

Brown

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national perspective. His lofty recruiting profile — 247Sports ranks him as the No. 9 player nationally in the senior class, as well as the No. 1 player in Georgia — guarantees his name will pop up in hundreds of stories about his possible college destinations.

How he's perceived nationally matters little to Brown, though. He cares more about Lanier, a school he has fully embraced and grown to love deeply.

"Derrick is involved in almost everything that goes on at Lanier High School," Mobbs said. "The Lanier Student Leadership Team, Lanier Student Council. It's funny. We say every time the doors are open at Lanier High School, he's here. He even worked here this summer as kind of a part-time job. He worked four or five hours here after we practiced. He has great friends here. I tell people all the time that one of the best attributes about Derrick is that he knows who to hang around. The people he runs with bring him up and he brings them up.

He's always chosen the right folks to be around. His best friend is Ashton Barnes (who has offers from all three service academies and every Ivy League school) and he's what we want our kids to be like. Those guys are always together doing things that are positive. They have both been really good for each other."

It was Barnes that got Brown heavily involved at Lanier from the start. "When me and (Barnes) came into high school, his mom was over student council and that's what got us into it at first," Brown said. "We wanted to do student council, and the leadership team and all of that stuff came after that." College football fans



Lanier's Derrick Brown poses at the College Football Hall of Fame. (Photo: Kyle Hess)

are more eager to know what school Brown will embrace in the future. Many observers have predicted that he will become a Georgia Bulldog, but that is not a guarantee with his other favorites of Auburn, Alabama and Tennessee still very much in the mix. He plans to announce his decision in February on National Signing Day.

"It's fun, but it's a little bit stressful here and there," Brown said of the recruiting process.

It's no surprise that Brown's most devoted suitors come from the SEC, where big and athletic defensive line-men rule. Those top schools offered very early in Brown's high school career, based more on

size and athleticism at that point.

"(Sophomore season) was an introduction to high school football for sure," Brown said. "I did so-so."

His junior season was far from average, though. He was a dominant force last season with 101 tackles (26 for losses), 17 1/2 sacks and five caused fumbles. He was part of a playmaking Lanier defense that brought the program's first 10-0 regular season and its first region championship.

"What's different about Derrick is how sudden he is for a dude his size," Mobbs said. "He's about 315 now and he moves like a 200-pound guy. His quickness at that stature is what's impressive.

Usually a kid like that plays nose and is plugger, and he is far from that. I think that was evident in his stats from last year. Just the plays he makes downfield, and even laterally side to side, are plays you usually see a linebacker make. But he makes those plays."

That he's making those plays for Lanier is a result of North's overcrowding and Gwinnett County Public Schools' construction of a new school.

"It was just a new beginning when I went (to Lanier) and a new opportunity to do things for the school," Brown said. "It means a lot for me to play well and hopefully represent Lanier at the next level."

THE BROWN FILE

Name: Derrick Brown
School: Lanier
Position: Defensive lineman
Height: 6-4
Weight: 322
College choices: Georgia, Auburn, Alabama, Tennessee
Place of birth: Mississippi
Role model: My dad
Favorite restaurant: Jim 'N Nicks
Favorite store: Nike
Favorite teacher: Marla Hatfield
Favorite subject: Math
Number of text messages I send in a month: A couple of thousand
Twitter handle: DerrickBrown90
Superstitions: None
Life's dream: Work for Nike
Info file: Brown is one of the nation's most coveted defensive lineman recruits, particularly by SEC teams who live off what the Lanier senior offers — size and athleticism. His four favorite schools are all in the SEC — Georgia, Auburn, Alabama and Tennessee — but his main focus is on another high school season. Brown was dominant last season for the Longhorns, racking up 101 tackles (26 for losses), 17 1/2 sacks and five caused fumbles.
Coach Korey Mobbs' take: "What's different about Derrick is how sudden he is for a dude his size. He's about 315 now and he moves like a 200-pound guy. His quickness at that stature is what's impressive. Usually a kid like that plays nose and is plugger and he is far from that. I think that was evident in his stats from last year. Just the plays he makes downfield, and even laterally side to side, are plays you usually see a linebacker make. But he makes those plays."

PREP FOOTBALL

Schedule of Gwinnett games on the first official week of the high school football regular season:

Friday
7:30 p.m.

Dacula at Collins Hill
 Duluth at Wheeler
 Eastern Christian (Md.) at Buford
 East Jackson at Hebron
 GAC at Benedictine
 Lambert at Lanier
 Mountain View at South Forsyth
 Newton at Berkmar
 Walker at Wesleyan
 Walton at South Gwinnett

8:45 p.m.

Archer vs. North Paulding at McEachern, Corky Kell Classic

Saturday
11:45 a.m.

Brookwood vs. Mill Creek, Corky Kell Classic at Georgia Dome

2:45 p.m.

Norcross vs. Valdosta, Corky Kell Classic at Georgia Dome

5 p.m.

Christ Presbyterian (Tenn.) at Peachtree Ridge

5:45 p.m.

North Gwinnett vs. Colquitt County, Corky Kell Classic at Georgia Dome

8 p.m.

Parkview vs. McCallie (Tenn.) at Peachtree Ridge

Moore

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had good environments to prepare."

Her successes have included everything from winning back-to-back championships at the University of Connecticut in 2009 and 2010, assuming a leadership role on a team that set the NCAA record for most games won in a row, and leading the Lynx to their first-ever WNBA championship after just being drafted. She won another WNBA championship in 2013, at the Arena at Gwinnett Center over the Dream, and was a two-time Olympic gold medalist among other achievements, including success overseas in the WNBA offseason.

A strong support system has powered Moore throughout those events, including the highlight of being the top pick in the 2011 WNBA draft.

"Being drafted No. 1 was definitely a cool moment," Moore said. "I think more so just for everybody who's been involved in my journey to just be proud and happy and excited that a dream has been achieved. Since I was young, going back to Missouri where I was born, a lot of my family that I'm really close to watched me just start out and then moving to Charlotte and then moving to Georgia and then on to Connecticut. So just a lot of people involved that I'm sure were proud and happy to be a part of my success at that moment."

Her family also played a vital role in Moore's spiritual journey — she credits her relationship with God as being the key to her success.

"It's no secret," Moore said. "If you know me at all, that's my foundation in



Minnesota Lynx's Maya Moore (23) attempts to block a shot by Atlanta Dream's Angel McCoughtry (35) during the second half of Friday's game at Philips Arena. (Photos: Kyle Hess)

my life. I know where my strength comes from. I know that every opportunity that I have I've been given, and I just work my tail off to make the most out of each opportunity. On top of that, I've been surrounded with awesome people, so great leaders, great coaches and teachers and teammates that have been super competitive and allowed me to shine.

"I've really had environments where I've genuinely been around players and people that want me to succeed, and I want them to succeed. It's been cool to be around such great people and such competitors, especially over these last 10 years."

Finding her faith, as a middle-schooler, is still the most life-defining moment that has stuck out the most for Moore.

"I started finding a unique purpose and meaning beyond sports, beyond school, beyond kind of the

everyday things you see in front of me," Moore said. "It's just been the fuel and the perspective and the motivation behind the way I live my life, the way I pursue basketball, the way I pursue school, the way I pursue relationships."

"I've had different opportunities, like going to Connecticut was huge for me, you know, moving to the Collins Hill district was big as far as basketball, having an awesome sports ministry called Athletes in Action be at Connecticut so I could develop and grow in my faith and as a leader and in school. I'm still involved with that ministry heavy today, which I couldn't imagine what my life would be like without the awesome people that I met through that organization."

The package Moore brings has become very marketable, too. The devout Christian is a positive role model for young girls, while

also being one of the best basketball players on the planet. Nike took notice and made her the first female basketball player to sign with its Jordan Brand.

Her work with Nike is exciting, but it's only part of her plans for the future.

"I would love to stay involved in sports somehow, whether that's consulting, speaking, writing," Moore said. "You know, having a family, spending time off the court doing things in my community. I would love to be involved in kids and youth sports and music. Music is a passion of mine."

The end of her basketball career is definitely not in the near future, though.

For now, she will continue on the thrilling ride she's on. Her career is just beginning, but she's already referred to by some as the LeBron James of women's basketball.

"It's a huge compliment, of course, being compared



Maya Moore (23) shoots the ball during warmups prior to Friday's game at Philips Arena.



Maya Moore (23) looks on during the first half of Friday's game at Philips Arena.

to one of the greatest athletes in the world right now, but I'm just me," Moore said. "I'm just trying to make the most of every day that I have. It's one of those questions maybe looking back I'll be able to answer after my career is over, but I'm just enjoying the mess

out of this team right now. "I've been super blessed. This team in particular already has great leaders, great players where I've had time to learn and make mistakes and continue to grow. I'm very grateful that I've got these guys around me helping me look good!"