

PITT BASKETBALL PERSONALITY PROFILES

KHEM BIRCH

- Sixth Pitt player in school history to earn McDonald's All-America team honors following teammate Dante Taylor. Also competed in the Jordan Brand All-Star Game.
- Highest ranked recruit to play at Pitt since Brian Shorter in 1987.
- Originally from Montreal, Quebec (Canada). Has played on the Canada Junior National Team. One of his goals is to put Canada Basketball on the map. He has the opportunity to compete for a roster spot on Canada's 2012 Olympic team.
- One of three Canadians who played in the 2011 McDonald's All-American game including Myck Kabongo (Texas) and Kyle Wiltjer (Kentucky).
- Originally a member of the 2012 class but graduated early from Notre Dame Prep and reclassified.
- First Canadian to play at Pitt since Vancouver native Levon Kendall (2003-07).
- First played basketball because of his height but now plays because he "loves the game."

ISAIAH EPPS

- Nickname is "Zeke" and/or "Easy."
- Originally from New York City (Manhattan) but moved to New Jersey with his mother before the eighth grade.
- Played on same team with fellow Pitt teammate Cameron Wright at the LeBron James Skills Camp.
- Second cousin of Pitt guard Tray Woodall.
- Pitt assistant coach Brandin Knight played in the same AAU program as Epps and is also from New Jersey.
- Attended same prep school (Hargrave Military Academy, Va.) as former Pitt star and current Memphis Grizzlies player Sam Young. Helped lead Hargrave to the nation's No. 1 prep school ranking as a senior.

ASHTON GIBBS

- Two-time Big East Academic All-Star and is a candidate for Academic All-America honors.
- Earned the Big East Most Improved Player Award as a sophomore, becoming Pitt's sixth Big East Most Improved Player Award winner in the last 11 years. Others who earned the award include Ricardo Greer (1999-00), Brandin Knight (2001-02), Carl Krauser (2002-03), Aaron Gray (2005-06) and Sam Young (2007-08).
- Two-time USA Basketball player who helped guide the Under-19 USA Basketball Team to the Gold Medal and undefeated 9-0 record at the FIBA World Championships in Auckland, New Zealand in July, 2009. Pitt Head Coach Jamie Dixon served as head coach of the squad.
- Father Temple Gibbs played college football at Temple and roomed with NFL All-Pro cornerback Kevin Ross.
- Father taught him how to shoot a basketball at a young age, but it was his mother who was the one who stressed making his free throws. She still does today.
- As a freshman, earned the nickname "Microwave" for his 3-point shooting off the bench. Former Detroit Pistons star Vinnie Johnson was also nicknamed the "Microwave" for his ability to heat up quickly during games.
- Played at same high school as Pitt assistant coach and former point guard Brandin Knight (Seton Hall Prep). Gibbs has known Knight since childhood.
- His little brother Sterling broke his school career scoring record at Seton Hall Prep. Sterling is a freshman basketball player at the University of Texas.
- Has known fellow Pitt players Tray Woodall and Nasir Robinson since the seventh grade. He played on an AAU team with Woodall.

MALCOLM GILBERT

- Originally from Smyrna, Del., but attended The Academy of the New Church near Philadelphia, Pa.
- Outstanding student who was also recruited by Harvard and Princeton. Said that Pitt was the "perfect" fit for him both academically and athletically.
- Owns an 88-inch wingspan.

- Sister Milana plays basketball at the University of Hartford.
- Played high school basketball with Syracuse player Rakeem Christmas.
- Underrated recruit who rose in the rankings as his high school career wore on.
- Plans to major in mathematics.
- Hobbies and interests include collecting model cars, fishing and swimming.

DURAND JOHNSON

- Fourth Baltimore native to play at Pitt in the last three years including Jermaine Dixon, Chase Adams and Aron Nwankwo.
- Nickname is "Pee-wee."
- Has devoted all of his successes to his grandmother, Odella Butler.

JOHN JOHNSON

- One of only two players in Philadelphia city history to earn four All-State high school honors.
- Nickname is "Johnny Flipp."
- Favorite NFL team is the Pittsburgh Steelers even though he hails from Philadelphia.
- Philadelphia native who follows in the footsteps of several Philly area Pitt players including Nasir Robinson, Brad Wanamaker and Mike Cook.

J.J. MOORE

- Won the "Throwdown Showdown," Pitt's dunk contest at its preseason Blue-Gold Scrimmage. His final dunk came after he took off from the free throw line and sailed over three standing managers.
- Named a Hoopscoop High School All-America selection.
- Impressed at the Jordan Brand Classic All-Star Game at Madison Square Garden following his senior year of high school.
- Extremely athletic, owns a 37-inch vertical leap.
- Played at same prep school, South Kent Academy (Conn.) as former Pitt teammate Gilbert Brown. Nickname is "Twin" since teammates believe he resembles Brown.

ARON NWANKWO

- Walk-on who is attending Pitt on a full academic scholarship.
- 2010 graduate of Baltimore City H.S. with a perfect 4.0 grade point average.
- Played in the Pitt JamFest AAU tournament at the Petersen Events Center on April 24, 2010. Head Coach Jamie Dixon offered him a walk-on spot following the event.
- Follows in the footsteps of two other Pitt Baltimore area products: Jermaine Dixon and Chase Adams.
- Chose Pitt for its pre-Med program with the opportunity to play on its top college basketball program. Said it was a "dream come true" and that he would gain the "best of both worlds" while receiving an academic scholarship offer to Pitt and then having an opportunity to play on the basketball team.
- Also played lacrosse in high school where he led City H.S. to three straight city titles.

LAMAR PATTERSON

- Played his senior year of high school at St. Benedict's Prep in New Jersey for coach Danny Hurley, who is now at Wagner. Helped guide St. Benedict's to a No. 7 final national ranking and berth in the first-ever ESPN Rise National High School Tournament.
- Younger brother of Perry Patterson, who played quarterback at Syracuse from 2004-07 and was a Second Team All-State honoree at Lancaster McCaskey High School. The Patterson brothers are two of only four players in McCaskey history to earn All-State honors in basketball.
- Played his first three seasons at Lancaster McCaskey High School where he was an All-State selection.
- Older brother Lorne Creighton also starred in basketball at McCaskey and played collegiately at Kutztown University.
- Favorite all-time basketball player is Magic Johnson and had the opportunity to meet him when Pitt played in the CBE Classic in Kansas City last year.
- Committed to Pitt after the Panthers' win over Duke at Madison Square Garden in December, 2007.
- Nickname is "LP".

NICK RIVERS

- Is back on the team for his final season of eligibility. Earned his degree in Economics and is currently attending graduate school at Pitt.
- Senior walk-on who earned a roster spot in August, 2009. The previous two seasons, he served as a student manager.
- Talented musician (rapping and singing) and dancer.
- Performs a dance routine, a blend of hip-hop and break dancing in the team huddle prior to home games. The team discovered his dancing talent in the lockerroom and encouraged him to perform the routine before games.
- Father Angelo Rivers played basketball at UC-Davis (1982-86) and was inducted into the UC-Davis Athletic Hall of Fame in 2006.
- Best job he ever held was a baseball umpire.
- Happiest and most gratifying moment in sports was seeing himself on ESPN.

NASIR ROBINSON

- Nickname is "Nas" and "The Warrior." His given name Nasir is Arabic for "helper" or "success and victory."
- As a high school junior, played in the state championship game against former Pitt star and current San Antonio Spurs player DeJuan Blair's Schenley team. Blair's team won the game, but Robinson bounced back the following year to guide his Chester team to the 2008 state title as a senior with a 33-1 overall record. His team earned the nation's No. 3 ranking by *USA Today*.
- Other Chester H.S. alums include Orlando Magic standout Jameer Nelson and Wisconsin head coach Bo Ryan.
- Has known fellow Pitt players Ashton Gibbs and Tray Woodall since the seventh grade.

DANTE TAYLOR

- Became the fifth Pitt player in school history and the first in 22 years to earn McDonald's All-America team honors joining Charles Smith (1984), Jerome Lane (1985), Bobby Martin (1987) and Brian Shorter (1987).
- Won the McDonald's All-American Skills Competition, where he completed a full-court dribbling and shooting course in 37 seconds. Also scored 15 points and grabbed six rebounds in the McDonald's All-America game in Miami on April 1, 2009.
- Honored by his hometown of Greenburgh, N.Y. as being a "native son" during halftime of the Frankie Williams All-Star game in June, 2009.
- Played high school basketball at National Christian Academy, the same school that produced Patrick Ewing, Jr., Kevin Durant and Deron Washington.
- Family sent him to National Christian Academy hoping that he would turn his life around and improve his grades. When he arrived at NCA, he stood 6-foot-5 inches tall and weighed 230 pounds. Since then, he has grown four inches and maintained his weight.
- Developed and improved over his four years at NCA. With hard work, he claims he went from a "raw, chubby kid to a McDonald's All-American."
- Good student who earned the team's Academic Achievement Award as a freshman. Also earned honor roll academic status two times as a high school senior.
- Invited to try out for the USA Basketball Under-19 Team during the summer of 2009 in Colorado Springs, Colo.
- Has several tattoos including one that says "RIP Grandpa" for his mother's father, who died before he was born. Another tattoo on his left arm has a basketball with a ribbon around it and the words "Respect My Hustle." Others say "Blessed Baller," and "Fear None, Trust Few."

TRAY WOODALL

- Played a starring role in the documentary reality movie "The Street Stops Here," a movie about Hall of Fame coach Bob Hurley and the famed St. Anthony basketball program. The two-hour documentary aired nationally on PBS in early April, 2010.
- As a senior, led St. Anthony High School to the nation's No. 1 ranking in 2007-08. St. Anthony's finished a perfect 32-0 and was named national champions by *USA Today* in 2007-08.

- Introduced to basketball by his cousin Khalief Woodall (age 16), who was tragically killed when Woodall was 11 years old.
- Redshirt freshman Isaiah Epps is his second cousin.
- Has known fellow Pitt players Ashton Gibbs and Nasir Robinson since the seventh grade. He played on an AAU team with Gibbs.
- Best friends on other college teams include Giovanni Fontan (Fordham/Southern California), Mike Rosario (Florida/Rutgers), Tyshawn Taylor (Kansas), Alberto Estwick (Fordham/Norfolk State) and A.J. Rogers (Saint Joseph's). All six played at St. Anthony's.
- Originally from Brooklyn, N.Y., but resides in Paterson, N.J.

CAMERON WRIGHT

- High school honor student with a 3.7-plus grade point average.
- Committed to Pitt on Sunday, August 9, 2009 after visiting the campus, saying it was an "unbelievable" visit and that he "found his home." He was impressed with Pitt's facilities, but most impressed with the people and coaching staff.
- His best friend, high school teammate and backcourt partner Derek Jackson plays basketball at Central Michigan.
- Played on same team with fellow Pitt signee Isaiah Epps at the LeBron James Camp.
- Invited to tryout for the USA Basketball Under-19 team in Colorado Springs during the summer of 2011.

TALIB ZANNA

- Originally from Kaduna, Nigeria. Moved to the United States in 2006.
- His father, a successful businessman in Nigeria, passed away not long after he committed to Pitt. He has a picture of his father in his locker and touches it before he hits the court each day.
- Early in his childhood, he played soccer. Following a growth spurt and at the urging of his brother, he switched to basketball. Began playing basketball at age 10. Early-on, he had a goal of traveling to the United States to play basketball.
- Discovered by American high school coaches at a big man camp in Lagos, Nigeria, which was organized by his friend, mentor and former Georgetown player Godwin Owinje.
- Ran up and down mountains in Nigeria to help increase his strength and speed.
- Devout Muslim who can speak four different languages. He could speak English before arriving in the United States.
- Played high school basketball at Bishop McNamara High School (Md.).
- His father, who never saw him play competitively, served as his role model and inspiration. After he broke his ankle during his first year in the U.S., his father told him to keep working toward his goals. He plays the game thinking of his father.
- Has five siblings. His dream is for them to see him play someday in the United States.