

ESPN

PRESENTS:
THE OFFICIAL GUIDE TO THE
FURRY BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION



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THE HOOP

YEAR 8, VOLUME 0

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<http://www.furrybasketball.com/wiki/index.html>

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR...

Thank you, first of all, for your interest in our little league for basketball-playing furies. It's a bit of a close-knit community, but that's besides the point - I want to thank you for reading about us, and for reading this guide! I was happy to have worked on this with Kingsley Wolfe, who went the extra mile and put this whole thing together. You liiiiiike?

I may not know you, and you may not know us. But for a moment, I want you to forget that this is about sports. In fact, throw the basketball out the window! What you have left, when you remove sports from the FBA, is a gigantic role-playing community. This guide represents a celebration of the efforts that the FBA community have put forth over the last seven years of its existence. By reading this guide, you have joined the celebration!

This guide is also a celebration of those who were here to help create this world of characters. Car-rizo (Buck Hopper) and JTigerclaw set the foundation for something larger than what could've ever been imagined: they designed a furry community around sports. Even more mind-blowing is that there have been over 800 different characters designed for the FBA, over 3000 pieces of art, and over 500 stories. Imagine that! The complexity of having to select less than 1% of these players, artwork, and stories to feature in this magazine was a true challenge. If we could, we would have covered everything in this guide. We truly would.

So why create a guide if it doesn't tell you everything there is to know? Well, first of all, I love editing and writing, and a guide seemed like a wonderful challenge to apply my skills. But doing this is not about me - it's about the community here. It's about you. There's something so magical about watching art be created for the characters, listening to podcasts of live games, reading the stories of the adventures of big-name players... it really makes you want to join in and contribute in any way you can. We want you to experience that magic with us, because we think it is a great place to be. Whether or not our characters become the best players in the league is not so important to Kingsley or myself. We just want to see, for a brief moment, people smile and enjoy themselves. For however long they wish to stay as an active member, we will do what we can to support them in their venture with the FBA, and many others feel the same way.

So, if you've read this far, and if you're not wondering how you can join the FBA by now, then we have failed in our endeavors. Didn't you remember that this isn't about sports?!? Well, it kind of is, admittedly, about sports. But good news! I guarantee there is at least one character in the league who is your favorite species, and there is likely an FBA team that plays close to your home town. So even if you don't like sports, I imagine you like to read or look at furies, right? Seek out that team, or your ideal player, and become a fan! Admire the art and the stories. Watch the season unfold, and go wild at the FBA Finals. Here's the sandbox: build your castle.

You can learn more about the FBA by going to www.furrybasketball.com. Click the 'Welcome' link, and let your imagination take you away. You won't be sorry. :)

-MadWorld, Editor-in-Chief



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SO JUST WHAT IS THE FBA?

The Furry Basketball Association is a sports based community project grounded within a shared furry sports universe. This community, made up of artists, writers, voice actors, roleplayers, and many others, works together to build this shared universe, which is centered around the titular Furry Basketball Association, FBA for short, a furry universe equivalent of the real world NBA. The in-universe FBA is made up of teams and players created and controlled entirely by the community, working together to tell the stories that make the league “come to life”.

This project was started in 2009 by world creator Buck Hopper. Having created the FBA universe as a backstory for his personal character, as interest in the character grew, he was convinced to expand the universe into what it has become: a league of twenty-four unique teams, each filled with fifteen players. Originally expanded by those who were both friends and fans of Buck, the league has grown to over 80 active contributors.

There is no limit on how to contribute, either. Some contributors are happy to submit a character to the yearly draft and simply see how they fare within the league. Some choose to fully act out their characters, roleplaying then through Twitter channels, through interactions and stories with other contributors, or through the writing of their own stories. Others prefer to draw out their character’s exploits, or to commission art of their characters. There are even those who lend their voice to characters, their own or others, through podcasts, audio dramas, songs, or even just spoken dialogue of interactions between characters. It is a realm of creative inspiration and imagination.

It is not just through the characters that this world is born. This is a shared universe, and external relations do affect the world. Whether it’s through the online FBA Chatroom, through Skype, or even through meeting in-person at gatherings or conventions (such as this one), the people that make up this shared world talk with each other, make friendships, and form bonds that may last for years - whether a contributor stays with or leaves the FBA universe.

So what is the FBA? It’s entirely what you, and everybody else, makes it to be. It is a world where everybody is welcome to contribute in whatever way they feel most comfortable: whether that’s creating a player for the league, creating a reporter, a referee, managing or coaching a team, or even just following along and enjoying the content that the league produces.

Without everybody, this league wouldn’t be what it is today.

THE FBA UNIVERSE

So, what can you expect if you decide to join the FBA? Well, that depends on how you decide to join!

CREATING A PLAYER

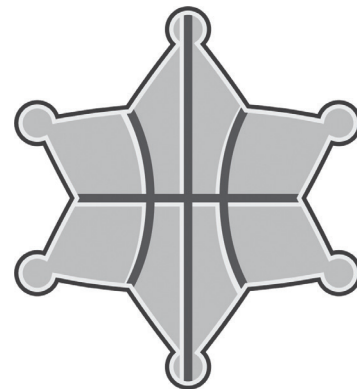
Once per year, the league opens submissions for draft entries for one month, or until 100 total entries has been reached. Characters submitted for players must follow some specific guidelines, including being under 7'6", under 350 lbs, have no more than 4 limbs and a tail (otherwise known as the 5 limb rule), and be non-poisonous (no poison in a non-controllable way). Additionally, a character's background must be reasonable for a professional basketball player.

Once a player has been accepted into the league, they are considered canon to the universe. Within a few month of the end of draftee submissions is the draft, in which the twenty-four teams draft forty-eight of the accepted draftees to contracts on their teams. Other draftees may be signed after the draft, or spend time in the Development League (D-League), able to be signed at any future time. The league is then simulated, an 80 game season, with a game approximately every two days, excluding a few short breaks during the course of the season. All characters are given a full range of stats befitting their skills, and these stats determine their performance during the season. These games are done to create opportunities for story creation, for interaction between characters and their creators. Story rules the league, not stats; the games exist to give chances for interaction.

CREATING A NON-PLAYER CHARACTER

Many of the rules that exist for players within the league do not exist for non-player characters such as coaches, general managers, reporters, etc. Characters larger than 7'6" exist, though only to a certain extent, as do characters over 350 lbs. Multi-limbed characters such as taurs exist within the canon of the universe, and may be created in a non-player character. Unlike player characters, the vast majority of the time, non-players do not need approval to be created, unless aspects of their existence are in conflict with the rules of the FBA Universe.

WESTERN



CONFERENCE

EASTERN



BALTIMORE



williamsburg



minutemen



CONFERENCE



ALASKA

Added to the list of teams during the 1994 FBA Expansion, the Alaska Arctics have managed to thrive in the harsh cold of Anchorage. Despite a slow start to the 2015-2016 season, the Arctics retain their usual tenacity to survive. Led by Cliff Matthews and Ambrose Slade, they intend to prove that they haven't frozen over just yet.

HAWAII

Originally known as the Tuscon Demons in 1961, this team has gone through a number of branding changes, first to the Galveston Sand Dollars in 2009, and finally to the Hawaii Kahunas in 2013. Almost immediately, the new general manager, Wilmer Grehr, made waves by drafting the low-ranked Alphonse Norwich IV. This move, among other unusual decisions, brought them from last place during the 2013-2014 season to the playoffs in the 2014-2015 season



SAN JOSE

In Thrust we Trust. Added in the 1994 expansion as the Stanislaus Thrust, the San Jose Thrust have not failed to leave their mark upon the FBA in the two decades since their introduction. Despite a championship, a conference title, and a few division titles, the Thrust have undergone massive changes in the past few years, trading away well known players like Buck Hopper in 2012 and the signing of Barnaby Jazz and Alessandro Serra during the 2015 offseason.



SANTA ANA

Owned by OMEN Technologies, the 2014-2015 FBA champions have their work cut out for them if they have the desire to repeat their championship run. Despite the phenomenal lineup that won them the championship, the team has opted to go under heavy reconstruction during the extended 2015 off season, letting former star players Crosby Sutters, Darius Aurelias, and Urayak Monogoyak go in favour of a much younger lineup of players.



EDMONTON

One of only two teams operating out of Canada, the Edmonton Totems are a team that follow a number of traditions off of the court. Originally the Des Moines Blanks, the team moved to Edmonton and became the Totems in 2012. Well known for their Ironfur Combine, the post victory scarf toss, and the 'Caracal Kid', the Totems have a very large, loving fanbase in the Great White North.



LAS VEGAS

Founded in 2012, for the Las Vegas Wildcards, the luck is truly in the cards. A team with a rather wild history of swinging between strong and weak seasons, you can never truly know what to expect from the Wildcards. Except, that is, the team partying post victorious home games at Tao, the club owned by resident Point Guard Li Ho Fook.



MONTANA

Founded in 1968, the Montana Howlers are a team that has never shied away from taking risks. From drafting players risky for their times, Shane Rufus and Rocky Caracal among them, to completely rebuilding if necessary, they've clawed their way to nine championships. The annual Howlreen game, an invitational between the Howlers and a team of their choosing, is seen as the official start of the pre-season, or the season proper, depending on the year.



SEATTLE

Owned by Nontentsu and managed by the illustrious Vicki Turner, the Seattle Summit were founded in 2014, a location change and rebranding from the Spokane Rapids after 20 years. Since rebranding, the team has worked towards signing strong young talent alongside a few strong veterans that can keep the starting line strong and help to train and improve the younger players.



ARIZONA

The Arizona Whips, formerly known as the El Paso Whips from 1983 until 2004, and the Santa Fe Whips from 2004 to 2015, come off a rough 2014-2015 season. After failing to make the playoff berth, the Whips rebranded and restructured greatly, although keeping memorable players Chesuk, Paulichek, and Middendorff in their lineup. With the acquisition of others, and a few key drafts, the Whips hope to regain their former championship power.



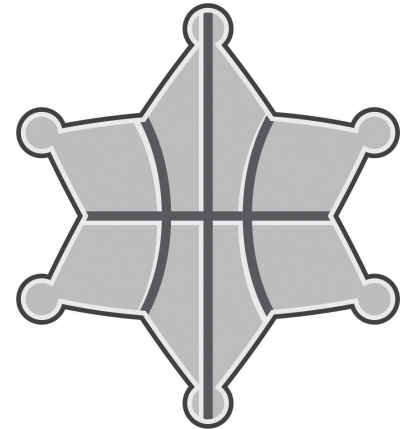
DAKOTA

Founded in 1979, the Dakota Bikers quickly earned a reputation as one of the roughest teams in the league, and for good reason. With a rock solid, very 'in your muzzle' defense, they locked opposing teams down, earning each and every one of their 6 championships. Still recovering after a scandal-filled, though ultimately championship-winning 2013-2014 season, which ended with their entire front office being replaced, the Bikers maintain a rivalry with the Howlers and the Thrust, and work towards a hopeful 7th championship.



TEXAS

Founded in 1961 as the Santa Cruz Clefs, becoming the Kansas City Clefs in 2009 and the Texas Lone Stars in 2013, the Lone Stars are a team that is hungry for a championship. Fielding big names in Buck Hopper and Marcus Knight, the Lone Stars assemble a strong supporting bench year after year. Although names come with the risk of clashing egos, the Lone Stars will not let that stop them from aiming for the stars to win their first championship since their Santa Cruz days.



WINNIPEG

The second of the two Canadian teams, the Winnipeg Voyageurs joined the FBA in 2011. Branding themselves through their colours and name to tie their team's identity deep into Manitoba, the Voyageurs are proud of their Canadian identity, as well as their rivalry with fellow Canadian team the Edmonton Oilers. Having come close to the championships a number of times in their few seasons, including their first, the Voyageurs have no intention of backing down again.





ALBANY

Named after the head wolf in a pack, the Albany Alphas represented the Eastern Conference in the 2014 FBA Finals, coming up short to Santa Ana on a buzzer-beater miracle shot in Game 5. Owned by billionaire mole Donahue Frump (yes, you read that right), the Alphas have been generally successful as of late, with coffee-loving husky Rodger Umaechi leading the pack with his aerobic slam-dunks and vibrant personality. The club celebrated its 20 year anniversary in 2013.

BANGOR

The Bangor Tides are the post-result of an ‘experiment’, per se, in an attempt to expand the FBA beyond North America, introduced in 2006 as the Bradford Bantams from Great Britain. The few years in the United Kingdom were financially unsuccessful, and by 2011, the franchise was moved to Bangor, Maine. After reaching some low points, like being banned from the 2013 FBA Playoffs and signing super-baller Barton Rouge to a lackluster contract, the tides may be finally turning. With Blanc Mange leading the pack, the team is poised to make it a real competition in 2016.



PLYMOUTH

There’s no place like home! The Plymouth Taproots (from Plymouth, Massachusetts!) have a successful and deep-rooted history (pun intended) with five championships under their belt, and a permanent fan base amongst the furs on the northeastern seaboard. For the last two years, they have been in the top three teams in the league, but have been unable to push through to the Finals. With the free agent signing of Travis Buckner in the off-season, the Taproots hope it’s what the team needs to break through.



QUEENS

In 2015, the Newark Pride moved to the Queens borough in New York City to broaden their city-wide appeal and to kick off a fresh start. Seen as a thriving team under the talents of Valencia Zeraus, 2014 was less than impressive - partially due to the behind-the-scenes changes that were taking place. The “Queens’ Pride of New York” has rebranded, sporting a fresh new logo and a young but energetic front five.



BALTIMORE



BALTIMORE

Similar to the Plymouth Taproots, the Baltimore Spirits are one of the original six teams of the FBA - they're like the New York Knicks equivalent in that regard: historic, and never-changing. The black and red peaked in the mid-1980s, until former player (and current head coach) Basil Trassel (rabbit), broke his leg. This ended the hot streak that, unfortunately, Baltimore is still searching for today - despite making the playoffs in 2014. He may not be in his prime, but Trassel vows to never retire until he can bring the Spirits back to the top. Will that be in 2015?

LORAIN

Do you have fire fever? It's been over ten years since the small Ohio city's last championship, and despite bottoming out in 2014, the Lorain Firestorm are expecting to surge back to the forefront of their division with a revamped lineup and a new management team. With entirely new management this year, the Firestorm are experimenting with "grounds-up development", training young players from their earlier years to their prime. The end result? They could get scary-good, scary-quickly - so watch out!



PITTSBURGH



Previously known as the Springfield Fusion, the Pittsburgh Keystones had their best season in 2014, thanks to the efforts of Terrence Tolliver (pronghorn) and Alan Murphy (kangaroo). They didn't quite make it to the Finals, but with a hot start in 2015, they're back - and they mean business. Whether it's Randy Catcher (frog) bouncing up and down the court, or Lance Freewell (leopard) hustling through defensive roadblocks, The Keystones are notable for getting real-life press coverage back in 2010! (Look up the Deadspin article.)

WILLIAMSBURG

Coached by the legendary Morgan Roosevelt, the Williamsburg Minutemen were once the best team in the Eastern Conference, sporting big-name players like Jake Masters (cat) and Stan Shields (wolf), and were the biggest threat to the phenomenal Healey Davis (whose daughter, Crystal, now plays for the Minutemen,) and the Huntsville Mayors in the 1990s. Recent retiree Karl Gruber (cougar) would take the Minutemen to their first championship in 2003, and again in 2012. With a star-studded lineup, can they make it back to the top in 2016?

williamsburg



BILOXI

First known as the Biloxi Mudpuppies, the Voodoo are still searching for that first championship since their re-branding, but it may be soon to come. Having spent the past two seasons signing strong, young rookies, as well as obtaining Aragon Fisher (Otter) after his championship season on the Moonshiners, and resigning former star Barton Rouge (Red Fox), many fans are hopeful that this may be their year.



HUNTSVILLE

The Huntsville Mayors began their history as the St. Paul Mayors, and were the first team to win the championship trophy. Soon, however, they began to decline, and were moved to Huntsville due to poor attendance during an expansion year. That all changed in 1988, when they signed the soon-to-be-famous Healey Davis during the first round. Unassuming, he improved greatly through his years, working not just on himself but on his whole team. Davis led the Mayors to five straight championships from 1996 until 2000, retiring in 2001 as the greatest player the FBA.



TALLAHASSEE

The Tallahassee Typhoons may be a relatively new franchise, but their story-packed history tells of a team that started from the bottom and climbed nearly all the way to the top. The Typhoons are best known for their “Dawg Pack” years, where they fielded a team containing many strong canine players. With the implementation of the Underwood Rule, limiting a team to 5 players of the same genus, the Typhoons have had to shift their player organization, though still retaining a number of canine players.



TENNESSEE

The Tennessee Moonshiners are a professional basketball team based in Nashville, Tennessee. Founded in 1994, the Moonshiners were the champions of the 2013-2014 season. After their championship season, the team underwent a massive restructuring, leading to a very rough 2014-2015 season. Entering into the 2015-2016 season, the Moonshiners seem to have found their groove, having assembled a strong, young talent pool for their roster, and they seem determined to take their place at the top once more.



RODGER UMAECHI
SPECIES: Dog - Husky
POSITION: Forward
CREATOR: ~JTigerclaw
2016 TEAM: Albany Alphas
YEARS: 8



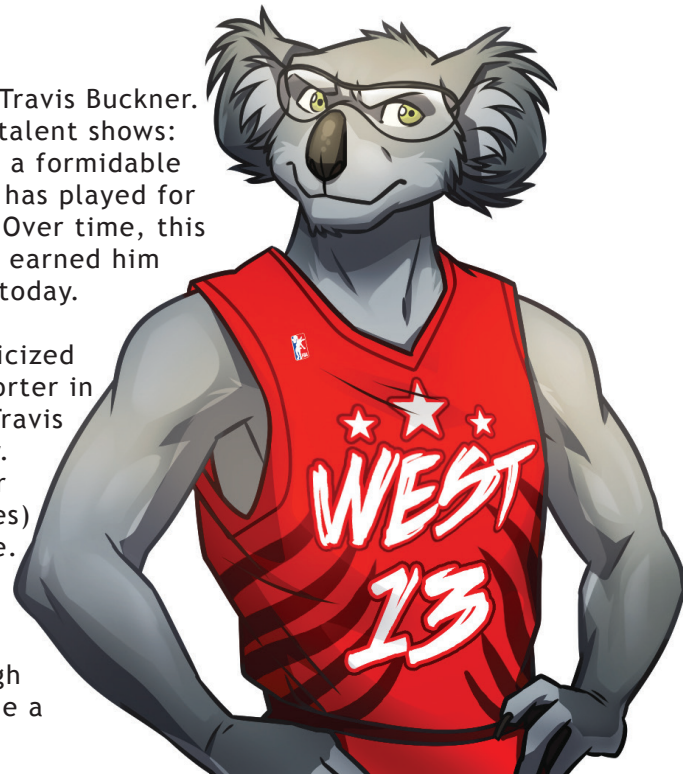
Rodger Umaechi is a 4-time FBA All-Star who was drafted 5th in the 2008 FBA Draft, but he had to work hard to get to the top. When Rodger chose to skip college and enter the FBA Draft right out of high school, few analysts were impressed by the Ohio-born husky - despite the toothy smile, and his curious love for gourmet coffee. But the Idaho Mounties were rewarded when they looked past his old knee injury and picked up a hard-working, highly skilled forward, plucking him from the unsuspecting grasp of the Tennessee Moonshiners in a draft day trade that turned out to be one of the most cunning moves in FBA history. "Dasher" may have simmered in his first season, but he's been boiling ever since, earning a Most Improved Player award in 2010, the MVP award in 2012, and leading his team to the FBA Finals in 2015.

Umaechi's infectious personality makes him a natural-born leader on the court. The energetic canine can make or break close-call games, and many fans adore him for his dunking skills and physical strength. The fanatics follow him off the court as well - and probably into many a coffee shop - for autographs, a photo op, and maybe just a chance to say "I met Umaechi" to incur that jealousy on friends. Now in his eighth year in the league, Umaechi has made a name for himself with the Alphas. If only he could get that championship ring...

TRAVIS BUCKNER
SPECIES: Koala
POSITION: Forward
CREATOR: ~Tazel
2016 TEAM: Plymouth Taproots
YEARS: 3

There's nobody in the FBA that exemplifies 'All Business' like Travis Buckner. This koala has an aspiration of being the face of the FBA. His talent shows: though he is small for a forward, he is naturally quick and has a formidable jump as well. Despite Travis' abilities, however, the teams he has played for have never won as many games as people thought they could. Over time, this became putting the blame on Travis; calling him 'bad luck'. It earned him the nickname "Jinx" - something he's still trying to shake off today.

Travis also has a bit of a temper, especially concerning a publicized medical revelation that infuriated him enough to punch a reporter in the face. In personal recompense, and because it's good PR, Travis has used his status and talent for basketball to give to charity. During his free time, he regularly visited the children's cancer hospital in Austin, Texas (near the Lone Stars practice facilities) to help give children something else to think about for a while. He's helped himself, as well - earning one of the biggest pay-day increases of any free agent during the 2015 offseason by signing with the Plymouth Taproots. Having a marketing degree may have helped him just a bit in that endeavor, though rumors abound he would have done so for less, just to continue a budding relationship with co-star Nina Lime..



BUCK HOPPER

SPECIES: Rabbit

POSITION: Guard

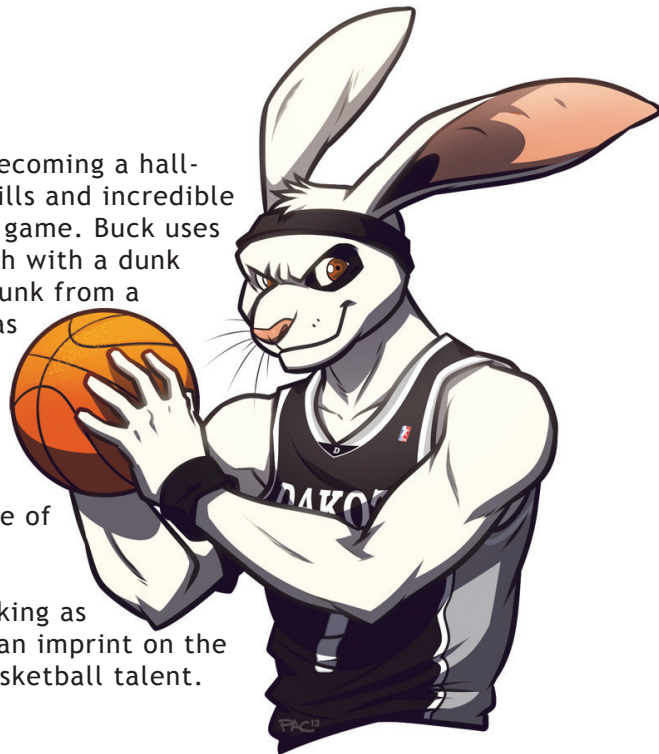
CREATOR: ~Carrizo

2016 TEAM: Texas Lone Stars

YEARS: 12

Professionally and historically, Buck Hopper is on his way to becoming a hall-of-fame player. Known for simply outstanding ball handling skills and incredible speed, his crossover is one of the fastest and deadliest in the game. Buck uses a rapid zig-zag style to drive to the paint, and prefers to finish with a dunk over the layup. With his exceptional jumping ability, he can dunk from a stand-still under the basket despite his height. Although he has not completely avoided controversy, there are many players and fans who only wish they could be Buck, let alone play basketball as well as he has in his decade of sport. Hopper is credited with two FBA championships.

Unafraid of speaking his mind, the rabbit has had his fair share of ups and downs along the way. One can read about the stories surrounding his 2007 clash with Julio Onca, or his alleged relationship with Pride player Valencia Zeraus. Thought provoking as it may be, nobody can deny “Lucky Number Seven” has made an imprint on the history of the FBA, and has influenced a new generation of basketball talent.



ALPHONSE NORWICH IV

SPECIES: Rat

POSITION: Forward

CREATOR: ~Zach Gates

2016 TEAM: Hawaii Kahunas

YEARS: - 3



Alphonse Norwich the Fourth is, well... there is really only one way to describe the rat from the former Rat Alley in Toxteth, UK: thuggish. Well, less so than when he first barged his way into the FBA's spotlights in 2013, scars, piercings, mohawked hair and all. There have been no shortage of sensational stories surrounding the rat, from players injured thanks to his aggressive street-ball style of play, to his appearance in the Toxteth riots of 2014, to the on-court engagement of his brother to fellow player Antonio Garza, an engagement that reports say the rat did not take well. Despite all the bad press, however, the rat has proven himself on the court, despite all the naysayers who said that Kahunas manager Wilmer Grehr wasted a 15th pick on a low ranked prospect. Alphonse has lead the Kahunas from the starting line for the majority of his time on

the team, providing a strong shot alongside a willingness not to back off from a shot.

DYLAN REDFIELD

SPECIES: Red Deer

POSITION: Forward

CREATOR: ~Wendingo

2016 TEAM: Dakota Bikers

YEARS: 4

Underneath the fur of the northeastern red deer is a multi-talented sportsfur - and he would be the first to let everyone know, in a very public way, just how talented he is. Dylan played football during his college years at Silverthorn, but an injury during his senior year forced him to take up something else with less “contact” - and due to his height, that ‘new sport’ turned out to be basketball. Athletic, but rough on the edges - it was a good way to describe the cervine when he was drafted by the Dakota Bikers in the first round of the 2012 FBA Draft, where he was slated to learn under long-time Biker Ryan Malone (Kangaroo) and Buck Hopper.

Omnipresence and controversy already surround Dylan’s career, whether he personally likes to admit so or not. A forced injury on Montana Howlers’ Shane Rufus (Wolf) earned him a hefty suspension in 2013. It shaped the FBA in more ways than one - the league introduced regulations for wearing protection on antlers and horns, and standardized rules for dangerous actions taken between players. Redfield would resurface as a top news story when he ran off to play a football game in the UFFL during the FBA season to play against (and win) his brother, Aspen. Now in his fourth year in the FBA, the buck has seemingly everything he could ever want, and yet it seems there’s something he’s still searching for.



NINA LIME

SPECIES: Wolf

POSITION: Swingfur

CREATOR: ~Jadedfox

2016 TEAM: Plymouth Taproots

YEARS: 5

Nina Lime is another player who aspired to be multiple things. Her first love was theatre, where she is complimented for her well-trained voice and ability to perform. But the wolf doubled as a basketball-playing talent while in college, and her abilities there did not go unnoticed. She didn’t play for the best college, but with Lime on the team, you almost didn’t need anyone else. She was drafted 1st overall in the FBA Draft; a first for a female in the FBA. Certainly, basketball was her first calling.

Personality wise, Nina is a leader: it’s her court, and she’s the alpha wolf. She’s good at barking out orders, but is an amazing team player. She’s just as happy to pass off for an open shot as to drive into the rim. Her numbers from the woods are strong enough where she’s a kind of frightening point. Her numbers seem to fit more of a center, but she simply doesn’t have the size to elbow it out in the paint. They call her “Limelight” for obvious reasons. But beyond the stage, and beyond the court, she has a heart of gold.



DAN QUVIANUQ

SPECIES: Polar Bear

POSITION: Center

CREATOR: ~Jakebe

2016 TEAM: Seattle Summit

YEARS: 4



Big. It's a pretty good way to describe Daniel Quvianuq - other than his brute skill and basketball talents, the polar bear is one of the tallest and heaviest players in the FBA. He focuses on grabbing defensive boards and blocking shots, clearing space in the lane to prevent other players from getting to the basket.

Offensively, he charges into the paint to clear a path for low-post points, in a way to prevent the opposing team from getting rebounds of their own.

Quvianuq was drafted #2 overall in the 2012 FBA Draft by the Dakota Bikers, where he was expected to fill the starting Center position. However, the discovery of several micro-fractures in his knees after a fall during a preseason game lead to surgery that sidelined him for a year. As a result, he spent the entirety of 2012-2013 season in an ambassadorial role, participating in several community outreach events and publicity functions. He was able to come back to play in 2013, and by 2014, he had returned to true form - enough so, that he earned himself a big ticket to play for the Seattle Summit. It is in Seattle that he has grown accustomed to being called out for his size. Despite what you may think, though - boy, that bear can set you back one.

LANCE CHEVAL

SPECIES: Horse

POSITION: Center

CREATOR: ~Carrizo

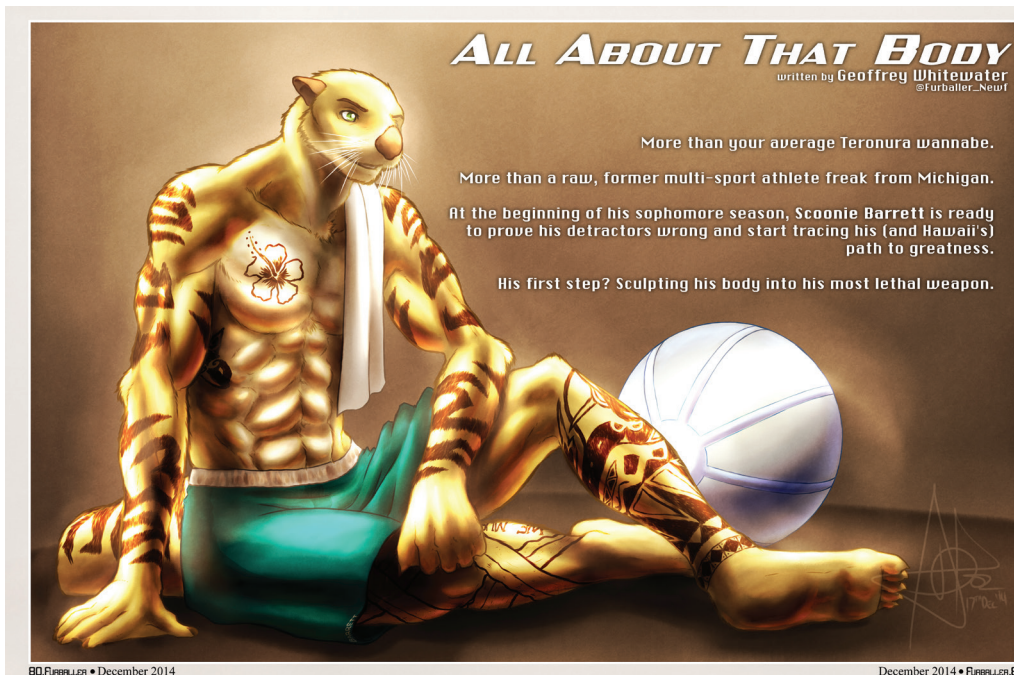
2016 TEAM: Santa Ana Spectrums

YEARS: 12

Lance Cheval brings forth the force of a horse (of course)! Lance was drafted in 2000 by the Stanislaus Thrust, and the male stallion center currently plays for the Santa Ana Spectrums, where he helped bring home the first FBA championship of his career. He is also the winner of the 2013 Defensive Player of the Year award, and in that same year, he appeared in the FBA All-Star game.

Beyond all of those accomplishments, though, there is Lance's alternate career - acting. With flowing blond hair and white fur, the stallion definitely had that 'movie star' look to him. But could he act? Trying to find a career in the movie industry, Lance actually left the FBA in 2005 to pursue the career as a movie actor. The ensuing movie, "The Horse With No Name", failed enormously, and after several years of dirty jobs and less-than-amateur filming gigs (most of which he will not talk about), Lance made the decision to return to basketball. Since then, he's earned back enough respect to live a prosperous life after his career is done.





ALL ABOUT THAT BODY

written by Geoffrey Whitewater
@Furballer_Neuf

More than your average Teronura wannabe.

More than a raw, former multi-sport athlete freak from Michigan.

At the beginning of his sophomore season, Scoonie Barrett is ready to prove his detractors wrong and start tracing his (and Hawaii's) path to greatness.

His first step? Sculpting his body into his most lethal weapon.

ALL ABOUT THAT BODY - AN INTERVIEW WITH SCOONIE BARRETT ~ by Qovapyri

It's safe to say that when it was announced, back in summer 2013, the Galveston Sand Dollars' relocation to Honolulu was met by most insiders with mixed reaction.

To sports analysts and commentators of every species and affiliation, few good things could come from taking a franchise which had been struggling

in its current emanation - chock full of bloated contracts but devoid of any true superstars after JTigerclaw's sudden retirement from the league - and moving it from its native Texas to one of the most remote locations in the United States. It didn't help that the early days of the Hawaiian franchise were filled with a number of head-scratching decisions that made people wonder whether the Kahunas' owner Makaio Kaimana - and most importantly, their general manager Wilmer Grehr - knew what they'd gotten themselves into.

Wasting both their first round draft picks on players who had been left out of the top 24? Check. Having to reschedule games to unusual time slots in order to cater to the national audience? Check. Unveiling hot pink alternate jerseys that wouldn't have been out of place on your average episode of *Queer As Folk*? Check.

For the first half of last season, their prediction turned out right. As we got treated to an endless stream of paeans celebrating Dakota's dynamic duo of Hopper and Malone, as well as Winnipeg's Greatest Show on Court, most of the official press as well as the casual audience dismissed the Hawaii relocation as a limited phenomenon that would eventually fail to gather interest nation-wide, both in results and team marketability. Still, as much as their first season left a lot to be desired, small glimmers of hope came out of it - one of them being the same draft pick that had been criticized by most just a few months earlier: Scoonie Barrett, a bigfur from southern Michigan who had been overlooked by most insiders after the rookie combine and summer league. Not by Wilmer Grehr, though - Hawaii's cervine General Manager has always been adamant in defending his selection. "[He] may have been left out of the Top 24, but I was aware that he had managed to make the cusp. [...] from what I had seen of Mr Barrett's play, he suited the needs of the team quite well. I saw a young, enthusiastic player that, I felt, would be able to become a face of the team given time and training."

Perhaps, the best way to fully understand the meaning behind Grehr's choice resides in a single stat. In spite of the lutrine's first season being a solid but unspectacular one for a lottery pick worth his salt (averaging 9.8 points, 4.5 rebounds and 0.6 assists per game), Scoonie came in 6th in the Rookie of the Year voting discussion. To explain such an outcome, the Kahunas' head coach Richard Berk points his claw at other factors beyond his undoubted popularity, repeatedly acknowledging the otter's primary role in the locker room as well as on the court. "[Scoonie] has proved to be solid in his shots, as well as excellent with his rebounds and assists. It is not only these skills, but his leadership and ability to foster a strong team spirit, that will help him on the court in Hawaii." Grehr, conversely, appraises his adaptability and work ethic - the lutrine spent the whole summer working on building the muscle mass he was lacking in the low post, which helped him to boost his numbers to 12 points, 9.2 rebounds and 2.6 assists per game in the first ten games of the current season, already bettering his double-double count by five times. Although management brought in veteran centers Charles Burgh and Antonio Garza in order to supply for Quintessa Hartnett's departure to San Jose, the otter's starting position has never seemed to be in any danger

Scoonie's impact on the Kahunas' development has been nothing but crucial, and we're just

beginning to see the fruits of his hard labor. He has got everything he needs to become a full-fledged FBA superstar in a few years, and to help the Hawaiian franchise fulfilling a number of goals in the meanwhile - should Wilmer Grehr succeed in keeping the otter away from the number of general managers who already have plans to swoop in and snatch him up once he tests free agency this summer.

But what exactly Scoonie thinks about his first pro season, taking his first steps towards FBA elite on a struggling team and adapting to a different position in order to maximize his chances? The young sophomore told us that and much more.

Welcome into the world of Scoonie Barrett.

HARD WORK - We meet Scoonie for the first time in the Kahunas' locker room, an hour or so before the tip-off of a home game against the Santa Fe Whips. The otter is entertaining a small group of journalists with a few anecdotes about his college days - he seems perfectly at ease with his role, his body language revealing a quiet confidence that transcends his age. Sure, Gerry Cross would be the team's appointed leader, but at only twenty-three years old and with a single season under his belt, Scoonie can already pass for the Kahunas' second-in-command - and the position of his personal locker, next to the biggest one belonging to his captain and mentor, seems to reflect that.

Once he starts talking, however, it really becomes clear why the press, as well as the fans, seem to love him. Not often in my career as a sports reporter I've found a young guy that speaks his mind so easily, while at the same time keeping his public image constantly in check. He doesn't shy away from my questions (quite the contrary!) but he's always aware of what is he saying and who is he saying it to - and in a world where the talent of a player looks alarmingly related to the magnitude of his Twitter outbursts, Scoonie's demeanor makes for a refreshing change of pace. I start this interview asking the otter about how he recovered from his most recent injury, a shoulder contusion which sidelined him for five games at the tail end of last season.

HOW ARE YOU DOING, SCOONIE?

Pretty good, thanks. Totally recovered from last spring's shoulder injury, season's off to a good start and I'm looking forward to keep the momentum going.

LET'S START THIS OFF WITH AN OBVIOUS ONE. PEOPLE WHO SAW YOU ON COURT DURING PRESEASON COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE A DEFINITE CHANGE IN YOUR BODY - YOU DEFINITELY LOOK BIGGER AND BULKIER THAN YOU DID AT THE END OF LAST SEASON. A FIRST IMPRESSION THAT GETS CONFIRMED WITH A QUICK GLANCE TO THE KAHUNAS' MEDIA-GUIDE CURRENTLY LISTING YOU AT 262 POUNDS, ABOUT TWENTY MORE THAN LAST SPRING. HOW AND WAY DID THIS CHANGE COME TO LIFE?

Right in the middle of our losing streak last year, Coach Berk tried me at center and was quite pleased with the results. After a game against Winnipeg where I got schooled by Dirk [Von Stryker], though, he started talking about the need for me to bulk up, which to me was pretty strange in itself because you can tell I was never told that during my career, be it high school or college. (laughs)

I'm pretty sure at that point Berk wasn't already planning to begin this season with me as starting C, since the management was still trying to land Quvianuq, but after he didn't work out and Quintessa [Hartnett] signed with San Jose, I knew I had the potential to start the season as more than a dependable backup.

ON WHAT ASPECT OF THE GAME DID YOU WORK THE MOST THIS SUMMER?

I spent countless hours in the weight room - first in Honolulu with our lead trainer Thorne Isaac, then back home in Michigan - mostly working to strengthen my core and lower body. I focused on a workout routine that wouldn't simply get me ready for the 80-game season, but at the same time would supply for the times I was at disadvantage against bigger players. Been getting a lot of reps up, done a number of things basketball players don't usually do - high-rep squats, deadlifts, shoulder press, we even tried chain dips for a while. I think you can see the results. (laughs)

CAN YOU ALREADY FEEL THE DIFFERENCE IN YOUR GAME?

I totally can. I'm more aggressive in the hole, I'm able to get more contact, I can dive for rebounds without fearing I'll be tipped over. Overall, I feel much more confident in my defensive game.

DID YOU CHANGE YOUR NUTRITION ALONG WITH YOUR INCREASED TRAINING?

Yeah, definitely. I've always tried to eat healthy - never been a huge fan of junk food, even back at college and high school. Yet when setting on such a hardcore training program, I know I have to take it to a whole different level. Burning all those calories and releasing floods of hormones through heavy lifting tends to really boost hunger, and it's easy to just let go and put on weight if you don't get somewhat strict on your eating regime.

Been avoiding red meat almost entirely - I'm more of a chicken and seafood guy. On the other paw, complex carbs, vegetables, gallons of milk - I can go down on those as much as I want to. No fast food, no fried goods unless once in a while. It's all about keeping stuff that won't do you good out of the kitchen.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR BEST PHYSICAL SKILL?

I pride myself on my abs and legs' strength and definition. It's amazing how my quads and thighs have cut up during this summer - I definitely had to buy bigger trousers. (laughs)

As for the torso, I can tell you tall people find it much tougher to build it up - getting a six-pack to come out is hard when you've got such long muscles. It's not just for show - a stronger core can do you wonders against weaker opposition, especially at the tail end of an 80-game season.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU FACE WITH YOUR BODY?

Keeping strong without putting on unnecessary fat. I got in the league at under 5% body fat, I was so lean I literally couldn't pinch skin from my stomach. Now I'm peaking at around 6/7% because of last summer's extensive training, but I really do think there are very few players out there who can legitimately claim to be fitter.

PRESENT AND FUTURE - Although that could definitely feel like a bold statement to the casual outsider, the Kahunas' lead trainer Thorne Isaac is willing to agree with it. "[Scoonie] is one of the best athletes I've ever worked with," the argali tells us, as he observes the otter answering questions from our web colleagues, a strikingly white towel slung low over his bare, chiseled torso. "Against guys like Dan Q[uvianuq] or even rookies like Jake Turner or Ahti Nereus, he's at a disadvantage in both height and weight. But there are some things we can't change, and I feel he can still make up for this by being a faster, more agile center even if he lacks the usual size." During his college experience at Mustelid Michigan, Scoonie looked like a perfect fit for the power forward position, if only for his offensive skills and silky mid-range jumpshot. Once in the FBA, though, his transition to center was decidedly smooth, and his defensive numbers have been increasing slowly but surely.

It's no wonder that Isaac, the very same individual who saw through Scoonie's skills and helped him adjust to the position change, is pleased to see that the management's gamble paid off. Quickly building the otter's weight, without taking away too much of his stamina while doing it, has definitely given the Kahunas' bigfur the extra boost he needed to be able to battle claw-to-claw under the rim against the likes of Raoul Kidane and Siegfried Romanoren. And though he's still far from having the same consideration as the two young stars, we're curious to hear Scoonie's feelings about his position within the Kahunas' roster and whether he thinks he can effectively lead the young franchise to its first successes.

YOUR DRAFT PICK WAS DEEMED AS PRETTY CONTROVERSIAL BY THE NATIONAL PRESS. HOW DO YOU THINK LANDING A LOTTERY PICK INFLUENCED YOUR ROOKIE SEASON?

It definitely brought in a lot of added pressure, especially when Hawaii wasn't doing too well and press took turns into flaming our GM, Wilmer Grehr, for his decisions. Ultimately though, I guess that was instrumental into putting me in the right mindset to tackle my second season.

WHO DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR BIGGEST RIVAL IN THE LEAGUE AND WHY?

I'd say [Zack] Tate from the Arctics, a fellow bigfur with an enormous potential and a lot to prove. We and Alaska have a whole story going on, as we meet up so many times every season, and he's the one I'd get to choose if I was to name only one. It's not a rivalry fueled by hatred - outside the court we're actually pretty tight, but that doesn't prevent us from going at each other like madbeasts every time we match up on the court. Basically we bring out the best of each other.

WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST INSPIRATION IN THE LEAGUE, PAST OR PRESENT?

Growing up as a Lorain fan, Gerry Cross was my favorite player - dividing the backcourt with him has been a dream coming true. He's a true-born leader, a fighter, and his willpower is something all of us youngsters we should try to mirror.

When it comes to who I look up the most, I'd have to go with PT [Teronura]. His triumph in the last Finals represented the coronation of an Hall Of Fame-worthy career. Most otters I know see [Paul] as something above legend - he's the ultimate role model, the guy who represents the best in our species. I got to meet him briefly during last year's All-Star Weekend, he's an endless source of inspiration for every young baller.

EARLIER IN YOUR CAREER, YOU OFTEN WERE ADVERTISED AS "PAUL TERONURA'S SECOND COMING", EVEN IF YOUR APPROACH TO BASKETBALL WAS DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO PT'S. HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS COMPARISON?

On one paw, getting compared to such a skilled player while in senior high was definitely a humbling experience. After a while, though, it became a little too much to bear - it clashed with the natural desire to carve my own path and establish my legacy, not be it wrapped up in some other player's. The catch is that as my first season progressed, my playing style naturally gravitated towards PT's, so it seems that people were actually right about that! (laughs) I've finally come at piece with that comparison - nowadays, I steadily watch tapes of PT and try to implement some elements of his game into mine.

After losing Lancaster to Biloxi, Hawaii struggled to field a solid backcourt for the better part of last season, but they managed to land two solid guards like Masalia and Warren, then added Beaver State stellar prospect Aurora Goldshine with their #1 draft pick. What are Hawaii's goals for the current season? Our minimum goal is to make the playoffs. Competition's tighter at West, but I believe we have what it takes to get that eighth spot. After that, well, it mostly depends on how we get there - our core group's physical condition and a bit of luck will be key to have the slightest chance to move on.

ANOTHER PLAYER THAT JOINED THE KAHUNAS' RANKS DURING FREE AGENCY WAS CANADIAN CENTER CHARLES BURGH, COMING OFF A DIFFICULT YEAR BOUNCING BETWEEN TEXAS AND HUNTSVILLE. AFTER TRAINING CAMP AND THE FIRST THREE WEEKS OF REGULAR SEASON, WHAT CAN YOU SAY ABOUT HIM?

Oh well...Chuck's a professional, first and foremost. He's all about business, whether in the gym or outside the court. He knows his stuff, he's not afraid to put money where his mouth is. Once the game is underway, he's the kind of guy you love to have on your team, and hate to play against. He's a fierce agonist, one of the best pure defensive players in the league - in my opinion he's a bit underrated because he hasn't been on a winning team yet. We'll make sure that changes (laughs)

HAWAII IS AN EXTREMELY YOUNG TEAM, FEATURING NO LESS THAN SIX ROOKIES IN HIS ROSTER - INCLUDING LOTTERY PICKS GOLDSHINE AND CROSS-KIRALY. HOW DO YOU SEE THESE GUYS? DO YOU THINK THEY CAN BE PART OF A FUTURE TITLE CONTENDER?

They've all been awesome. Of course there's a level of uncertainty when you start training camp with so many new faces on the roster, but these guys are taking to it pretty good. Aurora's perfect for this franchise, a young, strong woman with a crazy good jumpshot and willingness to learn. Julian...man, Julian's just great. I know it sounds strange now, but I really think in a few years people will consider him the biggest steal of this draft class. He's got the potential, he's got the right attitude - once he learns how to rein in his inner demons, he'll show that on the court as well. Between those two and the other guys - Chris [Hengst], Tanya [Fackle], Jirra [Martin] and O'Rourke - Hawaii's got a very promising young core, which could be the foundation for a stable playoff contender.

ALONG WITH A FEW OTHER KAHUNAS, YOU ARE DUE TO ENTER FREE AGENCY AT THE END OF THE CURRENT SEASON. ARE YOU SET ON CHASING VICTORIES AND FAME IN HONOLULU, OR ARE YOU ALREADY LOOKING FORWARD TO BRING YOUR TALENT ELSEWHERE?

All I know right now is that I want to be part of a winning franchise. I'd love to promise you I'm down for a few more seasons in Honolulu, but at this point in time I really can't - so many things can happen between now and August. It's true that I love Hawaii, we got one of the best fan bases in the FBA and I

really want to keep rewarding our supporters for all their love and dedication to the Kahunas' cause. Our team's got good chemistry and I don't really want to abandon this group if I can choose to, but at the end of the day it's all about what's better for yourself.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ARE THE KAHUNAS LACKING TO START WINNING REGULARLY?

Experience, no doubt. We got eleven players who have completed two seasons or less - you can guess how this gives us a distinct disadvantage against teams who are heavy on veterans. You see the last few teams which have won a title, all of 'em were the result of a project going on for a few years - Tennessee kept their starting five almost intact for a few seasons, the Bikers added a superstar like Hopper to a strong core group who was mostly there three years before, Williamsburg had their "big three" thing going on for a few seasons before getting a ring. The good news is that we have Gerry and Teo [Masalia], two veterans who were on successful teams at some point in their career - they can help us gain that hunger and "winning mentality" which is key in order to break through as a team.

STRICTLY PERSONAL - "Make sure to be at the facilities by 11:30. After players are done with training, Scoonie's all yours." Jyothi Bhanushali, the Kahunas' extremely kind PR manager, keeps her word. We get to the E Komo Mai training court slightly ahead of time - right as the players are engaged in a five-on-five practice match, white against blue. Scoonie's on the white team, and almost every play is passing through his webbed paws - whether he's setting the pick and rolls, dishing assists to the open guards or finishing with powerful rim-crushers. Between plays, he gives words of advice to the Kahunas' rookies, correcting mistakes and setting them up for the next offense - it's hard to believe that he used to be in their same spot just months ago.

Time's up, Coach Berk has had enough. Players are free to unwind, whether with a shootaround, a quick three-on-three under the basket or by putting themselves in the masseur's capable paws. Once Scoonie's strong back has been taken care of, we sit down with him again, this time tackling some more personal topics.

YOU GREW UP AS A MULTI-SPORT ATHLETE, PLAYING FOOTBALL, BASKETBALL AND ATHLETICS AT DIFFERENT TIMES DURING YOUR TEENAGE YEARS. WHAT ARE YOUR BEST MEMORIES OF THAT TIME?

No doubt about that - going 26-1 and winning basketball's state [championships] while in senior high. It took four years for our team to build the chemistry we needed to be successful and keep that edge against stronger teams. Learning that lesson was crucial for me to succeed as a college team captain, and hopefully now in the pros.

WITH A SISTER (CAMILLA BARRETT -ED.) NARROWLY MISSING A SPOT ON THE US OLYMPIC SWIM TEAM BACK IN 2000, AS WELL AS TWO BROTHERS (SEAN AND RUDYARD) PLAYING PRO BASKETBALL IN EUROPE, YOU CERTAINLY COME FROM A VERY SPORTS-ORIENTED FAMILY. JUST HOW MUCH DID YOUR FAMILY PUSH YOURSELF TOWARDS SPORTS, AND THEN BASKETBALL?

We definitely were a sports-oriented family. All [of] us eight brothers have practiced sport at one point or another, at least until college level. We were all pretty supportive of each other, I remember being eight and traveling to the Olympic trials in San Francisco with the whole family to support Camilla. Basketball was a big passion - us younger brothers played endless two-on-twos on our backyard hoop, Sean and Lynn against Rudy and me. We all were pretty competitive, but it never went overboard - if anything, I'd say sports and competition brought us together on many levels. I'll always be thankful to my father - probably the biggest sports nut in whole Michigan - for introducing me to sports when I was a pup. It's an approach I'd totally want to transfer to my future sons or daughters.

YOU GREW UP IN HOLT, A SMALL TOWN IN SOUTHERN MICHIGAN, NOT EXACTLY THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR BASKETBALL HUB. HOW DID THAT AFFECT YOUR CAREER?

Made it that much harder for me to get noticed by college recruiters. I received offers from all around the Midwest, not just basketball but football as well since I used to do both, but the biggest basketball programs never called. I had a chat with Mustelid Michigan's coach, Jeffrey Brauer, and after that talk I never considered going elsewhere - there might have been better choices at the time but I really

shared Coach Brauer's team vision and desire to build up a project that could get the team to legitimately take on America's best. We had a number of players from Michigan in our roster, and state spirit really ran high while I was there - I can safely say I don't regret a single minute of the time I spent in Dearborn.

IS THAT A BOND YOU MAINTAIN WITH OTHER MICHIGANDERS IN THE FBA?

Kind of, especially the younger guys. Typhoons' Corbin Li'Archi, I've been playing against him ever since my high school days. Mike Timmids and me were rivals at college, [Scott] Paulichek as well though he left a couple years sooner.

INKED MILESTONES - Scoonie's Michigan roots run as deep as his Vietnamese ones. Both his father Stephen, a veteran from the Vietnam conflict, and his mother Huong Ha, a 57-year-old war refugee he met while on army duty, have been providing the maximum support to Scoonie's athletic career. Things have been rocky at times, especially because of their son's unattached nature. "Scoonie's always been a bit of a wild child," Stephen says, "but he's got a good head on his shoulders. Ever since he was a little pup, he's been a free spirit and very independent - on his own terms. Back in high school, he didn't like having people telling him what to do - he preferred to discover it on his own, even if it implied making a mistake and getting blasted for it. But he's learned his lessons pretty well, and his behaviour in the league is proving it". Which makes us wonder about another point of discussion between Scoonie and his family...

WE CAN'T GO THROUGH THIS WITHOUT TALKING ABOUT YOUR TATTOOS. WHERE DID YOUR ADDICTION BEGIN, WHAT INSPIRED YOU AND WHY ARE THEM SO IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Got my first, a small band on my ankle, during a vacation in the Pacific - but I became officially addicted while at college, when I met this amazingly skilled artist called Larsen Oe. All my tattoos are thought out and mean something that's close to my heart - I don't simply walk into a parlor and pick a design off the wall. Each and everyone of them represent a brief chapter in the story of my life - my Vietnamese heritage, my upbringing, college years, the road to the FBA Draft and so on.

HAVE YOU EVER GOTTEN FLAK FOR YOUR TATTOOS? DO YOU ENJOY THE "TOUGH GUY" AIR THEY GIVE YOU, OR HAVE YOU NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT?

I definitely got flak for getting them, especially while at college. A local columnist said that my college should be ashamed for fielding a team captain who looked like he'd been coming straight from death row. A woman I met during a promotional meet-and-greet told me that I'm a terrible role model for all the Kahunas' kid fans, just because of my ink. And I can tell you my own parents, although giving me the utmost support and helping my reach every goal I set my eyes upon, weren't exactly happy to hear I planned to get a number of them. They definitely never encouraged me to getting them. (pauses)

I don't like to be labeled because of my choice to get extensive body art. I get tattoos because I want them to be looked at - it's about the need to express myself, show people I'm comfortable in my own skin and get them a little insight about what drives me to be the player and individual that I am and want to be. So if people like the "tough guy" flair I get from getting ink, that's totally fine with me - just not use them as a tool to berate my conduct on and off the court.

LAST JUNE YOU MADE THE NEWS FOR GETTING ONE PARTICULAR TATTOO. YOU POSTED A TWITTER SELFIE SHOWING OFF YOUR FRESH INK - A HIBISCUS FLOWER, THE SYMBOL OF HAWAII, SITTING ON YOUR RIGHT CHEST...

I knew that was coming! (laughs) You wanna see it? (He stands up and unveils his chest tattoo.) Whoa, really good work there. So...yeah, before the tip-off of every home game this season, you've made a habit of tapping it with your fist, as a way to show loyalty to Hawaii fans.

NOW, SAY YOU GET TRADED TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LEAGUE - HOW WOULD YOU COPE WITH THAT?

Well, to be honest, I haven't really given it much thought. Hawaii's my second home right now, I have a blast living here and sporting the hibiscus is a way to say "no matter what happens, nobody can take away the good times I had while playing here". I totally see why fans could get angry at that if I got on another team, but in the end it's their problem. I just know I'll give my 100% to whichever team I end up playing for.

THE KAHUNAS' ROSTER IS EXTREMELY VARIED BY BOTH SPECIES AND ORIGIN, WITH MANY INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS [NORWICH IV, MASALIA, GARZA...] BEING PART OF IT. HAS IT BEEN DIFFICULT TO BUILD TEAM CHEMISTRY AND BOND WITH THEM?

Not at all, we and the foreigners get along pretty swimmingly. At the end of the day, we're all young guys of similar ages, we play pro basketball and like to do more or less the same things - play videogames, go out for dinner, hang with friends and so on. A guy like Alfie [Norwich] loves doing the same things I do, no matter how different our personal backgrounds can be.

WE OFTEN SEE YOU IN THE KAHUNAS' WEB TV VIDEOS, HEADPHONES IN YOUR EARS, TUNING OUT FROM THE WORLD AS GAMETIME IS APPROACHING. WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE PRE-GAME JAMS?

My pre-game playlist incorporates a number of genres - thug rap, classic rock, dance pop, heavy metal...any energetic pump-up tune that'll get my blood flowing and adrenaline gushing through my body. I listen to a bit of everything according to the situation, I do not like to get stuck on a particular artist or music style. I know some guys out there are big on those inspirational hip-hop tunes - Howlers' LaShawn Grandon and a couple other guys insisted to get "Till I Collapse" as our college team's official track - but really, it's not my thing. I don't think I'll ever go out and make a hip-hop album, for that matter. (laughs)

WHO WILL BE THE WESTERN CONFERENCE CHAMPION?

Alaska. After their first-round ouster last season, they're the one who want it the most. I feel they're gonna get their revenge.

LAST QUESTION - HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR CAREER TO END?

I want recognition. I want to make the playoffs and be part of a winning team. Be a team leader on a regular title contender in a few years and eventually getting to win one, or better a few, rings. More than anything, though, I want to leave a tangible legacy to the generation of young ballers that will follow mine - while at the same time establishing myself as one of the great players of this generation. It may sound pretentious, and sure as fish it's one hell of a long shot, but that's what everyone's out there for.



AN UNEXPECTED VOYAGE ~ by Kingsley Wolfe

Fear.

If there was one emotion that Kevin could pin down as the one showing above all others at that moment, it would have been fear. Followed closely by nervousness, excitement, and a glimmer of hope. The auditorium was slowly filling up. Most of the draftees were there already, either walking and talking or sitting anxiously in their seats. The media were already buzzing with anticipation, ready to try and be the first with the news of the draft selections. Kevin looked over his shoulder, watching Barnaby Jazz and Daryl Conte settle into their seats in the crowd. Barbie smiled when he saw the pangolin looking at them, and Daryl waved, holding a camera in his other hand.

Kevin waved back before turning around and focusing on the stage. After so many interviews, so much press, he was uncertain if he had truly made an impression. He looked around the room as the GMs and their player delegations began to be seated at their tables, and his eyes focused in on Wilmer Grehr of the Kahunas. If there was one GM that Kevin was sure he had made an impression on, it was the British deer. It was through Wilmer's help that Kevin had been able to build up the courage to come out to his parents, and he had even given Kevin a small endorsement in naming him the MVP of his small team at the end of the Show Your Colours event earlier in the summer. Kevin sighed, looking away. He knew the odds of landing in Hawaii were exceptionally low. They already had a strong forward lineup in Gerry Cross, Alphone Norwich, Scoonie Barret, and Gary Ridge, but with so many free agents leaving, they needed guards, and maybe a centre, not forwards. Though, maybe not a centre, Scoonie could play that position too, and they had just traded for Antonio Garza, snagging him from the Voyageurs.

The big pangolin shook his head. What else had he done to impress GMs? Sure, he had made a few friends on the various teams, like Luukas Hirvonen and Crosby Sutters on the Spectrums, as well as Rocky Caracal on the Totems. He grinned, remembering the few fun adventures he had managed to sneak in with Zack Tate. Sure, a late night chat after an injury might not be an adventure to some, but when you're with a zorilla that considers a chest injury that requires stitches nothing more than a light scratch and tells you to pull over at a drive-thru on the way to the hospital, there's not much else you can call it but an adventure. And then there was that dinner in Hawaii. . .

But had he impressed the GMs? The players, sure, he'd made friends, but those friends weren't what was going to get him on a team. He hadn't really stuck out at the combine, and he had ranked 40th out of about 50 participants at the Totem's Ironfur competition, even when you discounted Li Ho Fook's fake entry. Sure 40th with place him among the draftees, but that didn't account for the other 50 players that hadn't participated. He hadn't shone in Vegas, and the only

real standing he had received was his MVP title in Hawaii. Even then, he hadn't made defensive fur of the event, despite his specialty in the skill. There had been a few interviews, a few chances to meet GMs personally, and they had gone cordially enough, but he couldn't gauge how well he had actually stood out from the crowd.

Kevin looked up from his thoughts as he heard the microphone being tapped. Standing there was Stefan Calico, the new Commissioner of the FBA. After asking for everyone to settle down, he led off with introducing the former commissioner, who took over for a quick speech. Kevin began tearing up a bit as the man spoke, and the mood was brought quickly back to heightened extremes as the speech finished up and Luukas Hirvonen took the stage alongside Nina Lime. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the legend himself Healey Davis walk onto the stage, taking a spot behind a keyboard. With no warning, Davis began to play, and Luukas Hirvonen began to sing, Nine Lime right alongside him. They sang their souls out, and partway through, Luke pulled out a sign with a message for Crosby on it, and Kevin teared up a bit from the sweetness of the gesture, especially after the news of only a few days prior. The auditorium cheered when they finished and the commissioner thanked them for their performance.

Then, Stefan Calico quickly got straight to business.

After only a few moments pause, a representative from Hawaii approached the stage and the commissioner began. "And for the first pick, the Hawaii Kahunas select . . ." The was a moment of silence before the commissioner continued, a name appearing on the screen behind him, "Aurora Goldshine."

Kevin almost leapt out of his seat at the selection. He stood and cheered as Aurora made her way to the stage, his friend beaming with happiness. If there was anyone Kevin thought truly deserved the first pick, it was Aurora. She was such a strong player, and such a friendly face both on and off the court. He chuckled. With Alfie, that aura of kindness could do the Kahunas a great deal of good. But Kevin's face dropped as he watched Aurora look out into the audience, her face going from happiness directly to confusion and dread. He watched as she looked over to Wilmer, then turned to smile once again at the crowd. Kevin pulled out his phone and tweeted a congratulations, but followed it up asking if everything was okay.

Right after, there was a slight pause as the commissioner announced that the next pick would be delayed as there were some last minute deals in the works. Kevin's eyes followed Aurora as she was approached by Ahti, who she quickly left her jersey with and ran towards the back of the auditorium. His attention was brought back to the stage by activity. After a word from the sidelines, Stefan Calico announced that the new Seattle Summits had traded for the third overall draft pick. Another small figure ran up to the cat and the commissioner coughed returning to the microphone, stating that the Summits had traded their 3rd overall draft selection for the 2nd overall draft selection, and that Seattle now had the floor to make their selection.

"And with the second overall draft pick of the 2014 FBA Draft, the Seattle Summit select Jake Turner."

Kevin nearly choked on his water. Mrs. Turner had selected her own kid, and based on the look on Jake's face, the fox didn't seem particularly pleased with the news. Kevin expected that Jake would go high, that he was even in the running for the first overall pick, but to go second, and to his mother's team, well, the pangolin felt a bit at odds with the decision. He knew family ties were strong in the FBA, that second or even third generation talent seemed to do better, but to be drafted by his own mother?

Kevin put the thought out of his mind. He congratulated Hiroyuki as he was selected. He hadn't really had the chance to get to know the shrike, but Josh seemed to speak well of him from their time playing together on Underwood, and that was good enough for the pangolin. Kevin barely had time to consider who might go next with Calico announced that the Howlers had selected TBalt as the fourth overall draft selection. Kevin smiled. Baltasar was one player Kevin admired for his strength and perseverance, and he was happy to see his friend drafted to high. The excitement

kept up as Warren Doyle was selected fifth, and Kevin once again did his best to congratulate someone he considered a friend. He had only truly met Warren recently, having lunch with him in the days before the combine challenge, but Adi had spoken highly of him from their time rooming together at the combine, and Warren had certainly lived up to those statements. He seemed friendly enough, and despite how curious he was, Kevin had withheld his question about the scars on his muzzle. As curious as he had been, that was obviously a private matter, one that Warren would discuss when and if he was ready for it.

He mentally replayed the selections in his head. Five in, and all five fairly high ranked among the Top 24. He couldn't even begin to guess at who would be next.

“With the sixth overall draft pick of the 2014 FBA Draft, the Santa Ana Spectrums select Aditya Anggun.”

This time, Kevin did jump out of his seat. He watched the civet's face go from shock to joy before he stood up from his table and made his way slowly towards the stage. Kevin had to restrain himself from running down there to give his friend a hug. Aditya, the friend who had helped Kevin get through so much, despite all the difficulties that he himself had, from those he talked about like his time in the military to those that he didn't. Aditya, the friend who had been the one to convince him that maybe he could still do some good in this world, that maybe he did have friends among the draft class, that maybe, just maybe, Kevin was beating himself up too much. Kevin smiled, he'd save the hug for later that night, once both of them got back to their shared room in the hotel. He was certain that the civet would want to celebrate a bit with his brother anyways.

The draft returned to normal for only a few moments afterwards. The seventh pick was called, Shirley Takamoto, another expected pick after her final draft ranking. But the next pick was Hawaii again. Kevin chuckled. Wilmer had drafted Top 24 for his first pick, but even this high, Kevin wouldn't be surprised to see Wilmer fish deep into the pool, like he had done for Alphonse last year.

“With the eighth overall draft pick of the FBA Draft, the Hawaii Kahunas select Julian Cross-Kiraly.”

Kevin cheered. There, that was the first surprise of the night, not that Kevin was truly surprised. If there were going to be a reach from Wilmer, Kevin suspected it would be on the French dog. After all, he had made the top of Wilmer's personal list after Show Your Colours, and despite hardships with some draftees, Julian had an impressive game, with lots of room for improvement.

And the draft continued on, Kevin's congratulatory tweets becoming standard after each selection. Kevin let his hopes get up when Rocky looked over and ordered Kevin a bottle of Cristal for him. His hopes of playing alongside the lynx were crushed when both the 11th and 14th picks passed with no mention of his name. Well, no matter, Kevin opened the bottle and poured himself a glass anyways. The nerves were beginning to get to him, and he needed it to calm himself down just a little.

What followed was a surge of friends being selected at once. Sebastian, Kevin's one self-appointed rival going at 12 to the Wildcards. Edwin followed at 15, snatched up by the Firestorm, and Ren taking the stage right after for Tallahassee. Kevin even gave a little extra grin when Hal was selected 18th by the Bangor Tides. But as he cheered his friends on, and tweeted his congratulations, Kevin sank lower and lower into his seat. He knew that he wouldn't go first round, that was obvious when you looked at the number of strong forwards this year and the low amount of teams that needed them. Even then, Kevin had hoped that maybe, just maybe, somebody had considered him worthy of the first round. But the first round was coming to a close, with Valentine being selected 21st by the Arctics.

“With the twenty second overall pick of the 2014 FBA Draft, the Santa Fe Whips select Trent St. Croix!”

Kevin scowled, sinking even deeper into his seat. Really, Trent? The polar bear was

constantly destroying his reputation on twitter, insulting draftees left and right. Even when he tried to be 'nice' he slipped in offhand comments and flaunted his wealth. If there were one draftee Kevin could not stand, it was St. Croix. The way he tossed his money around, offering extravagant gifts to the teams he visited, almost seeming to want to buy his way onto a team. Kevin was sure it wasn't true, but that didn't change how he felt. He shook his head, muttering quietly to himself. "I don't know how Corker deals with him, he's a nightmare."

Kevin was so lost in his thoughts that he barely heard the next selection. "...lect Josh Green."

Kevin looked up from his slumped position halfway down his chair, clapping for his friend. "Good on you, Josh," he muttered silently. "You've been so worried about the draft, about everything. You deserved this. I'm so glad I helped you get to Hawaii, you definitely put that trip to your advantage, and I'm sure it put you on a lot of radars."

"And with the final pick of the first round of the 2014 FBA Draft, the Winnipeg Voyageurs select Kevin Malka!"

Kevin's mind froze. No, he couldn't have just heard what he thought he heard. There had to be some sort of mistake. There was still Top 24 Forwards left, there was still Theodore Rockwell. Was Winnipeg really calling HIS name? He was snapped out of it as he felt hands clapping him on the shoulder, congratulating him. Finally, the realization that somebody had chosen him broke through his mental walls and Kevin leapt out of his seat throwing his arms into the air in an exuberant cheer. And that's when he remembered why had had been being so careful all night: his suit was too small, and pretty worn in as is. He heard it before he felt it, the sound of ripping fabric, his scales slicing through the suit. He looked up at his arms, seeing the pockmarked fabric through which he could now see his brown scales, the left arm almost completely detached at the shoulder. He felt a slight breeze across his back, and without looking he could tell that the back of his suit had fared even worse than his arms or the knees of his pants. A bright blush now heavy across his face, the pangolin began walking towards the stage slowly, trying not to do any more damage. He heard Edwin's voice yell his name as he got close to the stage, and the Canada goose came running up, shoving an unfurled Canadian flag into his hands. Kevin grinned, taking the flag in both hands and raising it above his head as he walked up onto the stage, where the commissioner and Mr. Tomasi were waiting for him. He shoved the flag haphazardly into his belt and took the jersey proudly from the Voyageur's GM, posing for the photo that the team photographer was set up to take. The smile never leaving his face, he followed Mr. Tomasi off the stage and back to the Voyageur's table, where he took a seat next to Yves Carbonneau, who gave the pangolin a congratulatory clasp on the shoulder.

Kevin pulled out his phone. He was glad it had been in his pocket when his name had been called, he could barely remember anything through the excitement of the last few minutes. Luke and Nina took the stage for an encore performance and Kevin's phone continuously buzzed in his hands. He saw a notification saying that he had 25 interactions on twitter, and as the phone buzzed again, he saw the number jump up to 27.

Though he could barely comprehend what was going on anymore, he head was still spinning, Kevin managed to catch the fact that with picks 26 and 27, Texas grabbed both Ahti and Wesley. Kevin cheered, seeing his friends remain inseparable, even in the FBA. And only one pick later, LaShawn Grandon had his name called. The Badger had gotten on stage, accepted his place in the FBA, and then turned around, got down on one knee and pulled out a ring, proposing to his girl. The entire auditorium had cheered, and even Kevin's already high spirits were lifted further with the amazing news. Kevin remained excited when following that, Jirra Martin was elected by Hawaii, and Kevin was glad to see his newest friend take his place on stage.

Kevin settled back into his routine, though a thought pulled at the back of his head the entire time. He'd cheer for each choice, and congratulate them on twitter, but . . . Where was Theo? The hybrid had been hyped so much by so many people, even TMatt Latrans had giving him a

callout after the combine challenge, so why hadn't his name been called yet? With ten picks to go, he watched Theo get up and leave the room, seeing the tweets on his phone for clarification of the action. Kevin was concerned, but he knew that Theo wouldn't want to had from him, at least not now.

Shannon went only a few picks later, and Theo congratulated her, even if it only seemed half-hearted. As the second round came to a close, Kevin got worried. Iver Drake got drafted 46th, which Kevin had been happy for, having convinced Iver to not leave only a few picks previously.

"With the 48th and final pick, The Winnipeg Voyageurs select . . ." Kevin squeezed shut his eyes, hoping, "Tanner Muldoon."

Kevin cursed inwardly. He liked Tanner, he did, but he feared for his friend. Theo hadn't been taking it well as it was, and now all the draft spots were gone. Kevin started thinking. Well, maybe somebody will sign him, or there's the D-League, that's always an option. Eli and Beulah came up from D-League and did wonderfully! Kevin barely heard the commissioner's words.

"And before we depart, there are a few last minute offers. The Albany Alphas have offered a contract to Theodore Rockwell and . . ." Kevin didn't even listen to the rest, pulling out his phone and tweeting at Theo. Finally, the hybrid responded, with utter shock and joy at the news. And the response made Kevin smile, his friend had made it. He'd show the GMs just what they had missed by not drafting him during their chance to do so.

But one friend still concerned Kevin. Emil. He watched the gecko's face, crestfallen, as he stood and headed for the back of the auditorium. Kevin tossed down his jersey and cap on the table, looking up at his new GM. "I'm sorry, I have to go take care of this."

And Kevin stood, running after Emil as the gecko exited the auditorium and rounded the corner into the hall.

TESTIMONIALS FROM FBA MEMBERS

1) HOW DID YOU FIND THE FBA?

ILLAROUGE: I was introduced to it by a friend, right in the middle of one of the playoff bouts for that year. I attended one of the FBA game livestreams as an observer, and I saw the potential. I'm not much of a social person, but there were stories to tell, characters to explore, and I wanted in on that.

MIGEYEFoxE: I found it initially while watching Fox's streams. That's actually how I came up with the idea of Kresta. That there was someone there whose favorite animal was a fox, but never used a fox in their name due to wanting to avoid stereotypes.

SAMGWOSDZ: Random browsing on FA years ago.

QOVAPRYI: So I know it's gonna sound strange and all, but...I'm a big fan of mustelids, and as I was searching for "athletic ferret" or something on FA I stumbled upon JTigerclaw's draft report for FBA player Mark Ferramin. At first I thought it was a one-off piece mocking real NBA draft reports, but when I discovered it was part of an entire universe centered around anthro basketball players...I just had to make a double take. Sports and furry go hand-in-hand very seldomly, and it sounded just too good to be true.

PAC: The first I ever heard about the FBA was when I was starting to do commissions for Buck Hopper. It started getting me interested in the idea of sports stories of modern characters in a contemporary "real world" setting.

2) WHAT KEEPS YOU INTERESTED?

BETSIE: The stories and the character creation. As well as seeing the growth of my team.

MIGEYEFoxE: It is an interesting community. The sort of very loose roleplaying based on some engine's decisions. With my self-appointed task of maintaining the Metrics/Stats page I have something that does admittedly make me feel like it's my duty to stick around at least during that season. That and staying invested in what/how Kresta is doing.

SAMGWOSDZ: Seeing art, stories, and games and GMing.

QOVAPRYI: I guess, the endless possibilities that this kind of shared universe gives, both in terms of storytelling, art and other visual/hearing medias. And the fact that it got me writing regularly in English and actually getting fairly good at it, which can only turn out helpful to me in the future.

PAC: Community members who are active and interested in telling their stories keep the FBA lively and interesting.

3) WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THIS COMMUNITY?

BETSIE: The people and the stories behind the characters. All the amazing characters for that matter (as well as the laughably bad ones).

MIGEYEFoxE: It's a story prompt. Seriously, I have been struggling to work on my stories for years now (many might think my dA account dead due to how rarely I post anything to it) but by some comment on the chat or how things are going I have still managed to become inspired enough to write a ton for Kresta, a ton more than I have on anything else, even if I do feel like I have to hold the kid's gloves with her.

SAMGWOSDZ: The fact that every day I know I have friends to talk to about stuff. :)

QOVAPRYI: Hands down, the wonderful individuals that I came across to during my stint as a contributor. It still blows my mind how this little thing can bring together people from different walks of life and cultural backgrounds, and actually sometimes make us feel closer than real life

acquaintances.

PAC: Kind of the same as the last question: seeing the new and interesting ways people tell a story through the lens of the FBA

4) WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE PLAYER OR TEAM (THAT IS NOT YOUR OWN)?

BETSIE: Player: Alfie. Complex story, complex character, and yet easy to understand and just a lot of fun to follow. Team: Can't really say I have a favourite. They're all interesting teams with interesting histories and futures that seem to be ever-changing.

MIGEYEFoxE: I think it might have to be a toss-up between a few of them. For times I'd say Shane Rufus, others Ambrose Slade. Mainly because they felt more "real" to me? That it wasn't all just "something bad happened to X, let's immediately show all the support because we're all one big happy family." Even if they got chewed out for it, I just appreciated that they were true to who they were, regardless of what happened to other players.

SAMGWOSDZ: Jake Turner.

QOVAPRYI: Too many to list! Back when I joined I was instantly in love with the Tennessee Moonshiners and their core three of Paul Teronura (<3 <3 <3), Barry Carpenter and Aragon Fisher, which sadly is long gone. As of now I really like most of the teams and players, even those I don't have a vested interest on. I especially love to dig up those players who haven't got a huge backstory going on, and try to flesh out their personalities and give them more life.

PAC: I have a fondness for the Winnipeg Voyageurs and many of the woman players, like Aisha Melbourne and Mika Ziggler.

5) ANY WORDS FOR PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY THAT ARE INTERESTED?

BETSIE: If you're interested in it, just go for it. Try it out. I threw myself into the league not knowing the first thing about basketball AND signed on as an HC my first go-round (no players entered on my part as I missed the deadline). My first year SUCKED. My team lost its GM AND was barred from the playoffs despite actually having a damn good season. But if you truly love it, none of that will matter.

MIGEYEFoxE: The FBA is a very open-ended community. You show up, make a character (or not) and follow along. There is never any sense that you have to contribute or that you should contribute. You are more than free to just show up, be a part of the community and put in however much or little you want and no one will think less of you for it. Heck, I think the best way to really get a feel for whether you want to participate at all is just join the chatrooms, talk with the people, involve yourself with the community regardless of not having a character involved. And if it seems interesting, If you like the people and what's being done in the FBA, then apply a character for the next year's draft.

HARLOW: Give it a shot! If you keep an interest and go with the flow, and you want to strive to improve your own art as well as read some amazing stories and characters, this can be the place for you. This is pretty much how I keep my English trained, how I like to express my creative side and how I managed to meet some incredible people. Don't be afraid to ask around to learn the ropes and people might just enjoy whatever you create!

QOVAPRYI: The FBA is probably one of the best active communities you can happen to stumble on the net, especially inside the fragmented reality of our fandom. If you like storytelling at its finest, as well as the action, camaraderie and drama that come out in a sports-based environment - this is definitely the place for you :)

PAC: If you are looking to develop a professional sports character, watch some sports documentaries and read some articles. You'll learn a lot about the human condition as experienced through a sports league, which is important even when you're talking about animals.





