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LONGTIME FRIENDS UNKNOWINGLY BOTH CHOOSE CNU

BASKETBALL PLAYERS SHARE LOVE OF GAME, SCHOOL, AND FILIPINO HERITAGE

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | May 2, 2024

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When Gabbi San Diego was being recruited to play basketball at Christopher Newport, she was thrilled. She felt like she had found the perfect place to grow academically and athletically.

Little did she know that her close family friend, Camille Malagar, was also on CNU's radar for basketball and was equally optimistic that she had discovered her future home.

The two, who lived in different cities and played at different high schools, were unknowingly on parallel journeys that would ultimately culminate on the court at Freeman Center. Both would become Captains.

It was as though the stars had aligned for San Diego and Malagar. They have a long history of friendship and family that spans the globe and decades. It all started when their fathers graduated high school together in the Philippines in 1987. They then decided to move to the United States. Once they had families, the San Diegos settled in Northern Virginia and the Malagars in Columbia, Md.

The men's families were tight, and their children developed a deep bond as their lives intertwined. Together, San Diego and Malagar celebrated occasions and took family vacations.

They also shared a passion for basketball. From an early age, they would play the sport with a mini hoop. They continued to play together on youth teams and then for the prestigious Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) organization.

Their families have a huge affinity for basketball, a favorite sport in the Philippines. San Diego and Malagar happily carried on the cultural tradition, taking to the court any chance they got.

When it came time to look at colleges, they were each independently recruited by CNU. At a get together with their families, San Diego mentioned she was leaning toward Christopher Newport. Malagar was shocked. She also was sold on CNU. The girls, typical teenagers, had become busy with activities at their respective high schools, and had not kept up with the day-to-day happenings in each other's lives.

"The coach (Bill Broderick) didn't even know we were friends," San Diego said. "It was kind of a crazy coincidence."

That coincidence proved to be a game changing moment for lifelong friends and soon to be teammates. Never did they imagine their lives would intersect on this level. In fact, they were not just being wooed by CNU. They were vying for the same position on the team: point guard.

On a subsequent visit to campus, when both San Diego and Malagar were together, San Diego's mom approached Coach Broderick and said, "You should take both of them."

He did.

"It was a full-circle moment," San Diego said.

The rest of the story is filled with what powers collegiate drive and dreams. San Diego and Malagar have proudly represented both their nationally-ranked team, coming close to winning the national championship last year, and their Filipino heritage, which serves as their foundation.

"We are super proud to be representing a minority on such a high level," San Diego said. "Diversity on the court is definitely something we are proud of."

As May is [Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#), the women take great pride in the culture that has shaped them into focused players and students.

“Our culture definitely has instilled in us to work hard and be resilient,” Malagar said.

They could not be any happier than to represent the Philippines on the court. They have been heartened to see young Filipino girls at their games, watching in awe. They believe that they are carrying on the traditions and passions that have been infused in them.

“During a game at Old Dominion, a group of girls came up to us and told us what an inspiration we were to them,” Malagar said. “It was super cool.”

Their families glow with pride when they play. San Diego’s mother lives in the Philippines and streams every game.

“I think they love it more than me,” San Diego jokes about her family’s deep-rooted adoration for the game.

San Diego and Malagar, continuing parallel trajectories, are both double majoring in [business management](#) and [marketing](#). They have decided to stay at CNU for a fifth year, paving the way for them to complete their double majors and play another year with the team. They live together, study together, and compete together.

“We are like sisters in a way,” San Diego said. “We are best friends. We are inseparable.”

“We are super supportive of each other on and off the court,” Malagar added.

They are competitive with each other, but in a friendly way, one that motivates them to excel. They laugh together, and finish each other’s sentences. The women bolster one another, and their teammates.

“We have great camaraderie,” San Diego said. “We get to play with such a great group of people.”

The two players not only share a deep love of basketball, but also of Christopher Newport. They have found their home, and success in the classroom and on the court.

“The community support is second to none,” San Diego said.

Professors, Malagar, said, have been “so supportive.”

“They are what I love the most,” she said. “They understand student athletes. It’s been super great for me.”

Being at CNU for an extra year, they said, is a huge positive. San Diego and Malagar are not ready to leave quite yet, as they both feel they have lots more to give on the court and gain in the classroom.

“We’re excited about it,” San Diego said. “We really love it here.”
