

5-Time WNBA All-Star Finds Her Treasure Off the Court

Maya Moore deserves a high five, as news broke last week that she's earned her fifth start in the WNBA All-Star Game, which tips off at 3:30 p.m. ET/12:30 p.m. PT Saturday in Seattle.

But besides having the honor as a five-time All-Star starter—and a slew of other awards and accolades—the star of the Western Conference-leading Minnesota Lynx knows that her reward lies in heaven as a daughter of God.

Moore recently shared her faith story with *Fellowship of Christian Athletes* (FCA,) *Magazine* for the May/June 2017 issue, where she said she knew she loved basketball at a young age and only hoped she would be able to play in college. Throughout several middle schools—she and her single mom, Kathryn, moved multiple times due to Kathryn's job—Maya worked on her game and strengthened her faith in Christ.

“We love highlighting the amazing stories of professional athletes like Maya Moore in *FCA Magazine*,” said magazine editor Clay Meyer. “When everyday Christians, especially young fans who are growing in their faith and hopefully becoming closer to Jesus, see that athletes like Maya can keep the faith even on sports' largest stage, they realize that Jesus is not only worth living for but deserving of glory in everything they do.”

By the time, Moore graduated from Collins Hill High in Suwanee, Georgia, she was perhaps the top college recruit in the nation, having led her team to a 125-3 record. But the successes on the court didn't stop there. At the University of Connecticut, she amassed a 150-4 record, four Final Four appearances and two NCAA championships in 2009 and 2010. Then the Minnesota Lynx selected Moore No. 1 overall in the 2011

WNBA draft. With other new acquisitions, the Lynx transformed from a 13-21 team in 2010 to league champions.

Now, just six seasons into her pro career, Moore has established herself as one of the WNBA's all-time greats, leading the Lynx to five championship appearances and three titles. Her trophy case includes the 2011 Rookie of the Year Award, 2013 Finals MVP, 2014 League MVP, 2015 All-Star Game MVP and two Olympic gold medals from 2012 and 2016. Last summer, the WNBA featured her on its prestigious "20/20" list, a panel-selected roster of the league's 20 all-time greatest players to commemorate its 20th anniversary. Moore, who turned 28 last month, was the youngest player honored.

But all that notoriety hasn't turned Moore into the textbook basketball superstar. Not content to sit poolside and sip on fame, she attacks social causes with equal ferocity as zone defenses, determined to help shine Christ's light into the dark and forgotten corners of the world.

"We are to be Christ's hands and feet," she says. "We're called to be loving neighbors. It might not be as popular, but we have to give a voice to the voiceless."

The passion with which she approaches issues off the court is no surprise to FCA's Michelle Backes, who also serves as the Lynx' chaplain.

"She is so passionate," Backes says. "She can hardly contain it in a game—in a good way—and I think that's how it is inside her [spiritually], as well. When she sees injustice of any kind, I think that strikes a chord. I think she's very prayerful. She won't proceed with things until she gets clearance."

When it comes to social justice, Moore takes her cues from Scripture. Psalm 37:28 declares, "For the Lord loves justice..." And Isaiah 1:17 (ESV) says, "Learn to do good; seek justice, relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless, plead for the

widow." However she can, Moore seeks to reflect her heavenly Father's character to others.

"Turning a blind eye to injustice," she says, "is the opposite of what the gospel means."

During the WNBA season, Moore's mission of reaching others with Christ's love doesn't change, even if the methods do. As a seven-year veteran, she has assumed the Lynx' main player-leadership role for the chapel program vacated by Taj McWilliams-Franklin, whose WNBA career ended after the 2012 season. For the last four years, Moore has organized and hosted team Bible studies at her apartment in Minnesota.

"She'd serve her teammates in a safe place even if she was tired and didn't have a great game the night before," says Seattle Storm guard/forward Monica Wright, Moore's former teammate in Minnesota. "You never felt like you owed her or had to pay her back. She just wanted you to get filled up."

And, like Wright said, not all games are great. The Lynx and the Los Angeles Sparks staged an instant classic in the 2016 WNBA Finals, as Minnesota played for a dynastic fourth championship in six years before a sold-out crowd. The game featured 11 ties, 24 lead changes and two of the league's biggest stars duking it out, as Moore scored 23 points and L.A.'s Candace Parker scored 28.

With 15 seconds remaining, Moore sank a clutch turnaround jumper to put the Lynx in the lead by 1. But with 2.1 ticks left, Nneka Ogwumike gave the Sparks the final advantage with an off-balance prayer after grabbing the deflection of her own blocked shot. At the buzzer, Minnesota's Lindsay Whalen heaved a desperation half-court shot, which bounced off the backboard.

"It was awful," Moore said. "Definitely the hardest loss of my career the way it ended. ... When I'm a part of a season that ended in a loss, it's tough. It's never easy. But I'm not

totally broken by a loss. I'm still a child of the King. I'm totally loved. I'm totally accepted. All the things that the Lord says are true of us as His children."

FCA is in the midst of its popular Camps season, with more than 700 FCA Camps in the U.S. and internationally this summer that will reach upwards of 100,000 coaches and athletes. FCA's 2017 Camps theme is "ONE," based on the Bible verse Philippians 1:27 (NLT): "... I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News." Seven types of FCA Camps include coaches' camps, leadership camps, partnership camps, power camps, sports camps, team camps and international camps.

Those who still want to be a part of FCA Camps can find camps by sport, day or location through FCA's easy-to-use camps site. Last summer, new attendance records were set as more than 100,000 coaches and athletes converged at 720 Camp events in 40 states and in 45 countries around the world, where 8,788 coaches and athletes made first-time commitments to Christ and 11,256 recommitted their lives to Christ. The 2016 attendance was an increase of more than 10,000 over 2015.

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