



DARIAN WHITE

HOOPING TO GO PRO

*"This Young Lady
Plays Her Heart
Out Every Second
Of The Game."*

~ Head Coach
Tricia Binford

BY CYNTHIA LOGAN

It's no surprise that MSU's Darian White would be a standout basketball player. When you start shooting hoops in kindergarten and are on an actual team in second grade, you're going to notch those proverbial 10,000 hours of practice that generate champions before you even hit middle school. "I got really lucky," says the point guard of her childhood in Boise, Idaho. "My dad owned his own basketball club and got the team together." Originally, the team was for her older brother, but young White was always grabbing the ball "so my mom was like, 'you need to get something going for her.'" He did, and she's been jumping, guarding, shooting and stealing ever since.

At Mountain View High School in Boise, White accumulated numerous accolades: she was the 2019 Idaho Gatorade Player of the Year, was awarded 5A All-Idaho Player of the Year honors, and named Idaho Press Player of the Year, as well as 5A Southern Idaho Conference Player of the Year. She also played club ball with Idaho Hoop Dreams. "She is a monster on defense," states her brother, Derrick. "The best comparison I can say is she's like a Russell Westbrook, just a straight dog. She's going to play defense and play her heart

out every second she's on the court." When it came time to decide on a college, White says Montana State reminded her a lot of Boise. "I love the supportive community. I could tell that Coach Bin was family-oriented; she treated me like her own daughter before I even got here."

That connection was particularly powerful, as White had lost her mother to cancer when she was 12, and the loss had been deeply painful. Her mother, Dawn, had been at every one of her games. "She was the biggest supporter of me," says Darian. "She was just an extraordinary mom that would just do anything, even if it was totally unreasonable, just to make me happy. I could always count on her." And then she couldn't. It was a rough few years, but basketball and her brother's encouragement kept her going. In addition to her sports awards, her high school coach, Connie Skogrand acknowledged her personal achievements, telling Idaho Press' Brandon Walton in 2018, "Life in general is

how we overcome obstacles and Darian is showcasing that right now... she's shown other kids her age that they can overcome anything and how important perseverance is in your life. It's not all about the destination, but the journey along the way."

As the 2020 regular-season champion, the Montana State women's basketball team was set to play in the NCAA tournament championship game when the Pandemic hit. This past season, though they won 11 of their past 12 regular-season games, they lost to the University of Idaho in the semi-finals—the Championship was against Idaho State, so losing to Idaho is personal for White, who had what is considered the best freshman season in Bobcat women's basketball history—playing and starting in all 31 games, and becoming just the third Bobcat to be honored in their first season as Big Sky Conference Freshman of the Year. "I'm not happy with them," complains White of MSU having finished third in league



BOBCATS

standings behind Idaho State and Idaho. "I'm very competitive." An honorable-mention Big Sky pick last winter, White led the league in steals and was voted as the Big Sky Defensive Player of the Year by the league coaches. She notched 64 steals on the season, averaging nearly three per contest.

"We're thrilled for Darian to be recognized by the Conference for her dynamic impact in nearly every facet of the game," says Head Coach Tricia Binford, who was recently named Big Sky Conference Co-coach of the Year. "She is an incredible playmaker, explosive scorer, and creates numerous extra possessions for our team, whether it's offensive/defensive rebounds or steals on the defensive end. This young lady plays her heart out every second of the game. There is not a play Darian takes off. Defensively,

she is disruptive and has really elevated our team's defense with her contagious energy. She is truly special and so deserving of the wonderful recognition."

A Junior majoring in Community Health, White describes herself as 'very cautious' when it comes to Covid. "I'm not isolated like last year, but I still have sanitizer in my car. It's still scary; I cannot believe it even happened." She says the Pandemic didn't throw off her academics; "My professors were very understanding and good with communicating; we could come to class, but the lectures were also online if we weren't comfortable with coming in." Now that "Shootah" Tori Martell has graduated, it falls to White and senior Ashley Van Sickle to lead. "Looking at the team, I'm really excited about the upcoming season," says White. "What we went through last year had an effect on our mental health and team chemistry—it made us stronger, made us tougher mentally. Just to finally be able to practice together was something we really appreciated."

While she's not had injuries, White finds that the mental aspect of the game can be challenging. "Oh, man.... I would say that probably, overall, not a lot of people realize how mentally challenging it can be. Being prepared, being mentally tough... you hear some opposing fans in the stands sometimes, especially in certain places." She doesn't let the taunting throw her game off, though. "Normally, I can ignore it; or it gets me pumped up to want to shove their words back in their face." She credits her older brother with helping her get tough both physically and mentally. "No doubt, my older brother was always there to pick on me to make me tough. We were always wrestling, and

playing football and basketball." She does admit that "sometimes the buzzer scares me a little—I'm not expecting it."

In the near-term, White is geared up to "hopefully win everything and go to the tournament." What does her post-collegiate future hold? "My first option would be to play basketball professionally, whether overseas or, ideally, I'd be drafted immediately," says White. "I want to take it to the next level." She follows a few professional women's basketball teams: "I watch Seattle Storm, the Las Vegas Aces and Atlanta Dream," she says. "Coach Bin and I have a lot of conversations about Seattle Storm point guard, Jordan Canada; she's fun to watch and is a great playmaker. She's so fast and good on defense. She's someone I watch and look up to."

As a backup, White's dream job is to be a post-partum doula, someone trained to provide emotional, informational, and physical support to women before, during and after giving birth. "I'd have to go back to school... I've always loved babies, she explains. "My mom ran her own day-care out of the house.



I loved helping and taking care of them. I've known I wanted to work with babies in a hospital setting, but sickness would be hard for me, so when I learned that being a post-partum doula is an actual profession, I was like, 'that's for me.'"

Interestingly, Tori Martell achieved her stunning successes while completing a nursing degree at MSU. Martell gained national acclaim for winning both the women's three-point shooting and the team shooting contests at this year's NCAA Basketball Final Four; she was one of just eight players around the nation selected this past April to participate in Rocket Mortgage Women's 3-Point Championship for the 32nd annual State Farm College Slam Dunk—and won the contest. "Tori is, without a



doubt, one of the best shooters to ever come out of the Bobcat program," says Coach Binford. "It's a great honor for her to [have represented] Montana State."

In point of fact, White has been at the forefront of the Montana State University Women's Basketball team since she arrived, standing shoulder to shoulder with Martell. "They really took this team on their backs from Day One on what it looks like to be a champion—how you practice, how you prepare, how you show up, how you do it consistently," says Coach Binford. "Both Tori and Darian are tremendous examples of our core values; they raise the standard in our program on a daily basis." Now that Martell is a post-grad, Darian White will be the standard-bearer, a role she is clearly capable of playing well.



Pacer Coulee
Chronicles
Wayne Edwards

Buster
the
Bridger Mountain Bear
By Wayne Edwards
Illustrated By Gina Daws

Available at:

Wayne Edwards is a former Bobcat RB who has authored several books for the Bobcat community. He is currently a graduate student at Montana State University and works as a post-partum doula. He is also a member of the Bobcat Hall of Fame.

Available October, 2021

These books were authored by former Bobcat RB WAYNE EDWARDS