

## SPORTS

# GB baseball player signs with Oakland Athletics during International Signing Week

SHAYNE STUBBS  
FN Sports Reporter  
shayne@nasguard.com

Major League Baseball's International Signing Period featured four signees out of The Bahamas, with one of those players being a native of Grand Bahama.

While three young men out of New Providence signed their names to join different MLB organizations, Grand Bahamian Davonn Mackey enlisted his services to the Oakland Athletics organization this past Monday.

Players in New Providence – D'Shawn Knowles, along with Trent Deveaux signed their names on the dotted line to join the Los Angeles Angels organization, while Kristian Robinson signed on to join the Arizona Diamondback organization.

In The Beginning Baseball Academy (ITBBA) represented the Oakland A's club, which seemed thrilled about the signing of the new prospect. ITBBA director, Carlos Lara, shared his enthusiasm about the signing.

"What a nice kid, this one (Davonn). He has a gift and just enjoy it man, because you're going to be a name in baseball," he expressed.

In front of his parents, family and friends Mackey expressed how "special" the moment was for him.

"I want to thank everybody who came out today. I want to thank God for allowing me to be here and protecting me all the time. I want to thank my family for pushing me so far and just sticking by my side," the former St. Georges' Jaguar stated. "There were a lot of times I felt like giving up, but it was my family, my church family and all my friends who were there to push me. So I just want to thank everybody."

"I hope that I can keep on going and keep on moving forward."

Jennifer Mackey was one proud mom of her youngest child.

She continued to thank a bevy of persons who played a role Davonn's growth as a player and as a person.



**INTO THE BIG LEAGUE – Davonn Mackey (second right) signed on to become a member of the Oakland Athletics' organization, during Major League Baseball's International Signing Period. In the Beginning Baseball Academy Director, Carlos Lara (right) and his parents Sebron Alphonso Mackey Jr. (left) and Jennifer Mackey (second left) look on as he places the A's cap on his head. At right Davonn shares the special moment with his parents seated next to him, family members and teammates.**

(PHOTOS: SHAYNE STUBBS)

"I just want to thank God, who is the head of our lives. And thanks to Ms. Stephanie Higgs, who pushed my oldest son, Keel Pinder, into baseball and he in return pushed my boys into baseball."

"And, I just want to thank all the family members, all the prayers my church sent up and my pastors for praying, his godparents – Mr. (Stephen) Adderley from Grand Bahama Little League (GBLL), his grand-

mother, his sisters, all six of his siblings and his teammates. I just want to see the other baseball players go off as well and to remind them, in all things put God first, push towards it and you'll make it also."

His father, Sebron Alphonso Mackey Jr, was also grateful and hoped that more players would follow suit.

Pinder was also Davonn's coach and played a big part in making sure he and other play-

ers were put in a position to get a fair chance.

"Special thanks goes to my oldest son Keel, who pushed them all, hard, and got them into In The Beginning Academy. They have a beautiful group and I would advise people to follow and get involved with guys like them. Look out because they're really doing a good job. They took care of Davonn all the time and I'm very, very proud of him and I hope he makes not just the

family, but also The Bahamas very proud."

GBLL president Stephen Adderley was nothing short of pleased with the progress players are making and is even more enthused about the trend that continues to increase around the country.

"We seem to be having more and more of these young men signing contracts to go off to school and all these sorts of other things. When we started

the program and you see the young men come in at four or five years old, you never know which ones are going to make it to the professional ranks.

"It's good to see somebody that started as a baby in the league come to this point. Davonn is a good example for the rest of the guys. There may be guys who were more talented than him, but he wanted it more than them. This is why he is where he is now."

## Jones earn Player of the Month honors after stellar performances

SHAYNE STUBBS  
FN Sports Reporter  
shayne@nasguard.com

The month of June bared a lot of positivity for the Connecticut Sun and individually for their star forward/center Jonquel Jones.

The Sun as a team went 6-2, during the first month of the summer season to stand at 8-7

on the season before they played the San Antonio Stars last evening. And during the past eight games potential All-Star Game starter, Jones, put up big numbers.

The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) named Jonquel Jones as the Eastern Conference WNBA Player of the Month as a result.

Sylvia Fowles of the Minnesota Lynx was named as the

Western Conference Player of the Month.

The sophomore pro ranked 11th in scoring averaging 15.6ppg. She also led the East with 11.9 rebounds per game and blocked shots with 2.13ppg. In eight games she totaled five double-doubles, one leading to a career high in points, and had the eighth best field goal percentage shooting at .527 percent clip.

Her run of double-doubles was sparked with a 20-point, 15-rebound and five block outburst, during the Sun's 104-71 rout of the Atlanta Dream back on June 10. She followed that performance up with 19 points and 12 rebounds in the Sun's 96-76 win over the New York Liberty.

One of their two losses came at the hands of the Dallas Wings, in which Jones turned in her third double-double for the month

with 14 points and 12 boards. She later put up 13 points and 17 rebounds in an 87-79 loss to the Los Angeles Sparks.

The team closed out the month on June on a high note by getting a win over the Seattle Storm by a score of 96-89. Jones went on to add her fifth double-double for the month with 13 points and 10 rebounds.

The Homles Rock native currently averages 16.1 points and

12.3 rebounds, along with 1.6 blocks. The team also sits squarely in play-off contention, holding down the fifth spot.

The WNBA All-Star Game presented by Verizon takes place July 22 in Seattle and voting closes tonight at 9:00 p.m. Jones is on pace to be a "lock" as a starter for the Eastern Conference as early voting results projected Jones had acquired 10,585 votes.

## Jones in early race for WNBA MVP

On Saturday, July 22, the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) 2017 All-Star Classic will take place in Seattle at the KeyArena, home of the Storm and this time around, there is a high likelihood that there will be, for the very first time, a Bahamian presence.

Jonquel Jones, the Grand Bahama native who has come into her own as the star center/forward for the Connecticut Sun, is a lock on at least a selection by the coaches. She has been favorable of a "Bahamian fan-base votes" campaign for a starting position on the WNBA's Eastern Conference squad. Bahamians have been lobbied to go online and vote for her and the response has been encouraging, but ours is a very small market.

The peers Jones is in a battle with for a starting berth, are all from cities and states with populations into the millions. So while, I would be elated for Jones and the Bahamas Sports

### SPORTS SCOPE

BY FRED STURRUP



Brand, if somehow, she gets enough fan votes to be included in the East starting five, there would not be much disappointment felt if that does not happen. I have concluded that based on how she has played thus far, Jones deserves a starting spot and for me, that's the bottom line factor in evaluating the 6-6, nimble standout.

My eyes are on bigger prizes for Jones this season.

I'm thinking beyond the All-Star Game to All-WNBA First Team status, the WNBA All-Defensive First Team and yes, the biggie, the WNBA Most Valuable Player Award. It is a

tribute to her breakout play this season that one can realistically think of Jones as the MVP.

The truth is that at the present time, if votes were taken, Jones would probably be a serious challenge for one of the acknowledged superstars of the WNBA, Brittney Griner of the Phoenix Mercury team. Griner, the 6-9 center, has gotten all of the First Team honors Jones would like to realize, personally. An MVP though, would be a first for both. Griner, into her fifth season and Jones into her second are putting up statistics that put the two stalwarts of the paint in an early race for the

#### WNBA MVP.

Jones has made the Sun, a potential playoff team. She is leading the way, as Connecticut sat in second place, as of press time for this column, with an 8-7 record in the West. Meanwhile, Griner had paced the Mercury squad to a 7-6 mark for third in the West.

Griner is leading the WNBA in two departments, points per game (21.8) and blocks (2-3); while Jones is on top of the WNBA in rebounds (12.1). Griner is not as active on the glass, rebounding at just a 7.7 clip. On the other hand, Jones is scoring at a 16.1 pace, in comparison to Griner. Both are top 10 and top 15 in other essential categories and taken on the whole, are, in my estimation, having better seasons that noted stars such as Candace Parker of the Los Angeles Sparks, Breanna Stewart of the Seattle Storm, Tina Charles of the New York Liberty, Jasmine Thomas and Alyssa Thomas (Jones' Sun teammates), Nneka Ogwumike



BRITTNEY GRINER



JONQUEL JONES

of the Los Angeles Sparks, and Sylvia Fowles of the Minnesota Lynx.

It speaks volumes about how Jones has improved from her rookie year, so much, that she is now talked about in the same conversation with the aforementioned. She captured all of the big awards during her stint in Asia after her initial WNBA season. She is on a course for similar results in her second year in the WNBA.

So, yes, at the moment, the focus is indeed the All-Star Classic.

Not too far down the road however, we might have in Jonquel Jones, an authentic WNBA super star with credentials to substantiate such a claim.

Go Jonquel!

(To respond to this column, kindly contact Fred Sturup at [ksturrup1504@gmail.com](mailto:ksturrup1504@gmail.com) or on WhatsApp at 727-67363).