

# WHERE TO

A resource dedicated to student-athletes and their Life After Notre Dame.

# LAND

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## FINDING MY SPORT, EMBRACING MY LIFE, OPEN TO THE FUTURE

*Born in Queens, New York, Natalija “Nat” Marshall (ND '24; Miami '25) helped her Christ the King High School basketball team win the 2019 New York State Federation Championship. The team also captured two-time titles in the New York Catholic State, New York City, and CHSAA Conference championships. While her freshman and part of her sophomore years with the Fighting Irish were spent rehabbing injuries, Nat's senior season stood out. She posted career highs in points, rebounds, and minutes, along with 14 steals, 34 blocks, and 63 offensive rebounds, the second most on the team. Against the odds, Nat and her teammates won an ACC Championship. A member of the ACC Unity Tour and All-ACC Academic Team, Nat double-majored in political science and American studies and served on the Advisory Committee for Climate Related to Race and Ethnicity, Student-Athlete Advisory Committee as director of communications, Together Irish, and Monogram Club. At the University of Miami, where she earned her master's degree in sport administration, Nat was a member of the All-ACC Women's Varsity Basketball Team, appearing in 26 games, 23 as a starter. Currently, Nat is a Ford model, freelance content creator, and digital content and social media strategist for Hana Kuma. She is also serving as an Alumni Advisor for United College Athletes Association and a Student-Athlete Advisory Council Young Alumni Representative at Notre Dame. LAND talked with Nat about the highs and lows of her athletic journey, how she has created an authentic and engaging personal brand, and the one thing she encourages student-athletes to do for a successful transition after sports. (It's worked for her.) Here's Nat's story:*



Sports have always been part of my family story — my parents, David and Anne, are in their respective colleges' athletic halls of fame at the University of Milwaukee — but basketball was actually the last sport I tried. I played everything first: baseball, t-ball, swimming, gymnastics, tennis, soccer.

I started basketball later than others, but what drew me to the sport was being part of a team working toward a common goal. I loved the physicality, too. And as I grew taller, reaching 5'10" by fifth grade, basketball seemed the best path to take. My first college offer came during my freshman year, and that's when I realized, OK, I can play this sport and earn an education doing it. That part was important to me.

### MY CHOICE IN NOTRE DAME

Recruiting ramped up with campus visits, basketball camps, and meetings with coaches until I considered a final three: Duke, Stanford, and Notre Dame. All were incredible programs offering the best academics and athletics, but what mattered deeply to me then — and still does now — was that the head coaches were women.

Growing up in Queens, surrounded by diversity, gave me an understanding of power and status and what those things meant. Gender and racial inequality, social injustice; these were revealed to me from a young age.

I had always been coached by men, even on all-girls teams. As I started to see more women in head coaching roles, including Muffet McGraw, Tara van der Veer, and Dawn Staley, I knew this would become a factor in my choice of school. I wanted to play for a female leader, and Notre Dame provided a bonus: an all-woman staff.

When I visited Notre Dame first, something just clicked. I canceled my Duke and Stanford visits and committed a few weeks later.

### A DIFFERENT KIND OF START

Freshman student-athletes, especially high-ranking recruits, are typically thrown into the fire, academically and athletically. You come in and contribute; that's the pressure and expectation.

But my first year wasn't normal. Not only was it the year of COVID, 2020, but I redshirted while rehabbing an ACL injury. Out of competition, I had time to adjust to college life at my own pace and that made my transition from high school relatively smooth.

At first, however, I didn't love that Notre Dame integrated student-athletes so fully into the regular student body — no athlete-only dorms or special treatment like at other schools. But looking back, I'm grateful for this approach. It helped me grow as a person, not just as a player. Notre Dame emphasizes being a student-athlete, in that order, and I've learned that's crucial to our experience. And if people who see themselves as athletes first buy into that, it's life-changing.

### A WINNING END



After COVID, my time on the team was filled with ups and downs due to surgeries and staffing shifts. We made three straight Sweet 16 appearances, but couldn't get beyond that mark, which was tough.

But it was our ACC Championship, won in my senior year, that remains special and memorable. It was my first start, but not only that, I was one of just seven players healthy enough to be available for the championship game. In the semifinals, one of our starting 5 had a torn ACL, compounding the loss of other players during games leading up to that point.

Somehow we pulled it off and beat North Carolina State. That moment was the pinnacle of “do your job,” with everyone stepping up even though we were all hurting. Collectively we were thinking, we've come this far, we're so close, we can't lose now!

Even with the stitches I needed at halftime, after a hit to my chin, nothing was going to stop us. Full of emotion and determination, we knew that if we pulled this off, it would be legendary for the program.

### FINDING MY FIT AT MIAMI



As graduation approached, I had a fifth year of eligibility because of COVID. I was conflicted about whether to stay or transfer, but I was certain I wanted a master's program focused on sports. The University of Miami offered a 10-month program in sport administration, as well as the chance for a fresh start.

At Miami, I gained the larger on-court role I was looking for and started nearly every game. And the city itself opened new doors. It's a hub for sports, fashion, and media, with endless opportunities to grow my network and explore other avenues, like modeling and content creation. I was happy with my decision.

### BUILDING MY BRAND

Outside of basketball, I've always loved creative work. My dad has spent his career in digital and creative media — at ESPN, USA Today Sports, and Yahoo — so I learned a lot from him early on. I got into photography, editing, and brand building, teaching myself the technical side while taking pieces of information and advice offered along the way.

That included the workshops on branding and marketing that Notre Dame offered when NIL launched, helping me to refine my approach. Over time, my content shifted from being mostly about college sports to lifestyle, travel, and fashion, my current niche.

My favorite part of content creation is giving people a behind-the-scenes look at experiences they don't have access to — what game day feels like, how media days play out, what it's like to travel with a team. And I don't delete my old posts; I want people to see the journey from Notre Dame to Miami, and beyond. Having your digital timeline is cool and I find other people's content fascinating.

### LOOKING AHEAD



I had planned to play professionally overseas, in Switzerland, but I re-injured my meniscus in the summer of 2025 and needed surgery. The recovery has given me time to reflect on what's next.

Modeling and content creation are going well, and I still have the option to play in the future if I choose. My dream would be to join a team in Europe and model at the same time, somewhere close to Milan, Paris, or Barcelona.

No matter what happens, I know how important it is to stay connected. Networking has been key throughout my journey and it's the one thing I advise athletes to do — network, network, network.

While a student, I was at every undergraduate and alumni event, every football game day, every ACC event over the summer. I put myself out there and believe I've gained not only friendships and strong bonds, but additional networking opportunities. Recently, I was invited to serve as Notre Dame's Young Alumni Representative for the Student-Athlete Advisory Council. Athletic Director Pete Bevacqua knew of me, and this new role is a reminder that networking matters and will serve you well in the long run.

LAND's services mean so much. Not every school invests in their alumni-athlete community the way Notre Dame does. LAND is a trend setter and a reminder that you'll always be part of this family.