

Franklin Towne senior loves family atmosphere at home, school



By **Joe Mason** January 6, 2024



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Meiara Staton knows full well how much a strong mentor can mean.

And, even more importantly, what family means.

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Staton is a senior on the Franklin Towne Charter High School basketball team, and if you notice her doing everything she can to help her younger teammates, that's by design.

She learned best from her mom, but also learned a lot from her sister Shamaya, 25, who played basketball for New Foundations and Community College of Philadelphia.

She learned a lot, and now she's paying it forward to her younger siblings, who include brothers Zahir, 12, and Saihaan, 9, and sister, Susu, 2.

"I grew up around it, I was always around basketball, my older sister played, and I always followed in her footsteps," said Staton, who credits her dad with giving her determination and grit. "Shamaya, she played basketball. She's 25. She's like a mentor. She's helped me a lot, we'd go to the park and play basketball. I have trainers, too, I'm lucky, but she was a big help to me.

"I love doing the same thing for my younger siblings. I'm very family oriented, it's just how my family has always been. So I love helping my younger siblings, just seeing them learn. That's how I learned, so I'm trying to do the same."

Staton isn't just serving that role at home.

A power forward by trade, Staton is doing everything she can to help the Warriors compete this year, and she's doing a fine job.

In fact, she's now helping out with point guard duties, at least on offense, where she brings the ball up for Franklin Towne and helps the other players get acclimated to the offense.

On defense, she's never up top. Instead, she's underneath, bumping and banging for rebounds. Staton doesn't mind the bruises she gets because it's helping her and her teammates accomplish their goals.

To get better.

"I'm usually running around, playing all positions," the Holmesburg native said. "I'm mostly playing power forward. I love center, that's my favorite, I like going up strong with the ball, make good post moves and feed the ball out to the corners for shots. I also love being a captain.

"It's very fun, it can be nerve wracking and anxious because you have the team on your back and they follow in your footsteps. But it's a great honor. I'm honored to do it. It means a lot. I was picked through the teammates, they nominated me and two others, it was through my teammates, so it does mean a lot."

The Warriors are making moves in the Public League. They're 5-1 overall, 4-1 in Public League play and every time they take the court, they're a better team than they were the day before. That's the approach Staton and her teammates take and so far, it couldn't be working any better.

"We're playing really well, it's not all games that have been easy," Staton said. "We just push through and play our game. It's all we can do, we got to play, get a big win and then try to win more games."

"Our goal was to have a good year. I knew we could. We have a really good team and we all like playing together. I'm really happy that they picked me to be a leader because it means so much to lead this team. It's a really good team."

Having a good atmosphere around the basketball team is important to Staton. And it goes beyond the hardwood.

That's why she joined "No Place for Hate," an organization that makes sure all students are treated great at Franklin Towne.

According to Staton, it hasn't been a tough cause to get behind. She says the school is incredibly welcoming, and she's doing her part to make sure other students feel the same way she does.

"I was asked by some of my staff, it's me and maybe 10 others who were asked and I thought it was a really good club," Staton said. "I love what it stands for so I decided to go for it. Now we run the club and we're called peer trainers. I moved up to an officer. I watch over the other trainers and lead the group meetings. It was a really nice opportunity. It definitely helped me. Being a captain taught me sometimes you have to take charge. Stand up for bullying and bias prevention, you have to stand up for what's good for the school. I hope to apply it not just here but throughout my life."

So far, she hasn't had much use for it at the school.

"I love the school, I love that the staff is so welcoming," she said. "We have so many great opportunities, great electives. It's been a great four years. It went better virtually compared to my eighth-grade year. It's school, it's not perfect, but the good far outweighs the bad. I love it there. And I'm really glad I'm there."

But not for much longer.

Staton is starting to think about next year, and just as she's done in high school, she plans to be the same person in college.

"Next year, I plan to go to college," said Staton, who is unsure if she'll play hoops in college. "Not sure where, but I do know I want to major in kinesiology to become a trainer and work with injured athletes. My love for being around the sports environment and I wanted to be in the medical field.

"I wanted to be an EMT, but wanted to go to school. I looked into athletic training and that was the best of both worlds. That's the career for me, stay around basketball and help people at the same time."

And of course, she'll always be there for her family.

"It's my sisters, my mom, my brother and my grandparents, and aunts and uncles," Staton said. "There's a lot of us and they're my No. 1 supporters. I'm very lucky to have them in my corner."