



# BECAUSE *we are* CATHOLIC

## Baltimore Catholic League Standout Pulls a 'Rudy,' Walking on at Basketball Powerhouse

Twenty-five years ago, the movie *Rudy* depicted the dream of Daniel (Rudy) Ruettinger's desire to play football at the University of Notre Dame in the 1970's despite numerous obstacles. University of Florida sophomore basketball player Andrew Fava could be described as the modern day Rudy Ruettinger.

Fava, who graduated from Loyola Blakefield in 2016, was elevated from one of the UF team managers to walk-on player by head coach Mike White before the beginning of the 2017-18 season. The 5'10" guard has contributed four points, a rebound, and an assist in four games for the Gators, who are currently the 20th ranked team in the country.

"When I first got here as a manager, the two people who never stopped believing in me were my dad and my grandfather," Fava said. "They called all the time last year to see how I was doing in pickup games with the team. They kept telling me to keep believing. My dad always told me I was going to be a story like Rudy. I just had to keep working hard."

Fava, a three-year starter in high school who earned All-Baltimore Catholic League Honorable Mention during his junior and senior years, turned down several Division III offers to try his luck at Florida, one of the nation's elite programs.

"I wanted to play basketball in college but knew with my size it would be very difficult. Florida gave me the opportunity to be a manager as a freshman with the possibility to walk-on down the line," added Fava. "I talked to Coach White about trying to walk-on midway through the summer. I made it very clear I thought I belonged and could help this program. He listened and gave me some feedback. I kept

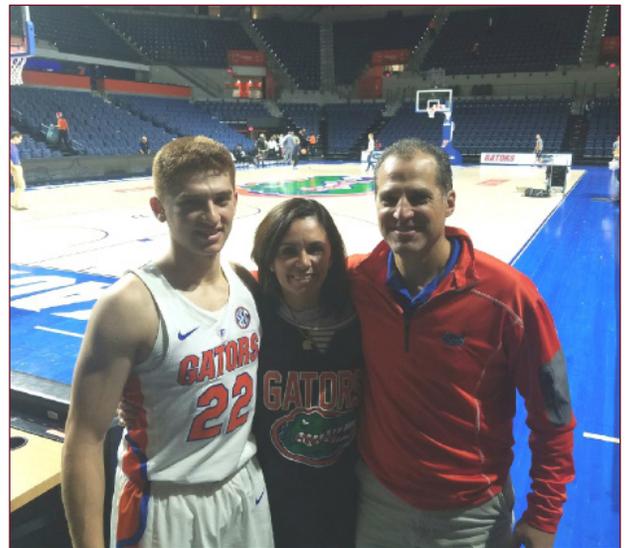
my head down and worked on what he told me to do. He started calling me Rudy. I thought it was hysterical and it is what he still calls me."

The aspiration to play for Florida has been Fava's dream since he was in third grade, attending Immaculate Conception School in Towson, after the Gators captured the 2006-07 national championship.

"They played Ohio State and I was actually rooting for the Buckeyes but Florida blew them out and I jumped on the bandwagon," Fava explained. "Two of my aunts went here and it just seemed like a good fit. My grandparents lived in Tampa and they would bring bags of Florida Gators gear every time they came to Baltimore. I became obsessed with Florida. One Christmas, my mom got me a Tim Tebow Fathead that is still plastered on my wall."

Just two days after being promoted to the roster, Fava made his collegiate debut against Gardner-Webb University and had an assist. Three days later, he scored four points in a victory over the University of North Florida.

"Everyone on the bench was so excited when my name was called for the first time," said Fava, who is majoring in both criminology and psychology with a minor in Spanish. "Once I got on the court, it was fine. Playing in the Catholic League helped a lot. Teams like Calvert Hall and



Andrew Fava (left), with his parents Maria and Andrew, fulfilled a lifetime dream to play basketball for the University of Florida after being elevated from team manager before the start of the current season.

St. Frances have huge crowds, so it has been easy to separate the game from the crowd. The most difficult part was the anticipation. But it felt natural once I got on the court because playing basketball is something I have been doing all my life."

*Catholic Schools Week, an annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States, begins this Sunday, January 28th. Throughout the week, schools focus on the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contributions to Church, local communities, and the nation. There are over 150 (Pre-K to 12) Catholic schools in Maryland serving nearly 50,000 students.*

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