

## *Asjha Jones*

For all of the legendary basketball players who've hailed from New Jersey, there's one athlete who is more decorated than any other.

In the history of the women's game, there have been just 16 players who have played on teams that have won NCAA and WNBA championships, as well as a Gold Medal in Olympics. That number narrows when you add a FIBA World Championship as well.

There's more: Only one player among that group has added an NJSIAA championship. And as a caper to it all, that person was also an assistant coach for a WNBA champion and is now a front office member of a NBA team.

Asjha Jones is that player. She led Piscataway to the NJSIAA Group 4 state championship during her junior year at Piscataway in 1997. She graduated the following year with career totals of 2,266 points and 1,256 rebounds. She was state Player of the Year, a consensus All-American, and ranks as the third-leading scorer in Middlesex County history.

She played collegiately at the University of Connecticut, and set a school record for games played (138) and was a part of Huskies teams that won NCAA titles in 2000 and 2002. She closed out her career there with 1,502 points and 794 rebounds.

She was a first-round draft choice (fourth overall) by the Washington Mystics in the 2002 WNBA draft. She played professionally, both in the WNBA and in Europe (competing in Israel, Russia and Spain), through 2015. She was a WNBA All-Star playing for the Connecticut Sun in 2007 and '09. In her final season, she was a member of the 2015 league-champion Minnesota Lynx, coached by fellow New Jerseyan Cheryl Reeve.



During her pro career, she was also selected to play on the United States national teams that won the FIBA World Championship in Brazil in 2010 and the Olympic Gold Medal in London in 2012.

Jones, who played AAU ball against boys prior to her emergence at Piscataway, joined the WNBA coaching staff of the Mystics in 2018, and was with the team when it won the WNBA title in 2019, making her the first person to win league titles as a player and coach.

She took another big step in 2021, when she left the Mystics to become Director of Basketball Strategy and Planning with the Portland Trailblazers of the NBA. In her role, she assists in the team's strategic planning and future-focused initiatives, salary cap management and transaction execution. She is also active in roster construction and player evaluation for the draft, free agency and trades.

Jones was inducted into the NJSIAA Hall of Fame in 2018.