

Here are a pair of feature stories, on brothers Samme and Shannon Givens:

Those who watched **Samme Givens'** career at Drexel would be rather surprised seeing him play now.

The 6-foot-5 forward has transformed his game, moving from a pure post player to a hybrid forward. All summer at the Delco Pro-Am, he's been handling the ball much more than he ever did as a Dragon, showing off a much-improved jumper and ability to create from out on the wing.



Samme Givens, working on his jumper during the 2012 Delco Pro-Am playoffs. (Photo: Mark Jordan)

"People around me were telling me 'you're a little small to play inside, but if you can hit the jump shot and hit maybe one to two threes per game...you can make yourself more diverse and people have to play you differently and you can give yourself more options,'" Givens told CoBL. "So that's what I'm trying to do and that's what I'm preparing for."

Givens' first professional season, spent with Aris Leeuwarden in the Dutch Basketball League, couldn't have gone much better. He finished the 47-game season averaging team highs with 16.3 points and 5.9 rebounds per game, winning the league's Eurobasket.com Player of the Year, Forward of the Year and Import Player of the Year in leading his team to the Eredivisie finals, where they fell to Leiden.

"It was great, it made it seem like all my hard work I put into the summer and going into the first year, it paid off," he said of the accolades. "You've got to get over there, get adjusted to the lifestyle and the style of play. It's a little bit more physical than what I was used to in college and everything, but I thought I adjusted well."

Last year, it took Givens until the end of the summer to secure that contract with Leeuwarden, a common trend among first-year professionals looking to secure their first contracts. After proving what he could do in his first year overseas, Givens did not need to wait long for a follow-up contract.

He's already signed to play over in France's ProB League with Evreux, which should be a step up in both competition and exposure.

"Had (the contract) as soon as I came off the plane from the other team, so I was very happy, I was relieved," he said. "You don't have that pressure of waiting on a job or waiting for teams to come at you."

This summer, Givens is playing with the newest class of Drexel Dragons, including forwards **Rodney Williams** and **Mohamed Bah**. A natural leader on the court, Givens is constantly giving direction to his younger teammates, making sure they're in the right spots defensively as well as making smart decisions on the offensive end.

"I'm just trying to teach them the stuff before they get into (Drexel coach) **Bruiser (Flint)**'s camp," he said. "Just telling them 'look, it's not going to be easy, you've got to learn...just be prepared to be a sponge and be ready to absorb everything.'"

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As well-recognized as the Givens name is at Drexel, it's still not quite as well-known as it is around D-II West Chester University. **Shannon Givens**, a rising senior guard on the Rams, has a big name to live up to.

His father, **Kevin Givens**—the head coach at Academy New Church, where both Samme and Shannon went to school—is West Chester's all-time leading scorer.

"It's a lot of pressure on me, he scored a lot of points there," Shannon Givens told CoBL, "but it's been a great experience. Met a lot of old friends that went to school with him, a lot of people, a lot of alumni. It's great at West Chester."



Shannon Givens, here in Delco Pro-Am action, is the captain of the 2013-14 West Chester squad. (Photo: Mark Jordan)

The elder Givens finished his career with 2,054 points at the school, one of just two Rams to ever break the 2000-point barrier. The other is current West Chester head coach **Damien Blair**, who fell 29 points short of the school's record.

Shannon Givens, a 5-11 point guard who transferred from Drexel after one season there, also sat out the 2011-12 season before returning last season to average 7.8 ppg last season. While he certainly won't come anywhere close to catching his dad's record, he has a chance to accomplish something neither his father nor his head coach were able to do.

"We talk about making history all the time," he said. "We haven't won a (Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference) title since 1959, we need to make history this year.

"We've been close for the last two years; two years ago we lost in the championship, last year we lost in the semifinals to IUP, so it's real frustrating to make it far and not finish it up. This year I'm hoping that everybody gets on board and we can make history."

As captain of the team in addition to being part of a six-man senior class, Givens' responsibility this year goes behind being the starting point guard. His brother led Drexel during the Dragons' 29-7 season in 2012-13, and Blair isn't worried about the younger Givens following right in those footsteps.

"It must be something that runs in their veins because he's a leader on and off the floor," Blair said. "If we're going to be any good this year, he's going to have to take the bull by the horns and make sure everybody does what we need them to do in order to be successful.

"There's no question he's matured as a player and he's a very intelligent player, so when he does what we need him to do, we're a good team."

Last year at the Delco Pro-Am, the two Givens brothers played on the same team, clearly enjoying every opportunity to take the court together. This year, West Chester has its own team in the league, so Shannon plays with his college teammates.

Of course, he's still gotten advice from his brother.

"He said 'let the game come to you, don't try to do too much, set the team up first,'" Shannon said. "Your shots, everything else will come.

"Just lead the team."