

Cardinal Athletics

Young Basketball Alum Is Already a

LEGEND

He was a star on the Catholic University court. Now, he's starting out in the NBA's Development League, and learning to be a rookie all over again.



“I obviously couldn't be where I am today if I hadn't gone to Catholic University. I'm proud to be able to represent the school on the national stage.”

At The Catholic University of America, Bryson Fonville, B.S.B.A. 2016, was a big fish in what is essentially — in basketball terms, at least — a small pond. Now, he's a little fish in a big ocean. And it's no exaggeration to say he has become a legend.

He is, in fact, a Texas Legend — a member of the NBA Development League team based near Dallas. The D-League is made up of 22 teams that prepare players, coaches, and other staff for possible work with the NBA. At just over six feet, Fonville isn't the tallest guy on the team, or the fastest, but he makes up for it with heart.

These days, his heart is filled with gratitude. He is living his dream of playing basketball, a game he has loved since childhood, as a professional.

Fonville is also grateful to have been one of 10 players recently chosen for the Landmark Conference All-Decade Team. He is one of four Catholic University basketball stars so designated, along with Jason Banzhaf, B.A. 2011; Chris Kearney, B.S.B.A. 2013; and current junior Jay Howard.

“That was a great honor,” Fonville said. “And to be able to make money playing basketball is amazing. It's a blessing.”

In 35 games with the Legends, he has averaged 4.8 points and 2.4 assists per game. Fonville's peak moments so far came on February 9, when he scored 19 points during a loss to the Austin Spurs.

“We didn't get to win that game,” he said, “but to have such a good shooting performance was definitely exciting, and just added to the confidence I already had.”

Adjusting to being a pro — and to life in Texas — has its wonderful aspects, but it's also a bit of a culture shock. Fonville, originally from North Carolina, says it's like starting out again as a freshman at Catholic University.

“Going to college is different, but it's kind of the same experience,” he said. “Me being a rookie, it's like my first year in college. You've got to get to know people and let them get to know you. It's kind of the same feeling getting to know my teammates, my coaches,

and people that work in the organization.”

Any comparison can be pushed too far, of course. Life in the world of pro sports is significantly different from his life as a college student. Fonville's current teammates come from more diverse backgrounds; some are older; some have professional experience already. He works hard and tries to learn as much from them as he can, in order to prepare for whatever opportunities come next.

Fonville is no stranger to hard work, having finished his career at Catholic University with 1,649 points, 427 rebounds, 613 assists, and 164 steals. He was named to the All-Landmark First Team three years in a row, and in 2015 was voted Player of the Year.

“Bryson had an incredible ability to make his teammates better,” said Head Men's Basketball Coach Steve Howes. “I believe he was the best point guard in Division III the four years that he was here with us at Catholic University. He had uncanny vision on the court, was very athletic for his size, and had the ‘refuse to lose’ attitude that was infectious. His talent took our team to a new level.”

Fonville's time at Catholic University taught him how to be a good teammate. He applies lessons learned on the basketball court and in management classes to his current job.

“Management taught me a lot of leadership skills I can definitely use going forward. I use a lot of it now, as far as understanding different relationships and people's attitudes and how they mesh together in a team setting. As a point guard, I deal with everybody on the team. I have to understand who needs the ball where — to recognize situations and decide how to attack them.”

Some day, Fonville may go into business, but it's possible that he'll stay in the sports arena, perhaps as a coach. For now, he is happy to see as much of the world as he can, maybe eventually playing overseas, and to let the game of basketball take him as far as it will. Whatever comes next, Fonville is sure of one thing.

“You've got to have fun in the work,” he said. — G.V.

SPORT SHORTS

Men's Swimming and Diving Takes the Title

For the first time in league history, The Catholic University of America men's swimming and diving team captured the Landmark Conference Championship Title. The Cardinals won the three-day championship with 806 points, more than 220 points ahead of the runner-up University of Scranton (584.5). Senior Guido Saccagi was named Swimmer of the Year and Paul Waas was named Men's Coach of the Year by the Landmark Conference.

New Football Coach Named

Alumnus Mike Gutelius, B.A. 1992, is the Cardinals' new football coach.

Gutelius has more than two decades of coaching experience. He most recently served as a defensive coordinator for seven years at Lindsey Wilson College in Columbia, Ky., where the team made three straight NAIA Football Championship Series appearances and earned the program's first number one national ranking. Gutelius was selected as the 2015 American Football Coaches Association NAIA Assistant of the Year.

“I'm thrilled to have Mike return to Catholic University as our head football coach,” said Sean Sullivan, associate vice president and athletics director. “He clearly has a passion and respect for the game, and as an alum, he knows the importance of the values associated with Catholic University.”

Gutelius earned a bachelor's degree in politics with a minor in philosophy at Catholic University. In 2001, he earned a master's degree in education with a special emphasis in athletic-educational issues from the University of La Verne (Calif.).

“I feel a huge sense of responsibility to help these guys grow through the sport of football,” Gutelius said, “and to be able to do that job at this unique place is a lifelong dream of mine.”