

Jontay Williams- The Co founder of Big Guard U.

I am from Des Moines Iowa and I graduated from Lincoln high school in 2013, I struggled a lot freshman and sophomore year trying to receive playing time, but I sat the bench majority of those years. One game we played against Dowling and after the game a coach from Kingdom Hoops came and recruited some of the players on my team to come play for them. He did not talk to me, I felt ashamed of myself and wish I could have gotten talked to. I was no stranger to hard work so I practiced everyday, and told myself I will never be overlooked again, regardless of height or skill, I knew I was going to be something special. One day I was in the gym practicing and I seen a man training a girl, I then went up to him and asked if he coached anywhere, because I wanted to play for a team, he said "He coached for Kingdom Hoops, then gave me his card and said "you should come to play for us." I ran home and told my dad and he took me to go practice. After practice was over the coach told me we have a game tomorrow, here's your jersey, I was shocked and nervous at the same time. I ended up playing that first game and did amazing! my confidence was through the roof, I ended up playing a month on the regionals which was traveling around Iowa for a month, then worked my way up to nationals which was traveling around the world. That was when I got to see and play against Division 1 athletes, I gave it everything I had for the rest of the summer and when I finally got some down time, I got right back working on my skill work. That was a very humbling experience for me to be able to prove to myself that I can do anything I want, all it takes is hard work and dedication.

College bound

After High school I was recruited by Iowa central community college, when I got there, the coach made me tryout for the team again. Once tryouts were over he posted who made the team for that year, my name was not on the list. I was extremely disappointed, but all I could do was go practice and work on my game. During that year, I took that time to connect with coaches so I can play college basketball somewhere, at that point I did not care for going Division 1, I just wanted to play basketball. I ended up trying out for an NAIA team called AIB, I made the team and I ended up committing to that school. That next year was going so great until the season started, I had to sit out 9 games because all of my credits did not transfer over. After my 9 games were up they announced the school will be shutting down at the end of that year. I had nowhere to go and again I was back at square one. I did not let that stop me, I practiced everyday and started looking up schools. A former teammate from Kingdom Hoops told me about a school called Grace University in Omaha Nebraska (NAIA) I called the coach and he gave me a visit. I made the team and was finally able to actually play, the year went really well and I felt I finally accomplished something, throughout all the hard work I put in, I finally made it. When my second year came around I was sure this was going to be my break out year, I was ready to take on the starting position, but the school announced they were shutting down at the end of the year.

After thinking about life, trying to figure out what I wanted to do, because basketball was not my main focus anymore. I thought long and hard about what I wanted to do, but I said to myself I have never been a stranger to hard work, I knew I wanted to give back to my community and make sure they do not have to go through the same things I went through.

When my college shut down, I went to Nebraska Christian College(NCC), this is where I found my calling. I knew I wanted to work with kids and help them understand the importance of being a student athlete. While I was attending NCC, we went through so much in one year, but that is normal when you are an athlete, but it takes leadership to pull everything together. We were on the rise to win a championship and the NAIA division level, I knew we had a pretty good chance but, we just had to come together as a team first, we were considered the underdogs because we were not a well known school. We went to regionals in Oklahoma and we faced a team that beat us by 20 the first time we played them. This time we were playing for a regional championship, we ended up winning by 10 points and we became champions!! After all of the ups and downs with basketball throughout life, I ended up with a regional championship ring. This was very exciting for my teammates because we persevered through the whole season and came out with a win.

New Beginnings

Once I graduated, I stayed in Nebraska for a little while and I started working for a leadership academy. I loved my job, but I knew I could have been doing something else alongside my position. When Covid-19 hit the U.S, I lost my job, everyday, I was just trying to find something to do, everything was closed down, I felt trapped. My former Co-worker, had a brother who started up an organization called Ross Leaders and it was a bunch of kids in the community who loved to play basketball, he would pick them all up and they would go practice at the basketball courts, because all of the gyms were closed. I would go to the park everyday and train those groups of kids for free. One day as I was training, I thought to myself, why can't I do something like this when I get back to Des Moines, so I ended up telling myself I will start up my own when I get back and I knew just what to call it.

BIG GUARD U (More Than Training, We Are Family)

I started Big Guard U, because I wanted to make sure kids do not have to go through the same challenges I had to face growing up. I wanted to make sure they were one step ahead of the game and kind of had a broad idea of what they wanted to do when they graduated. These are all the things I wish I had growing up, but instead found out later in life. I made business cards and started showing up to AAU basketball games and passing them out. I ran into a couple of families along the way who have been helping me out tremendously with getting kids for the program. I am truly honored and grateful for everyone who has taken part in the organization and given me a chance to mentor and guide every kid in the right direction in life, because it is more than training, We are family.