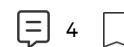


His dream realized, Syracuse's Kadary Richmond is ready to work



By Matthew Gutierrez (/author/matthew-gutierrez/) 7h ago



There was a time, just about a year ago, when Kadary Richmond didn't think the dream was going to happen. He hadn't cracked the 247Sports Top 100 in the 2020 class yet, and he didn't play a minute on the EYBL circuit. Two EYBL teams he had tried out for, he said, basically told him he wasn't good enough. Yet Richmond kept pushing. He had a dream to fulfill.

How he ended up at Syracuse, the school he wanted to be at from the start, and with an expected role as the first guard off the bench this season, has something to do with Shawn Mark, his mentor and coach at South Shore (N.Y.) High, calling assistant coach Allen Griffin to ask whether the Orange had a scholarship available. They did. Isaiah Jackson, a priority in their 2020 class, had committed to UConn. Griffin grew up near Richmond's home in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn, and he had enjoyed seeing him play the last three

summers. Watching Richmond, Griffin said, had always been a fun experience, particularly given his ability to penetrate. Syracuse had other options, though, and Richmond was not necessarily top priority.

Until Richmond forced the issue with his play, developing into the No. 83 prospect in the Class of 2020, according to the 247Sports Composite, and someone Syracuse had to have. As a sophomore, Richmond walked into Mark's office and announced that he wanted to play at Syracuse. He felt it was the best fit for its proximity to his home, plus its winning tradition and rabid fan base. He was a big Carmelo Anthony fan, too. So when Syracuse finally did offer in October, Richmond didn't have much to contemplate. He pounced.

This week Richmond checked into campus after a postgraduate year at Brewster (N.H.) Academy, where he brings the mentality of a grinder to the Orange backcourt. He could play the point, the two or the three. His size and strength could make him a wing, although he knows he needs to improve his shooting consistency to have a big impact. Having a ballhandler in Richmond who can anchor the bottom of the zone when needed is a plus. As he begins his college career, the 6-foot-6 guard explained where he fits in the SU system, his strengths and weaknesses, and the player he hopes he becomes. "Shooting," Richmond said, "is the one place I need to grow to be an all-around player."

This much was relayed to him by Griffin when he committed last fall: "We like you because you're very versatile," Richmond recalled Griffin telling him.

"I love having the ball in my hands, but I know Joe (Girard) will probably stay at the one," Richmond said. "I'm just trying to be a playmaker. That's my best attribute. Griff said he can see me playing at the top of the zone, with my length, and being on the bottom because I can rebound and challenge shots."

Richmond's length should be a bonus to the defense, which struggled last season. He also knows he must remain aggressive in looking for his own offense. Be a threat to score. Attack downhill. This is what distinguishes him. "I think he's got a big, big upside, even right away," coach Jim Boeheim said. "He gets to the rim better than anyone we've ever had lately."

0:00

Begin any analysis of his game with his get-to-the-rim mentality and quick first step, which allows him to pounce on the gaps he surveys in the defense. Two summers ago, he conducted workouts on the Coney Island beach, under the hot sun. Running in sand created a burn in his legs. Ladder footwork drills quickened his feet. When he returned to the court that fall, he felt a noticeable difference in the space he created on his first step toward the rim. “I try to read the defense, who’s moving where, and attack the gaps,” Richmond said. “I try to slow everything down and see how guys react. I try to see the game in slow motion. That’s what I want to do.”

He surveys the floor well, doesn’t have to make up his mind in advance, and he’s shown he’s creative with the ball near the rim. He doesn’t shy away from contact. He loves to play in the pick-and-roll, Syracuse’s primary offensive move. “I feel at my best in the pick-and-roll and in transition,” he said. Many of his best plays in high school came when he drove to his right strong side, but he has demonstrated a strong handle going left. His crossover in either direction is his top move to attack. “I broke my left hand when I was about 10 or 11, so when I came back, I trained my left more than my right,” Richmond said. “Since then, I’ve felt my left hand is sometimes stronger than my right.”

Richmond acknowledges his jump shot, particularly from deep, is his biggest weakness. He's inconsistent with his form, he said, and doesn't always line up his body toward the rim. Improvement begins with footwork. He plans to form-shoot throughout the summer and work with assistant coach Gerry McNamara on cleaning up his shot. "I see myself as a streaky shooter," he said. "Once I see the ball go through the net, that's when I get my confidence and I keep shooting with confidence. I know I need some work there."

"He's more of a point guard than anything," Griffin said. "His vision, his ability to make the right play. You can't just deem him as a scorer. He's a basketball player. He makes the right play a lot of the time. It's what our team needs without Elijah (Hughes). Kadary's ability to shoot right now, he'll be able to make shots. Can he turn himself into a really good shooter? That will take him over the top."

Richmond loves to renew and rebuild his game. He admires Allen Iverson, whom he still watches on YouTube today. "He's really simple," Richmond said. "He doesn't try to do too much." Richmond is a man of few words and says he'd rather let his game do the talking. Will he start as a freshman or sophomore at Syracuse? Probably not. The backcourt is crowded with two returning starters, but maybe he will surprise and sneak in at the three. How many minutes will he play? Who knows. Much will depend on the skills he showcases this fall in practice. Either way, Mark, Richmond's mentor, says he's ready to play big minutes: He was playing with grown men at New York City parks when he was 15 years old and, more recently, Mark says he's spoken with Richmond about playing time and how there's an open starting spot. Richmond wants it.

If he doesn't start, they have decided, he won't return to Brooklyn during breaks. He'll need to be in the gym at SU, working on his craft. "If you don't crack the starting lineup as a freshman, don't come home," Mark recalls telling him. "Stay in Syracuse. Outwork everyone else."

(Photo of Kadary Richmond courtesy of Brewster (N.H.) Academy)

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Matthew Gutierrez ([/author/matthew-gutierrez/](#)) is a staff writer for The Athletic, covering Syracuse basketball and football. He has written for The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post, among others. Previously, he covered Syracuse basketball and football for The Daily Orange, the student newspaper.



4 COMMENTS

Paul H. 5h ago

Really excited for Kadary the more I read about him. He's got the potential to see 10-15 minutes a game this season and I hope he's able to handle the point so JG3 can play off ball. Just a quick edit - Isaiah Jackson committed to Kentucky, Andre Jackson committed to UConn.



2

Shane D. 5h ago

Kadary is a stud, and without Hughes as an iso player/go to bucket getter Cuse will need his penetration skills and ability to find guys like Girard, Buddy, and (hopefully) Griffin for open looks.



1

Brad M. 4h ago

He'll provide depth in the back court, something they lacked last season.



1

Chari B. 4h ago

A good ball handler who can drive in and dish is what the team needs. His ability to play a few positions should create some interesting lineups.



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