

FAMU Player Turns Life Struggle Into Triumph

Contributed by Dontaye Carter - Black College Wire
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Star forward makes changes in life, on court

The star forward for Florida A&M University men's basketball team, is quickly changing the tides of his past to become a leader not only on the court, but in life.

Change, by definition, is the transformation of a person, place or thing. And for one athlete, change has defined his life. After his marriage this past summer, Akini Adkins legally changed his last name, becoming Akini Akini.

Originally from Cameroon, Africa, Akini has distinguished himself at FAMU. He said a summer visit to America when he was a teen, followed by his adoption, helped to change his life.

"They [The Adkins Family] said we adopt kids, if you want us to adopt you, we can help you," the star forward said. "It changed me a lot, and I am definitely a better man than what I could've been." Akini said that after he spoke with his mother about the adoption, she encouraged him to come because of the opportunity that was provided. And that opportunity gave him the chance to stand out at Leon High School.

"Akini was a real special person here at Leon High," said Sam Striplin, Akini's high school basketball coach. "I saw him grow [from] someone who was trying to learn to someone who was teaching." Striplin added that Akini was an outstanding athlete in high school.

"He was the tallest player we ever had," said the Leon High School in Tallahassee. "He was a big kid that could dribble and shoot."

But Striplin added that is not the only mark Akini left behind.

"He was very smart, 4.0 student," Striplin said. "The teachers always ask about him." He was a good kid that you didn't have to worry about getting into trouble the coach said.

After beginning his collegiate career at the University of Alabama, Akini transferred due to the lack of playing time.

"It was a quick decision, I didn't understand you had to wait your turn," Akini said. However, that decision proved to create a difficulty of its own as the star forward struggled to find himself.

"I was on the verge of quitting," Akini said. "That's why my past two seasons here weren't good." He said he was going through some things mentally that made those two seasons difficult.

But those tides soon began to change, and Akini began to find his motivation to play again.

"You get heat, that, OK, this is my senior season, it's either do or die," Akini said.

In the season opener, Akini led the team with 18 points and 11 rebounds to spark the rattlers to an 86-83 win over Carver College. Coach Eugene Harris seemed proud of the performance.

"He's improved a lot since I got here in terms of frustration and mistakes and learning to play through it," Harris said, adding that Akini's great work ethic has given him the ability to perform at such a high level.

"He has great character," Harris said.

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Dontaye Carter, a student at Florida A&M University, writes for The Famuan, which originally published a version of this article.

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