

How Cal Poly guard Jackson Mosley achieved his dream of playing collegiate basketball at just 5'10

Standing at just five-foot-10, Jackson Mosley has had to work harder than most to get to where he is now. A junior guard at California Polytechnic State University, he's living his dream of playing basketball at the Division 1 level.

Mosley was just four years old when he first picked up a basketball. Growing up watching Kobe Bryant and the Lakers, basketball became one of Mosley's first loves. "As a child watching a lot of the Lakers and especially with Kobe. He was my favorite player growing up. That was where I really started to really love basketball."

Mosley started playing in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) when he was nine years old. His AAU team in Riverside, Team Elite, played a major role in shaping his basketball career. He would often find himself playing against older age groups, despite being one of the shortest guys on the court.

Because of his size, Mosley had to adapt his game. He credits his coaches on Team Elite for building his confidence. Mosley explained, "If I played timid around them or passive around them...they would tear me up or they would get mad at me 'like what are you doing, go get a bucket, you can score on these dudes.'"

Going into high school, Mosley's father also played a key role in his basketball training. "That's when the training switched to a lot more intense stuff," Mosley recalls. Training became more about how Mosley could use his size to an advantage.

Mosley said the COVID-19 pandemic helped take his game to the next level. He and his dad went to the gym late at night, working to build his stamina. Mosley explained, "A lot of the times it wasn't necessarily a lot of skill, but more so building up my endurance. Between every drill he had me running suicides, doing burpees, doing box jumps, in between every drill. And I feel that's where my motor and overall the way I play with aggressiveness, that's where that took that next step."

Mosley was a walk-on his freshman year at Cal Poly, playing in just seven games.

Then, with a new coaching staff, he decided to redshirt his sophomore year to learn the new system and put himself in the best position to play the next season. "Staying confident in myself, in my abilities, has always been a big part in where I am today," Mosley said. "I knew the work that it took to even be able to be in the position that I was in my freshman year at Cal Poly, just to be on the spot at my height...It wasn't anything new to me."

Mosley considers his height to be a blessing and a curse. He explains, "It's a blessing in the fact that because I'm short I know I have to work a lot harder than other people who are taller."

Mosley has always had to work harder than most. He remembers thinking, “Why does it seem like things are going better for them when I’ve been putting more work in.” Still, he never stopped grinding.

That's why, during his freshman and sophomore seasons, he was in the gym late at night and when the team was traveling, putting in work and lifting with the team's strength and conditioning coach.

Mosley can't do a lot of the drills or moves that taller players can, so he's had to be creative in the way he trains and scores. “It may look funky sometimes how I may finish at the rim, but ultimately that's the way I'm gonna be able to be effective at this level.” Mosley elaborates, “I've always worked hard on my balance and strength ever since I was a lot younger because of the fact that I'm smaller.”

Mosley's hard work is paying off. He played in 17 games this past season. He said, “This year I was finally able to get the opportunity after being patient. I felt like it's been a good experience.”

Mosley spoke on his next steps in his basketball career. He has two years left of eligibility and his goal is to win the Big West Championship and punch their ticket to the NCAA Tournament. He believes that with the coaching staff and the way the team plays, they can get it done.

Additionally, Mosley wants to keep the ball rolling after college and play professionally. While he is studying mechanical engineering at Cal Poly, he never wants to be away from the game, even if that means becoming a coach.

Mosley loves inspiring and giving hope to younger athletes. “Not everybody is gonna be 7 '0, 6' 5, dunking, windmilling, stuff like that. There's gonna be a lot more people in basketball that are closer to my height, and me playing right now, at the level I'm at right now, despite not having all the best physical tools and making due with what I have, I like seeing little kids look up to me.”