

Forbes

Familiar Faces Join Athletes Unlimited Basketball For Season 2 In Dallas

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Contributor

I cover women's sports and the intersection of sports & society.



Minnesota Lynx guard Layshia Clarendon, right, celebrates after scoring and drawing a foul during ... [+]

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After a successful inaugural season in Las Vegas, Athletes Unlimited is bringing women's basketball to Dallas, Texas, this winter. The season will take place at the Fair Park Coliseum for five weeks beginning February 22 and

concluding five days before the NCAA Women's Final Four Tournament flies into American Airlines Center on March 31.

“We are thrilled to bring the excitement of Athletes Unlimited Basketball to our great fans in Dallas, which will truly be the epicenter of women's basketball during that time with AU and the NCAA Final Fours happening so close together,” said Jon Patricof, CEO and Co-Founder of Athletes Unlimited in the [press release](#).

“We are also proud to have the support of our partners at CBS Sports and Air National Guard in bringing our unique brand of basketball to fans,” Patricof added.

CBS Sports is set to broadcast five of the 30 games live and will air a 30-minute special titled “Athletes Unlimited: A Pro Sports Revolution” Saturday, October 29 at 1:30 p.m. ET on CBS. The Air National Guard is Athletes Unlimited's newest partner beginning with women's basketball.

2022 Season Recap

Tianna Hawkins was crowned the first-ever AU Basketball champion after her team, Team Hawkins, defeated Team Cloud 116-111 in the triple-OT championship game. Hawkins posted 6,836 points using the [“radical scoring system”](#) developed by Athletes Unlimited. In basketball, players are awarded individual points for rebounds, steals, blocks, and made free throws.

Hawkins recorded a league-high 11 double-doubles and earned 500+ leaderboard points in seven games this season, the most by any player in the inaugural season. Natasha Cloud, Isabelle Harrison, and Lexie Brown earned top-four finishes.



Dallas Wings' Allisha Gray grabs a pass during a WNBA basketball game against the Phoenix Mercury, ... [+]

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Cloud, Brown, Sydney Colson, DiJonai Carrington, Courtney Williams, and Kelsey Mitchell are among the WNBA players returning for Season 2 of the Athletes Unlimited Basketball league. Other players with WNBA experience joining Athletes Unlimited include rookies Evina Westbrook, NaLyssa Smith, Dallas Wings guard and 3x3 Olympic gold medalist Allisha Gray, and former WNBPA executive board member Layshia Clarendon.

Finding the Joy

I had the opportunity to speak with Layshia Clarendon, who uses all pronouns, ahead of the AU Basketball announcement about their return to the court. After a nine-year WNBA career, Clarendon found himself on the outside looking in just four games into the 2021 WNBA season after being released by the New York Liberty.

She found her way onto the Minnesota Lynx roster for the remainder of the 2021 season but was released the following year. Now, the veteran finds herself a rookie in a new and innovative basketball model.

“I’m very excited to play, domestically especially. I think that is what I’m so overjoyed about that the AU opportunity because when I didn’t play this summer, I really debated going overseas,” Clarendon told me.



Minnesota Lynx guard Layshia Clarendon (7) drives to the basket past Seattle Storm forward Breanna ... [+]

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With a young child at home, it is tough to make decisions that can benefit an athlete's family and career. With this opportunity, Clarendon can remain in the United States and reconnect with the joy of the game as she prepares to play competitive basketball again.

“I had such an amazing year in 2021. So [I’m focused] on getting back out there and showing and proving that again that I’m that player, that I’m healthy, and to just really enjoy the game. I think free agency will unfold the way it’s meant to unfold. I’m not holding on too tightly to that. I’m really trying to be in the moment and enjoy playing basketball,” Clarendon said.

However, that doesn’t mean Layshia isn’t going to try to make her game work for her regarding the innovative leaderboard.

“I can’t lie, I have [thought] I gotta make sure I rebound because I am a rebounding guard,” Clarendon said. They have also started taking notes on inbound plays, just in case they are named one of the weekly leaders and thus have the chance to draft their team.

“How would I structure a practice if I’m one of the captains? What inbound plays would I put in? What have been my favorite plays that I’ve used throughout my years in the league? Those kinds of coaching aspects of it are really fascinating to me.”

Fans can begin purchasing tickets for the Athletes Unlimited Basketball season starting tomorrow.

Athletes Unlimited Basketball 2023 Roster

Antoinette Bannister G/F 5-10 Jacksonville, Fla. East Carolina She/Her

Kristi Bellock F 6-1 St. Rose, La. Texas A&M She/Her

Lexie Brown G 5-9 Suwanee, Ga. Duke

Kirby Burkholder G 5-11 Bridgewater, Va. James Madison She/Her

Jordin Canada G 5-6 Los Angeles, Calif. UCLA

DiJonai Carrington F 6-0 San Diego, Calif. Stanford

Essence Carson G 6-1 Paterson, N.J. Rutgers

Layshia Clarendon G 5-9 San Bernardino, Calif. California They/Them

Natasha Cloud G 6-0 Broomall, Pa. Saint Joseph's

Taj Cole G 5-9 Richmond, Va. Virginia Tech She/Her

Sydney Colson G 5-8 Houston, Texas Texas A&M

Drew Edelman F 6-4 Sunnyvale, Calif. USC She/Her

Allisha Gray G 6-0 Sandersville, Ga. South Carolina She/Her

Rebecca Harris G 5-7 Belleville, Ill. Illinois She/Her

Air Hearn G 5-8 Memphis, Tenn. Memphis

Naz Hillmon F 6-2 Cleveland, Ohio Michigan

Meme Jackson G/F 5-11 Murfreesboro, Tenn. Tennessee

N'dea Jones F 6-2 Lawrenceville, Ga. Texas A&M

Whitney Knight G 6-3 Winston-Salem, N.C. Florida Gulf Coast She/Her

Jessica Kuster F 6-2 San Antonio, Texas Rice

Akela Maize C 6-5 Greensboro, N.C. NC State

Danni McCray F 6-1 West Palm Beach, Fla. Ole Miss She/Her

Laurin Mincy G 6-0 Newark, N.J. Maryland

Kelsey Mitchell G 5-8 Cincinnati, Ohio Ohio State

Karis ma Penn F 6-2 Shaker Heights, Ohio Illinois She/Her

Odyssey Sims G 5-8 Irving, Texas Baylor

NaLyssa Smith F 6-4 Converse, Texas Baylor She/Her

Destinee Walker G 5-9 Orlando, Fla. North Carolina

Evina Westbrook G 6-0 Salem, Ore. UConn

Courtney Williams G 5-8 Folkston, Ga. USF

Ty Young G/F 6-2 Wilmington, N.C. James Madison