

“After my Sophomore year I had the offer to play with the Jordanian National Team after some of the people that represented basketball in Jordan were watching a game on ESPN and saw me playing. They recognized my name and knew it was from Middle Eastern origin and contacted me about playing with the National Team the following season. I decided not to go that Summer because of the coaching change but stayed in contact with them and kept it as an option for my future,” he said in a *TDG Interview with former Golden Gopher, Jamal Abu-Shamala* on February 8, 2011. “My father is Palestinian and was born and raised in Palestine so I was able to play for Jordan because roughly 65-75 percent of Jordan is Palestinian and there is no Palestinian state.”

“There were so many experiences that I could list but I would have to say the most valuable to me were meeting family I had never met, learning about different cultures, making great relationships with teammates and being able to travel the world at such a young age....I was able to travel to China, Taiwan, Turkey, France, Italy and Qatar and learn so much about the world.”

After two summers on the Jordanian National Team, Jamal found out that Palestine had a national team. “So I playing my first tournament with Palestine in the Arab Games in Doha in December 2011. I was very proud the first time I played with Palestine and now that we've had some success I'm even more proud.”

Most of the guys speak great English and the others speak some, but we are all able to communicate well. I don't speak much Arabic, but I am taking classes and trying to learn it, according to *Palestine Square*.



“My father is from Gaza and my mother is American born and raised. I was given the opportunity through my former job to go to Gaza on a medical mission trip a couple years ago with an organization called the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund to perform surgeries on children in need. It was the first and only time I have been to Gaza and it was an amazing experience both personally and professionally,” said Jamal in an article *Palestinian National Basketball Team, Interview with Jamal Abu-Shamala* on October 17, 2015 from *Palestine Square*.

“I met many relatives on my fathers side of the family and was able to connect so many pieces of my background.” Jamal married Jilly E.Bean, and they have a daughter, Reiss Lena Abu-Shamala.

According to an article by Zach Eisendrath published on January 31, 2008 in *Minnesota Daily*, *Road to Williams not an easy one for guard* at <https://mndaily.com/194380/uncategorized/road-williams-not-easy-one-guard/>, better than his three-point shooting or grades in the classroom may be Abu-Shamala's character. Travis Busch said there is much more to Abu-Shamala than what the average fan sees from him on the court.

“He'll do anything for you. He's one of the nicest guys I've ever met. He really thinks about others,” he said. “I give him a hard time because he is such a good guy and there is nothing you can say bad about him.”



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Jamal William  
Abu-Shamala

جمال أبو شمالة

In Shakopee since 8th Grade



Jamal William Abu-Shamala played with the Shakopee High School Sabers, the University of Minnesota Gophers, and on the Jordanian National Team, the Palestine Team, in Mexico, and in the NBA D-League.



Jamal William Abu-Shamala was born on July 25, 1987 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His parents were Subhy Mohamed Abu-Shamala, who was born in Palestine, and Carolyn Myrna Allen Abu-Shamala, who was born in Minnesota on November 10, 1947. Jamal's father moved to Minnesota when he was 21 years old, and shortly after, he married Carolyn.

After 1987, when Jamal was born, Subhy Mohamed and Carolyn Myrna Allen Abu-Shamala divorced, and when Jamal was 13 years old, he moved to Shakopee.

"Winning the state championship in high school was one of my most memorable and biggest accomplishments for me as a basketball player," said Jamal. "When I moved to Shakopee in the 8th grade I saw that we had a lot of talent in my class and I always felt that if we stuck with it and continued to work, we could win state. Winning state was always my biggest goal from that point on followed by playing division 1 basketball."

"I started to play varsity my sophomore year and all three years I played varsity we made it to state but my sophomore and junior year we got knocked out in the first round. After losing my junior year, I remember thinking of how disappointed I was after losing and decided to dedicate everything I do to finally win state the next year," said Jamal in a TDG Interview with former Golden Gopher Jamal Abu-Shamala by **GopherNation** February 8, 2011.

### "Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard"

*-Jamal William Abu-Shamala*

"The one thing that sticks out to me about the team my senior year was how close we were and how much we enjoyed hanging out together. We all worked really well together and had one common goal. We had a scare the first round of state but we ended up pulling out the win and we didn't look back from there. I gained so much confidence from winning the state championship and really cherish the memory of that season."

Jamal Abu-Shamala, class of 2005, led the Shakopee boys' basketball team to the Class AAA State Championship during his senior year. Abu-Shamala was named team MVP in 2005, was nominated for the state's Mr. Basketball award, and finished his career with 1,254 points, according to Pat Minelli in the **Shakopee Valley News** on September 25, 2015, where Jamal joined the Shakopee Hall of Fame. Jamal scored 24 points and had 13 rebounds in a victory over Richfield in the Class 3A championship game in 2005.

After graduating from Shakopee, Abu-Shamala went on to receive his bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota, where he walked on to the Golden Gophers men's basketball team and played all four years. During that time, Abu-Shamala was named the University's Male Student Athlete of the Year in 2009.

Still, there was one other major concern: paying for tuition and housing. Abu-Shamala came from a single-parent home with his mother, and she was struggling to make ends meet because of an injury that wouldn't allow her to work. Putting Abu-Shamala through college would be a difficult task.

In fourth grade, Abu-Shamala met Mark Stensrude through the United Way's Big Brother program. Over the years, Stensrude turned into a father-like figure for Abu-Shamala. Stensrude offered to pay for the then-18-year-old's college expenses. Abu-Shamala was reluctant to put the financial burden of his college tuition on his surrogate family, but finally accepted the offer when the Stensrudes convinced him it was something they truly wanted to do for him.

"Every step of the way he's been there, guiding me and providing whatever I needed to achieve what I wanted to achieve," he said. "It's like they are my second family. They come to every game."

As a college freshman, he started 10 games and was key in helping Minnesota rebound from a dismal start to advance to the postseason. The coaching staff offered him a scholarship second semester of his freshman year. For Abu-Shamala, it was one of his proudest moments. "That was one of my biggest accomplishments," he said. "That's pretty high on the list, next to winning a state championship. Getting that was one of the greatest moments of my life."