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* Intro to my life

Hi, my name is Ben Mascarenhas. I am a third year Mathematics and Statistics major at the University of Windsor. I created this website to share my basketball journey and reflect on how I got to where I am today.

Basketball has been in my life for a very long time. It has been something that I’ve used to get me through life. Through this beautiful game, I have built many life long relationships, I’ve learned what it takes to be a leader and a follower, I’ve learned how to be a part of a team, there is so much more basketball has done for me and you will we go through this website together.

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* Early years (before travel)
* Bennies camps
* Hockey and soccer
* Backyard training

I’d like to start my story before I started playing basketball competitively. Hockey was truly the first sport I loved. I was skating by time I could walk and as soon as I was good enough, my parents signed me up for house league hockey. When I wasn’t on the ice I was in the basement with my dad on roller blades practicing shooting at targets or stick handling through cones. My dad spent many nights after dinner going through drills with me and is a big part of why I got so good at hockey. After house league, I was lucky enough to get to opportunity to play travel hockey for the Cambridge Hawks and moved on to play AAA until grade 6. We were one of the best teams in our area making playoffs every year. We never won the championships, but we came so close in one of my first years. I will never forget the Championship game against the Waterloo Wolves. We we’re eventually matched and went back and forth all game. It ended up going into triple over time but, we unfortunately lost on a spectacular goal scored by Waterloo’s best player. My whole team was so upset we left the ice crying and had to be called back to receive our silver medals and of course shake hands with the other team. After that game we forever had a rivalry with the Waterloo Wolves.

After hockey season was over, I would hang up my skates and switch over to soccer for my summer sport. My parents signed me up for house league when I was 4 years old. Not to brag, but I was a good little soccer player. Some nights I would finish my games and my parents would drive me over to my sisters’ games to play up 2 years in her co-ed soccer league. I then went on to play travel soccer for Cambridge United from grades 3-8. I had big dreams in soccer and spent a lot of hours practicing and playing games.

After my grade 6 season, hockey was becoming more of a hassle than it was fun for me. I was tired of going to practice 4-5 times a week and spending all my weekends on the road at tournaments. So, I made the decision to switch over to basketball for my winter sport. After 2 or 3 years of playing basketball in the winter and soccer in the summer I wanted to focus on one sport and my basketball era began in grade 9.

I played everything. I played lacrosse, baseball, hockey, soccer, track and field. I was a big believer that[…]when the season was over you[…]played something else.

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* Centaurs years
* Wilton

Before I get into my centaurs years, it wouldn’t be fair not to mention the St. Benedict Basketball Summer Basketball camps. I was first introduced to basketball at these camps going up. Every summer during the second week of July my dad would sign up my sister and I for this basketball camp that he also happened to coach at. The camp was organized by my future high school coach John Malnerich, one of the greatest high school basketball coaches in Ontario. Every year I looked forward to participating in the camp because it brought our community together and it made me dream of playing basketball for the St. Benedict Saints.

As I mentioned on the previous page, I made the switch to basketball in for my grade 6 winter season. I spent all summer training with my dad on my backyard basketball net, dribbling through cones, doing layup drills, and working on my jump shot. I remember being so nervous going to tryouts because I didn’t really know what to expect; I never played organized basketball before other than the Bennies camps. After the first tryout they made a few cuts and luckily my name was called to move onto the next tryout. After two more tryouts they announced the team, and I made it!

During my first season we had to play fair play, meaning for 3 and a half quarters everyone played equal minutes but in the final 4 minutes of game the coaches would play their best 5. During my first few games I would already be disqualified because I fouled so much from being used to the aggression of hockey. I laugh about it today but I remember being so upset that I didn’t get to finish out the games on the floor. I got a lot better in my first year and eventually became one of the better players on my team. I have to give it all to my coach Wilton Grant, he was tough on us but he knew how to handle the group of guys that we had.

My first year we won the division 4 championships, placed 2nd in division 3 the next year, placed 2nd again in division 2 the following year and lost in the semis in division 1 in my final year with the centaurs.

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* High school basketball
* Grade 9-10

Growing up right next door to St. Benedict’s it was a tradition to go watch the annual Saint’s Invitational Basketball tournament. For as long as I can remember, it was a dream of mine to play at the lunch time game when all of my friends, classmates, and teachers were watching. By the time I got to grade 8 I knew I was ready to play high school basketball.

In grade 9 I tried out for the team with Mr. Frat as the head coach and my dad was the assistant. I was already known as a good basketball at St. Benedict because of the summer camps that I went to every year. We ended up making to the District 8 finals where we faced off against St. Mary’s (our rival for years to come). St. Mary’s, lead by current Laurier point guard, Ethan Passley, came out on top and defeated us.

The following year, I was asked by the Senior coach, John Malnerich, to play up on the senior team instead of finishing out my junior year in grade 10. I accepted the offer and joined the senior team. However, this team was extremely deep and most of them have been playing together for a very long time. So, I didn’t see much floor time strictly due to the fact that most of them were fifth year guys and the coach was going to play them ahead of me even if I was better. Ultimately, I made the decision to go back down to junior basketball where I knew I would get more playing time.

Once again, we made it the finals and we faced St. Mary’s again. It was a very close game and went down to the last few minutes but St. Mary’s came out on top for the second year in a row.

My grade 11 season was a breakout season for myself. We were led by Jake Polski (also played basketball at Windsor with me in 2021) and myself. This season was one of the greatest experiences in my life. The team chemistry this group has was amazing. Heading into playoffs we were on a 27-game win streak. Surprise, surprise, we met St. Mary’s again in the finals. Unfortunately, for the third year in a row we lost to them again. This one really hurt…

I’ll continue the rest of my high school career on the page!

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* The switch to wolverines
* Ahmed

After my grade 9 season with the Cambridge Centaurs my coach told us that he was moving to Toronto for work and could no longer coach us. This is when a couple of my teammates and myself decided to make the switch to try out for the Waterloo Wolverines. We had played them the year before so going into the tryout I knew what to expect from my competition. After a few tryouts, 2 of my centaurs’ teammates and I made the team. This team was one of the most talented teams I played for because it was composed of the best players from Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo. Practices were always competitive, if you didn’t come to play, Ahmed would let you hear it. He was hard on us, but we knew it was because he cared so much. During our season we made it to the semi finals in our league where we faced two of the top recruits coming out of Canada. We ended up losing the game but we kept it close.

After our season was over, we began practicing more and signed up for some AAU tournaments in the States. The first one we attended was the Pit Jam Fest in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was the first big AAU tournament that I ever went to. The competition there was the best I’ve ever seen at that point in my career. When you walked into the facility, it was filled with probably 20 courts in a giant warehouse and then another 20 courts on the floor above. Some of the courts were packed with college scouts looking to give out scholarships. At this point in my life my basketball dream was to play division one basketball so I was excited to have the opportunity to play in front of coaches from D1 schools. However, since we were from Canada and not very well known, all our games were played on the side courts where no scouts came to watch. We didn’t place very high but we did pull out a couple wins against some American teams.

Our next tournament was in a small town in New York State. When we got there the competition didn’t look nearly as good as the teams we played in Pittsburgh. I checked into the game a few minutes into the first quarter and on my first layup attempt on a baseline drive a defender stepped in last second and took my legs out while I was in the air. I flipped over and landed on my shoulder and had to be taken to the hospital. It ended up only being a minor clavicle separation, but it was enough to sideline me for the rest of the season. Despite my injury my team ended up winning the whole tournament.

The following year, Kitchener native and current NBA star, Jamal Murray, started up his own aau team and Ahmed was asked to be the head coach. So, our wolverines team converted over to Team Murray. My greatest memory from playing for this team was when Jamal Murray’s dad, Roger Murray, challenged me as the best shooter on the team. He asked me to make as many 3’s as I could in a minute. I was nervous because I was being watched by all my teammates and I needed to prove myself as the best shooter. Well…shot terribly and got down on myself. Roger yelled at me and told me to fix my body language and have some more confidence because it doesn’t matter if you miss a few shots, its how you respond after missing. After talking to me about confidence he let me have a second attempt. This time I didn’t even miss, I hit over 10 shots in a row and my teammates were cheering and crowded around me before the time even expired. I often think back to that moment when I find I start to sulk after missing a few shots. Half of shooting is having the confidence to make every shot you take.

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* mvp season

This is the year where I truly made a name for myself in high school basketball. I had an entire season of senior basketball under my belt as well as a competitive aau season, playing for Team Murray. This year most of us had more hunger to win our league, especially myself and two of my other teammates who had lost to St. Mary’s three years in a row in the finals. Throughout the season I had many high scoring games and was often face guarded because I was big threat from the 3pt line. My team finished the season in first place with only 1 loss to St. Mary’s. That meant the D8 finals was going to be hosted on our home court. We filled up both bleachers, around 5 rows of 20 chairs along the baseline, and we had people standing at the back. It was the most packed gym I had ever played at that point in my career. I started the first quarter with 3 triples so St. Mary’s put their best off ball defender on me for the remainder of the game. My coach decided to keep me on the floor as spacer since my defender wasn’t helping off; it opened up lanes for the rest of my teammates to score. St. Mary’s kept the game close, but we pulled away in the fourth quarter, lead by my best friend and high school teammate, Aidan Whalen. He finished the game with a career-high 23 points and had the entire gym on their feet. We finally did it! We defeated St. Mary’s and were named D8 senior boys basketball champions.

Moving onto regionals we were expected to play a public school by the name of Eastwood in the finals. We previously beat them in the semi-final match of the Bennies Tournament earlier that year. However, our dreams were cut short when we lost to an underdog team from Guelph and hard fought semi-final game. That brought an end to my grade 12 year.

After the season was over, my coach called me to his office during class. When I got there he told me he had some big news. He said that the leagues coaches came together awarded me with a first-team all star and league MVP. This was the next best possible way to end my grade 12 season other than going to OFSAA and competing for the provincial championship. I really could not have done it without the help of my teammates, coaches, and family. They all trusted and believed in my abilities to play basketball and helped put me in the best position to succeed.

The following year I made the decision to return to high school of a 5th year to hopefully get recruited by some Canadian Universities. However, it almost didn’t happen because in August 2019 I was playing at a local community center and I was undercut going up for a layup. I flipped over and tried to break the fall with my hand and ended up breaking both the bones in my right arm. When the doctors saw my x-ray they said I was going to need surgery to but the bones back into place and I was going to be out for at least 2 months. I now have 2 metal plates in my right arm for the rest of my life. I was lucky enough to get my cast off early because the plates were holding my arm together. I wasn’t told by my surgeon to go to therapy, so I rehabbed it all myself and was able to start shooting and dribbling again by late October/early November. I missed the first couple league games and tournaments but I was back playing again by December. My first few games back at a tournament in Niagara Falls, I averaged around 20pts/game, we won the tournament, and I was named as 1 of 5 tournament all-stars. Throughout the season, I picked up interest from Waterloo, Windsor, McMaster, and Lakehead. I was more than happy to be recruited by these schools because after breaking my arm I was unsure if I’d be able to play basketball at the same level as I did before. After, my season was over I went visits to Mac, Waterloo, and Windsor. Coach Cheng did a great job selling the program to my family and I so I made the decision to commit to The University of Windsor.

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* Covid year
* First season
* Fall semester 2022
* University basketball

The first year of my university career was cancelled due to covid but I still moved down to Windsor to train with some of the local guys and whoever else decided to come to town. I moved into a house with two of my fellow 1st year recruits. Despite all the covid restrictions, we had a very busy basketball schedule. We had Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 6:30am lifts at a local high performance gym called ETS. Then three times a week we had skills training in the Fieldhouse on campus. Finally, we had scrimmages with the Junior Lancers 3 times a week. Even though we didn’t have any games I enjoyed building those relationships with my teammates early on and having the chance to live away from home for the first time.

In my second year I came back to Windsor in August to begin practices with the team. Those were some of the most competitive practices that we had because they announced that were having a season so we were all overly excited to be back playing again. Heading into the season I didn’t expect to play very much if at all. I didn’t see any court time in the preseason games and then only played 6 minutes total in our first 3 games of the season. However, after losing to Waterloo my coach decided to switch things up and throw me into the rotation. I finished with 7 points, 4 rebounds, and 2 steals in 28 minutes. From then on I was a part of the regular rotation. I played a total of 322 minutes in 16 games, starting in 6 of them. Unfortunately, we ended up losing in the first round of playoffs to Lakehead. Overall, I didn’t play very well statistically but I was very lucky to get the experience under my belt.

After my first season I decided I was going to live in Windsor for the summer so I could have access to a gym and weight room everyday. My assistant coaches ran skills sessions and few times a week and we had open runs in the evenings. I saw a lot of improvement in the summer and I was excited to show my coach how much better I had gotten.

However, I didn’t end up playing as well as I had hoped in the preseason so my coach didn’t see me as a rotation guy and I was pushed to the end of the bench. I competed everyday at practice in hopes of cracking the rotation but, whatever I was doing wasn’t enough because I still wasn’t playing in games. My coach wasn’t giving me much feedback, so I scheduled a meeting with him. He didn’t provide me with a very clear answer so I just continued to workout outside of practice and then do my best at practice to prove to him that I was good enough. I never got into the rotation throughout the entire Fall 2022 semester. I scheduled another meeting with my coach and I thought it would be best for my career if I transferred schools. So, I made the very tough decision to leave the team and Christmas and go back home to Cambridge. I am currently taking two online courses to maintain my eligibility for next year so I can play basketball at whatever school I decide to go to. It is unfortunate that Windsor didn’t work out for me, but I had to do what was best for my own mental health and basketball career. I am now looking at couple different Universities and Colleges in my area with hopes to play somewhere else in Fall 2023.

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* My future with basketball

**Citations**

So…what’s next for me in basketball? Like I said on the previous page I am planning on playing for a University or College somewhere closer to home. After that is over, I do have big dreams of playing professionally somewhere overseas. A lot of people may call me crazy for thinking I can play pro basketball but that’s usually how people are viewed is have these big dreams and aspirations. I don’t plan on playing professionally for a long period of time but I want to reach my full potential in basketball and hopefully get paid to play for a little while.

Thank you for going through my basketball career with me. I hope you enjoyed reading this as much as a loved writing it!

Authentic Manhood. “Top 25 Quotes from Basketball Greats.” *Authentic Manhood*, https://www.authenticmanhood.com/blog/top-25-quotes-from-basketball-greats.