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# Bigger not always better: Three athletes start at lower levels with high expectations

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By David Jolkovski

## Khari Holloway

Mountain Pointe graduate Khari Holloway, left, turned down smaller Division I and II offers and will start his college career at Mesa Community College with hopes of finding his way to a better four-year college after two years.



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While Wimbish, who had DI interest but couldn't accept their offers, fellow Pride graduate Holloway had them and could.

Holloway averaged 16.5 points per game as well as shot 50 percent from the floor as a 6-1 combo guard. Those numbers drew him attention from Weber State and Oregon State among others, but the names weren't what he cared about. He wanted something else.

"I just wanted to go to a school that I loved and not liked," Holloway said.

Finding the right fit was the most important thing. No offers appealed to Holloway enough, so he elected to go to MCC and work for a better offer, even if he may be better than most of his competition.

"I'll have people tell me, 'You're not a junior college player,' you know, 'You should have just gone to a DI school like you could've,'" Holloway said. "I didn't feel like it was the right route for me."

Ideally, Holloway will play for a year at MCC before transferring to a DI basketball program.

"I like Gonzaga a lot, they're a good mid-major school," Holloway said.

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By Eric Smith Special to AFN | 1 comment

Sometimes it's best to start out small and work up to something bigger.

High school athletes dream of the day they tear into an envelope containing a scholarship offer to a Division I college. It's one of the crowning achievements of an athletic career that oftentimes has spanned most of their lifetime.

But not every athlete gets that opportunity. Sometimes they need to start somewhere smaller just as three area athletes — Desert Vista football player Zack Tamburo and Mountain Pointe basketball players Tylor Wimbish and Khari Holloway — have come to know.

Wimbish, a 2011 Pride graduate, and Khari Holloway, a 2013 graduate, both drew Division I college interest but for different reasons and times, they chose Mesa Community College as the place to continue their careers.

Wimbish, a 6-foot-8, 200-pound forward, has spent the last two years at MCC after academic issues forced him away from his DI hopes.

Although it wasn't what he originally wanted, his time at MCC allowed him to refine himself both on and off the court.

"I just buckled down more and just made sure I did everything I needed to do," said Wimbish who is transferring to Division II University of Missouri-St. Louis after averaging 10.7 points per game in 2013. "It's just exciting to know I have two more years of basketball to play and it's just always been my dream to play at a university."

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Holloway didn't receive an offer from a school that he liked at first, but Desert Vista offensive and defensive lineman Zack Tamburo knew exactly what school he wanted to play for.

Practically since he'd started at Desert Vista, Tamburo wanted to go to the Air Force Academy but medical issues at first forced him elsewhere.

"When I took my visit to the Air Force, they told me, because I had asthma, I would probably be denied admission to the academy," Tamburo said. "They told me at that time to kind of move on."

So he did, signing to play for Southeast Missouri State.

But the week of signing day, Tamburo got a call from the Air Force doctors again, saying he may be able to pass their medical tests. He took two tests that week.

When Tamburo received another call in May, asking him to take two more tests, the choice was easy.

"I felt that if I didn't do it at that point, I'd already gone that far into it and I may look back on it and regret if I don't at least try," Tamburo said.

As it turns out, he wouldn't regret it.

"Just last week, the academy doctors turned over my asthma disqualification and offered me a spot. I'm going to be going to the academy," Tamburo said.

Tamburo got his offer from the school he wanted to go to, but he doesn't get to head straight to Colorado Springs, Colo. First, he has to attend an Air Force prep school.

"They put you through courses you're going to see at the academy, kind of get you used to the military lifestyle and everything that comes with it because it's really intense," Tamburo explained. "They send people, a lot of times athletes, to prep school just to make sure that they're going to be OK when they get to the academy."

Spending a year at the prep school gives the 5-foot-11, 275-pound Tamburo time to adjust to both a new lifestyle and a new position on the football field. In Air Force's option-based running attack, Tamburo, who impressed Air Force with his footwork as a pulling guard, is being groomed for a move from offensive line to fullback.

"It's just another year to get older and grow and develop," Tamburo said. "It's going to give me a year to get used to the position and learn everything and stop running like a lineman and start running like a back."

Just because an athlete gets an offer from a DI school doesn't mean it's always the right choice. Sometimes, for one reason or another, by choice or not, the DI path isn't the best one.

Sometimes the most important thing is starting small, and finding the right fit.

• Eric Smith is a junior journalism major at Arizona State University. He is a summer intern at the AFN.

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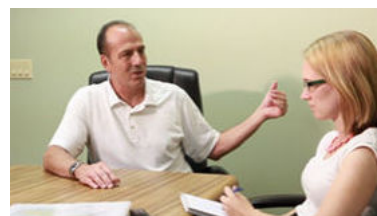
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