my high school with 1550 points. I also received Unanimous All Conference Accolades and All State Player recognition that same year. My biggest accomplishment has been using my basketball skills to help me earn my bachelor's degree on a scholarship.

How has basketball been more than a game for you?

During some of the most difficult times in my life basketball was my outlet. It was the easiest way for me to cope and get through those tough times. It also taught me the importance of having self-discipline, to be a multi-tasker, to be a team player, and it shaped my work ethic, all these skills can be used in any aspect of life.

How do you see yourself paying it forward?

I would love to give back by coaching in the community and help children use basketball as a vehicle to achieve and chase their dreams.

Do you have any words of wisdom for the upcoming athletes?

Basketball is more than just a game and the memories formed within this program will last a lifetime. Always be one of the hardest workers in the gym. Cherish all the moments good and bad. Set goals for yourself and celebrate every small achievement towards them. Be gracious in defeat and humble in success. Never forget where you came from and those that helped you get there. Always look back and help the next one behind you because we truly rise by lifting others.

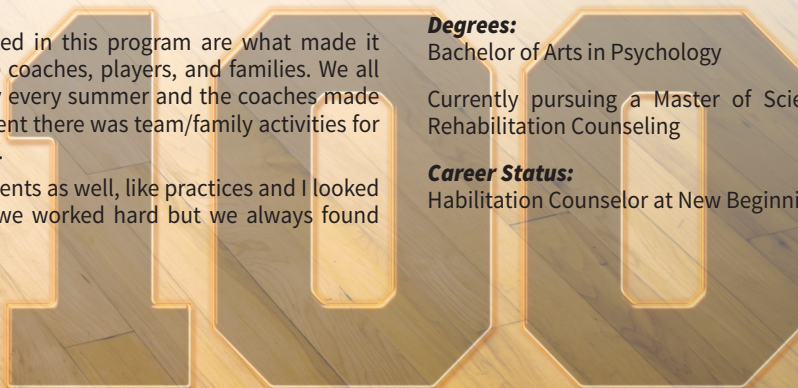
Degrees:

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology

Currently pursuing a Master of Science in Mental Health and Rehabilitation Counseling

Career Status:

Habilitation Counselor at New Beginning Counseling Services.



PLAYER SUCCESS

Rockford Lutheran-2016
Michigan Tech-2021

Baillie McGirk



When did your passion for basketball begin?

I believe my passion for the game started developing when I was young, particularly on my family's backyard basketball court. This is where I learned to dribble, worked on form shooting, and played countless hours of pickup against my brothers. I didn't quite understand how much of an impact the game of basketball would have on my future, but I sure am grateful for that backyard court.

When did you know that basketball was your path to a brighter future?

My purpose for playing the game was never just to receive a college scholarship...I simply loved playing basketball. My mindset was always focused on the process and how I could improve year after year to help my team reach success. It wasn't until high school that I realized I could use basketball as a catalyst for earning a college degree, thanks to my high school and AAU coaches.

How did Rockford Heat assist you in obtaining your goals?

I can't express enough how thankful I am to have played for the Rockford Heat. The efforts that my coaches put forth to help my teammates and I gain exposure (talking to college coaches, sending film, etc.) were unlike any other AAU program I've played for. A lot of our practices were focused on fundamentals, which I carried into my collegiate career.

Can you share your favorite Rockford Heat memory?

One of my favorite memories was when Ellie Welsh and I were both being recruited by Michigan Tech, but we didn't know it, and the Head Coach came to one of our Heat practices. I may have shot an airball, and Ellie claims that I looked immediately at the coach to see if she saw. Luckily, I don't think she did because we both ended up playing ball there. :)

What's has been your biggest highlight or accomplishment?

During my 5th year at Michigan Tech, my team ended up finishing the season with a 20-2 record, winning our Conference Championship and Conference Tournament, and earning the 1 seed in our region for the NCAA DII Tournament.

How has basketball been more than a game for you?

The relationships that I have built and the lessons I learned through basketball have truly shaped who I am today. Basketball has been my escape when school or life was getting stressful, and it has brought me my absolute best friends. I learned that no matter how hard I may want to give up (specifically while running suicides), I can push through.

How do you see yourself paying it forward?

I can definitely see myself coaching in the future, whether it is a kid's team or a random high school/AAU team. Since graduating from college, I noticed that I cannot be away from the game for very long. I believe that coaching is a huge part of who a player becomes, on and off the court, and I want to help shape the future of kids who were in the same position as I was years ago.

Do you have any words of wisdom for the upcoming athletes?

My biggest advice is to enjoy every moment and never lose your love for the game. When things may not be going your way, at the end of the day you control your own destiny...not a coach/teammate you don't like, adversity that comes along the way, or the people who tell you otherwise.

Degree(s):

BA: Business Management with Marketing
Masters of Business Administration (MBA)

Career Status:

Marketing Director for Denver Hardwood / FDG

100 ATHLETES
ON COLLEGE
SCHOLARSHIP

PLAYER SUCCESS

Guilford -2017
Lincoln College-2021

Kaleia Monteiro



When did your passion for basketball begin?

I started playing basketball in 5th grade. I had just moved to Rockford, Illinois and I wanted to give it a try. I tried out at Nelson elementary, I was on a coed team. I didn't know much about basketball. My passion for basketball came in middle school, that's when I knew basketball was my sport.

When did you know that basketball was your path to a brighter future?

I knew basketball was my path for a brighter future in middle school, but really going into high school. I was a big factor on the court. Playing Basketball was something I was doing everyday.

How did Rockford Heat assist you in obtaining your goals?

Playing with Rockford Heat brought me many opportunities. We were traveling, playing in big tournaments, in front of many college coaches. I started getting looks from coaches. It made me a stronger and better player.

What's has been your biggest highlight or accomplishment?

One of my biggest accomplishments has been scoring over a thousand points and rebounds in my high school and college career.

How has basketball been more than a game for you?

Basketball been more then a game to me because I have made bonds with coaches and teammates. It held me accountable for my actions and it also helped me with communication skills, and time management.

How do you see yourself paying it forward?

By giving my time and knowledge to other ballers. I learned a lot from the great coaches I had and it's only right to share it.

Do you have any words of wisdom for the upcoming athletes?

For the upcoming athletes I would say work hard in practice and take the weight room serious. It's worth it at the end. Have fun and make memories! Don't let anyone make you second guess your love for the sport. Be coachable, it's good to learn new things.

Degree(s):

Associates of Arts

Bachelors of science in Sports Management

100 ATHLETES
ON COLLEGE
SCHOLARSHIP

PLAYER SUCCESS

High School-Grad Year: 2014
Clarke University: 2018 & 2019

Kea Whittington



When did your passion for basketball begin?

I started playing basketball when I was 3 years old. I knew right away the love I had for the game. I always played basketball games with boys and this helped me become more competitive with my game.

When did you know that basketball was your path to a brighter future?

During my middle school years, friends and family always told me that I could

go far in basketball. I developed a strong work ethic to get better every day. I have so much love for the game, the passion for the game has always been there.

How did Rockford Heat assist you in obtaining your goals?

Rockford Heat gave me numerous opportunities to be looked at by college coaches at basketball tournaments. Also, practices were intense, hitting all the concepts necessary to become a better basketball player and individual. I only played with Rockford Heat for one year, but it truly felt like a family. I always recommend this program to others.

What has been your biggest highlight or accomplishment?

My biggest accomplishment is the records I hold at Clarke University. It honestly is a great feeling to see my name in different categories within the history of Clarke.

How has basketball been more than a game for you?

It is more than just a game because it relates to my life and career. Basketball is not a one-woman show, it is all about teamwork. We must use one another's strengths to help win. In my career of teaching, I must understand the needs of my students. I ask myself, what do they need in order to be successful. As a coach, I use that strategy as well.

How do you see yourself paying it forward?

As much as I love playing the game, I know it is my time to share my knowledge with others. I am currently the boys high school head coach. Basketball is not a major sport in Dominican Republic. Some of my players have never competed competitively. It is eye-opening to see how much they have learned and progressed in 7 months. It has been a great journey with them. Eventually, I want to start my own AAU organization when I return to the US.

Do you have any words of wisdom for the upcoming athletes?

Always believe in yourself, be coachable, love the game, and cherish the memories. When deciding on a college make sure you go with the one that feels like home. Clarke University wanted me to play even though they knew it was a chance that I wouldn't be able my first year due to my back surgery. I knew at that moment that they truly wanted me to be a part of their family. Other coaches decided to stop recruiting because of the situation, so just go with a college team that feels like family. Lastly, enjoy the ride! Build the relationships with teammates and coaches that will last a lifetime.

Degrees:

Elementary Education (BA), Educational Leadership (MA)

Career Status:

Teacher in Dominican Republic, Coach Boys High School basketball

PLAYER SUCCESS

North Boone High School 2014
University of St. Francis 2018, 2019

Renee Martin



When did your passion for basketball begin?

My passion for basketball began at a very young age, I came from a family where basketball was played all the time and my Uncle played professional at the time in Europe. I have always had a competitive mindset, so basketball was a major passion for me since I could pick up a ball!

When did you know that basketball was your path to a brighter future?

I would say in about 5th grade is when I really decided that I wanted to play basketball at the collegiate level. Hearing my older cousins talk about how much college cost and with my mom explaining what loans are and how much I would have to pay back, I knew that I wanted to pursue college basketball because I loved the game already and it could help pay for school.

How did Rockford Heat assist you in obtaining your goals?

Rockford Heat opened up many doors for me for college, not only having the opportunity to play in tournaments and participate in showcases in front of numerous college coaches, but I gained so much more. Rockford Heat was more than a basketball team for me, it was my family. When we traveled away for tournaments I often stayed with different teammates and their family in hotels and coaches treated me like their own daughter – helping me out in ways that I could never repay them for. I would not be where I am today, on and off the court, without the opportunities that Rockford Heat gave me!

Can you share your favorite Rockford Heat memory?

All my favorite Rockford Heat memories start with the people - the coaches, my teammates, our families being our biggest fans. My favorite Rockford Heat memory would have to be when multiple teammates and coaches came out to my signing day and were able to be a part of that big day with me! I was a part of the first graduating class of Rockford Heat in 2014, and to see how far the program has come now is incredible! It makes me so happy to see all the athletes that are offered this opportunity now!

What has been your biggest highlight or accomplishment?

For me, my biggest accomplishment is graduating college debt free with my Bachelor's degree being paid for with academic and basketball scholarships and Master's degree being paid for as a Graduate Assistant Coach.

How has basketball been more than a game for you?

Basketball has gotten me through some of the toughest times of my life; it was always my escape and therapy. As I grow up, I realize that basketball has taught me so much more than what a face cut is or how to hedge a screen. Basketball has taught me invaluable life skills – how to work on a team, how to be a good teammate/ coworker even if you aren't best friends with them, responsibility of juggling multiple commitments at once, and the importance of working hard when nobody else is watching. The world of basketball can open so many doors for you!

How do you see yourself paying it forward?

The impact my coaches had on me throughout my life is something that I am forever grateful for – they have all helped shape me into who I am today. I have always dreamed of being a coach myself to pay it forward. I was fortunate enough to be a graduate assistant in college while working on my Master's and I now am the Assistant Varsity Coach at Belvidere High School. My only hope is that I can leave half the impact on the girls I am coaching, as my Rockford Heat coaches left on me!

Do you have any words of wisdom for the upcoming athletes?

My biggest advice for upcoming athletes is to always be the hardest worker in the gym! Whether you are the best athlete or not – leave everything on the floor every time you get to step onto the court! Set the standard for your team and you will see just how far it will take you all!

Degrees:

Bachelor's Degree: Double Major in Accounting and Finance 2018

Master's Degree:

Finance 2019

Career Status:

Financial Analyst at Mercy Health Hospital in Rockford, IL

Thank You to our sponsors that continue to step up and help our youth by giving them an opportunity to succeed despite barriers that may hold them back! I want to give a HUGE THANK YOU to Rockford Lutheran High School for our partnership that helps us with gym space and the rest of our great sponsors.



Loves Park Mayor Greg Jury



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Anonymous*

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