

July 20, 2024

By Dennis Garcia  
SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - Many college basketball careers are filled with twists and turns and actually wind up at a place the player never really fathomed when he left high school.

Asheboro High School's Jerquarius Stanback's collegiate path took an unsuspecting turn recently when he said Appalachian State told him they didn't want the basketball standout to enroll, instead advising him to head to a junior college or prep school.

This, after Stanback verbally committed and then signed with the Mountaineers during his final season with the Blue Comets.

"I missed my appointment for an MRI and they found out about that," said Stanback, who was injured during the opening round of the state 3-A playoffs, suffering a concussion, contusions and a severe wrist injury, which hasn't fully healed. "Coach (head coach Dustin) Kerns wasn't happy about that. He asked for a zoom meeting and in that zoom meeting (on June 24) he said I lied to him about it. I still don't know what I lied to him about. They said any other mistake would get me off the team. I started feeling not welcomed at all."

Stanback said members of the coaching staff called him every day after the zoom meeting, in essence, attempting to persuade him not to come. Stanback said he had the same response to each of the coaches.

"I told them he (Kerns) doesn't want me to mess up and I understand that and I can come there and not mess up, I can do that," Stanback said. "The last coach who called me, I told him I can still come up and do it. I don't think I will make any mistakes that will ruin my chances with the team. He kept saying you're a freshman, you're a freshman, it's going to happen.

"They took it away from me," Stanback added. "Even after I said I could do things the right way, they weren't able to take that. They definitely made me feel like a nobody."

Stanback said he was at the beach the day of his missed MRI appointment and had planned to get up early that morning and drive back to Asheboro, but he overslept.

ASU head coach Dustin Kerns wished Stanback luck in a statement provided. "With respect to his privacy, Jerquarius has been released from his letter of intent, and we wish him well in his future endeavors on and off the floor."



*Asheboro graduate Jerquarius Stanback is re-evaluating his basketball future.*

Once Stanback was released from his commitment to App State, he said he called other colleges, but most said it was too late for the coming year. He attempted to enroll at Coastal Carolina and become a walk-on, but didn't qualify, and basketball personnel at the school told Stanback about prep schools that he could attend before coming into Coastal Carolina for the 2025-26 season.

Stanback, who said he didn't want to go to community college because it reduced the years of eligibility at a bigger school, was told about Athletes In Action Prep, a school in Xenia, Ohio, which is located close to Dayton. AIA Prep, which is about to begin its third year of operation, provides student-athletes a gap year after high school to develop spiritually, physically, and emotionally in order to prepare them for college. Stanback said he would receive a full scholarship.



*Stanback speaking with SportsTone following a Blue Comets win.*

"The advantages for me are some of the best competition in the country, good exposure and another year of getting better, stronger and bigger," Stanback said of AIA Prep, which includes not only a rigorous athletic training program but bible studies, college courses, leadership classes, SAT and ACT prep courses in order to raise scores and community volunteer opportunities. "I like how they do everything as a team. The weight room program will be beneficial."

This, of course, would reopen his recruitment for the 2025-26 season and with Coastal Carolina, Wofford and Alabama State already expressing interest, Stanback won't be short of collegiate opportunities.

As of mid-week, Stanback said he has not yet committed to AIA Prep, but was leaning in that direction. The day to report to the school is August 21.

"It's been tough, really, really tough," said Stanback, who opted out of the NCCA East-West All-Star Game because of the injury, an injury he said was checked by a specialist earlier this week, who determined surgery would not be needed. "I've been praying about it and just hoping for the best opportunity."

AHS coach Brian Nance said it's been a very difficult four weeks.

"I have been avoiding people, not wanting to talk about it," Nance said. "It's like it happened to one of my daughters. We put a lot of time into it when they said they wanted him in December. It's like someone just pulled the rug out from under you. What do you tell the kid? I tried to stay positive and tell him there would be opportunities before this was all over. And now there is."

Stanback is one of the most gifted players in AHS history, averaging 25 points, 11 rebounds and recording 99 blocked shots in 23 games his final year. Stanback was the NCBCA District Player of the Year his senior season.