

More Than Meets The Eye

Q & A With Salem State Junior Temitope Bailey

By PJ Montezuma

As the final buzzer went off on Thursday February 22, the #1 seed Salem State University Men's Basketball team got upset in overtime by the #4 seed Fitchburg State University, 90-81, in the Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference Tournament. The Vikings had won their last 15 games, and entered the playoffs with a 22-4 record. Although it was the last time six seniors put on that Vikings jersey, the future looks bright for the team with talented underclass men like junior Temitope "Temi" Bailey. Bailey was born in Lagos, Nigeria and migrated to America back in 2002. The six-foot-four Forward has lived in West Springfield since and found his passion for basketball in this city. Bailey not only played basketball all four years of high school, he was a three-sport athlete playing football in the Fall and volleyball in the Spring. The sport of basketball was Bailey's first love but he understands that there is more to basketball other than just dribbling a ball.

Q: You were a three sport athlete throughout high school. Which of the three sports (Football, Basketball, Volleyball) was your favorite? And Why?

A: I definitely have to go with basketball, I loved the sport since the first time I picked up a ball. There's just something about basketball that always made me happy to think about. I love playing the sport and watching the sport, even playing [NBA] 2K. There so much to the game to

learn and appreciate. Also a lot of my friendships growing up were made on a basketball court from city leagues to AAU.

Q: Being a basketball fan since a young age, who is your favorite basketball player? What about this player makes him your favorite?

A: Kevin Durant has been my favorite player in the NBA since he got drafted to the Seattle SuperSonics who went on to become what is now the Oklahoma City Thunder. Although a lot of people got mad and lost respect for KD when he left OKC and Russ [Russell Westbrook] to go join the Golden State Warriors, he still is my favorite player. I was beyond happy for him when he finally got his ring, although I wish he won it with OKC instead. Haters gon' hate.

Q: What was the transition from high school basketball to college basketball like? Was it difficult to adapt to? What was something that is the biggest difference between the two for you?

A: A lot of people have their own little struggles trying to adapt to the new level of the game they have reached, but for me college basketball came pretty smooth for me because of my size. Being 6'4" and weighing 240 was beneficial for me because I was the biggest freshman on the team that year. One of the biggest differences has to be the crowd, definitely the crowd. The college basketball crowds are packed and way more lively, it's like a completely different atmosphere. Especially playing in front of the home crowd here in Salem.

Q: Last year this team won the Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference (MASCAC) Tournament, can you express what that felt like?

A: Man, when I tell you that was one of the happiest moments of my life, I mean that shit. Being a Division III school I feel like people overlook us but we have a very talented group of guys who all know what they're doing and bring their own little skills to the table. I was also selected to the MASCAC Spring All Academic Team for that 2016-2017 season and that is also something I hold dear to my heart. Winning the title game last year was the first championship game I have ever played in and my adrenaline was through the roof the whole time I was on the court. It was crazy.

Q: I know it may be a little soon to ask this, but you guys fell one game short of making it back to the MASCAC Title Game. What has been going through your mind the last few days?

A: Winning the game is a lot sweeter than losing. This was a tough loss not only for me but for the senior guys who worked hard all season to get us here. For our 15-game winning streak to end was heartbreaking, especially since we played the semi-finals game home in Salem. Next year we are going right back to the Title Game and taking back what should be ours. I'm a positive guy and am going to keep my head up, and try to move on from this loss, you know?