

Image not found or type unknown

# Natalie Kleemann-Day: Champion, Veteran, Mentor - Embracing VI's Untapped Potential

Sports / **Published On August 04, 2023 04:56 AM /**

Staff Consortium **August 04, 2023**

Image not found or type unknown



## Natalie Kleemann-Day

*Editor's Note: This is the part of a series of profiles of the athletes on the VI Women's Basketball team, who will be [celebrated this weekend](#) for their gold medal win at the 2023 CAC Games.*

Winning tournaments like the Central American and Caribbean (CAC) Games should come as no surprise, if one considers the sheer talent coming out of the Virgin Islands. That's the belief of Natalie Kleemann-Day, one of the players who helped the team emerge victorious in El Salvador late June. "I don't know another country with our population doing what we're doing across all levels of women's basketball," the 33-year-old proudly stated.

As a professional athlete, Ms. Kleemann-Day has witnessed the talent of players from various corners of the globe. She has played professionally for the past 11 years in countries such as Europe, Australia, China and Puerto Rico. Prior to going pro, she played D1 Basketball at Howard University and the University of Portland where she obtained a bachelors degree in international business and marketing.

Her introduction to the sport which would change her life came in middle school, when she worked as a camp counselor. While the children were outside or at the pool, she would go into the gym and shoot a basketball. "During that time, nothing else existed and it soon became an outlet and a ritual. Kids would go outside, I would have my me time. Me, the ball and the basket," she recalls with fondness.

"In the evenings, I would go home and watch random cassette tapes (yes, cassette tapes) of Michael Jordan shooting and I literally just copied his form," the basketballer explained. "I didn't know how to dribble or anything else, but I knew how to shoot so I took it from there and tried out for the JV team my freshman year of high school."

She's experienced tremendous growth since then, learning that development as a person is directly correlated to her experiences. "Tapping into my truth as an individual, remaining present throughout every moment and understanding pain and ego within us all, I believe, allows me to continue to grow as a better person, mother, wife, teammate and athlete," she explained.

Tracing her Virgin Islands heritage through her maternal lineage, Kleemann-Day has been part of the USVI Women's Basketball team for 13 years and has seen the team make remarkable strides. She stressed, "Every year we defy odds in one way or another. At first, it was qualifications for tournaments no one thought we would ever qualify for. Then we started medaling in these same tournaments making history. And now, we're winning them."

This recent victory, she believes, is just a small glimpse of the potential and talent in the U.S. Virgin Islands. For her, it cements that each member of the team is an example for other girls and women across the territory, demonstrating what they can all aspire to achieve. "We have amazing players representing the territory in all levels of basketball right now. From Junior Colleges to NCAA D1 and D2, international professional players and even the WNBA," the seasoned player stated.

She is confident that players like herself and her teammates can inspire future athletes, convincing them that they belong right next to them on any podium upon which they stand. As she tenderly explained, "I just want them to know that no matter where they are and where they aspire to go, that they are supported and capable. I only hope that they are able to cross paths with any of the great women on this team to tell them that face to face."

After over a decade of professional basketball, Kleemann-Day says she is at the point in her career where she's ready to give back "through mentoring, coaching or supporting the player standing next to me on the court." That's where she says she is being led. "I'm still trying to find my voice as I do so, but that is where my heart is pulling me with basketball," Kleemann-Day shared. As for her ambitions as it relates to the National Team, she's dreaming big. "I want to see this team in the next World Games. We're talking the Word Cup and yes, the Olympics!"

Natalie is currently working towards a masters degree in engineering, as she has a keen interest in emerging environmental technology. At present, she works for a financial technology company as a technical support engineer. Outside of work and basketball, she enjoys reading and cycling. "If I wasn't a professional basketball player, I would probably try to be a professional cyclist," she said

humorously.

© Viconsortium 2025