

safer.”

“One thing I like about wrestling is that it’s a lifestyle,” Nina Makem said. “Wrestling teaches you to be disciplined and go to practice almost every day to develop your skills not always because you feel like it, but because it’s important to reach your goals. You develop a mentality and routine to make weight and learn about nutrition. You can carry that with you for the rest of your life.”

Across all of her competitions, Nina’s experienced only one occasion in which a male didn’t want to wrestle her because of her gender. Otherwise, competitors and especially her teammates and coaches have been enthusiastic and encouraging.

“My Shakopee teammates are very supportive,” Makem said. “They’re always saying, ‘Good job. Keep it up.’ They are always helping to make each of us better and feel happy. They don’t treat me differently because I’m a girl. They treat me like I’m a member of the team. It was really fun to go to practice every day and wrestle with the boys and be part of a successful team.”

“Nina is a pretty solid individual,” said Chad Shilson. “On the mat, she is a work horse. She will do anything you ask her. Off the mat, she’s the person that sends you random text messages, thanking you for helping her and her sister, wishing you Happy Birthday or various nuances of the Babaju tribe. What’s not to love about this girl?”

Besides wrestling, she also competes in track in high school, where she throws shot put and discus, and runs sprints. She said sports are important to her and help her academically.

“Sports let me take time off from school when I’m not thinking about the classroom,” Nina Makem said. “Sports give me a break to rewire my brain. I can do something physically, then come back to do my school work.”



Nina became a U.S. citizen on November 29, 2019.

Nina Makem attended Normandale Community College, the University of Minnesota, and Augsburg University. She wrestles and majored in exercise science with an emphasis on physical therapy. She loves volunteering, cooking, drawing and painting, and helping others.

Nina loves life, and enjoys gaining new skills, more experience, and become an expert in her field. Every day Nina starts the day by waking up and seeing what the next day will bring. “Nina is the epitome of what you want in an athlete. Very kind and humble and extremely disciplined with her diet. She puts an emphasis on academics, and I believe she is the hardest-working athlete in the country. Nina has the drive and passion to make World teams,” said Jake Short.

She encourages other females who are interested in wrestling to pursue it. “Try it before you start making assumptions,” she said. “You might like it and want to stick with it because it’s fun. You figure out that as you go, you can get very good at it.”



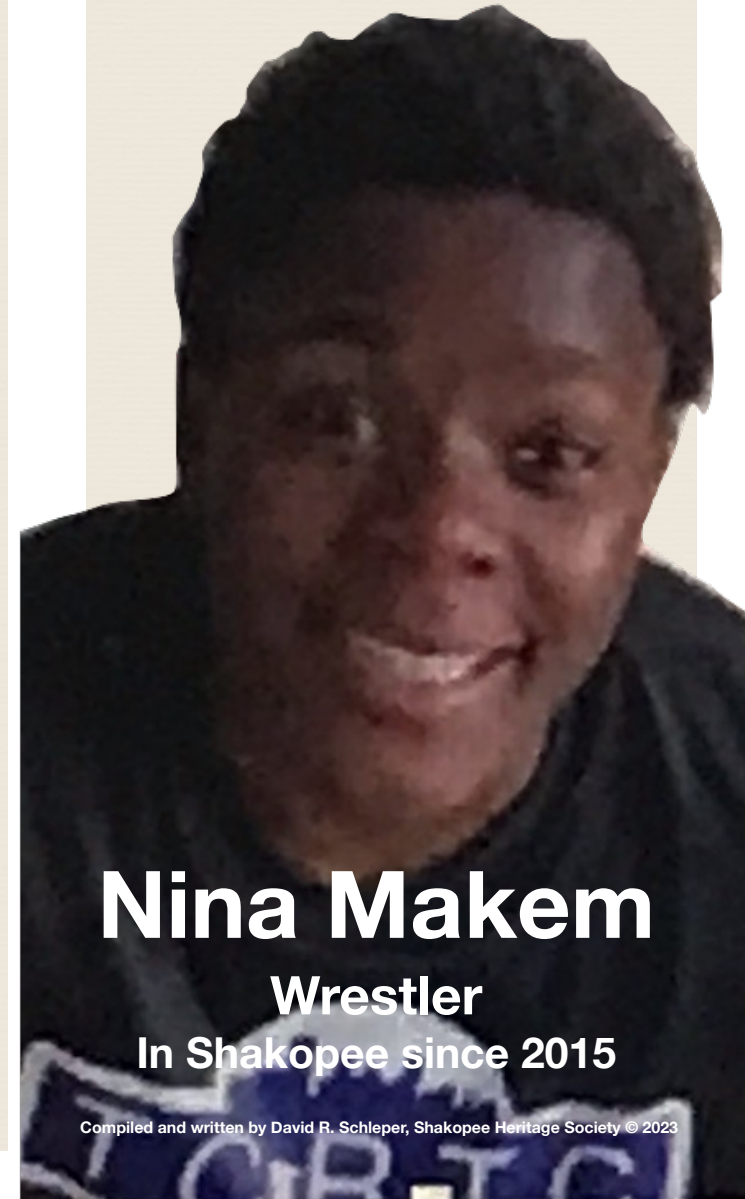
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Nina Makem
Wrestler
In Shakopee since 2015



“When Nina Makem and her family moved from the central African country of Cameroon to Shakopee in 2015, she had no idea she’d one day be heading to college as a wrestler,” according to an article, *Female Shakopee wrestler to compete at college level* in the **Shakopee Valley News** by Brett Martin on March 18, 2021 at https://theguillotine.com/2021/03/female-shakopee-wrestler-to-compete-at-college-level/?doing_wp_cron=1676774585.0752539634704589843750.

According to Derek Levendusky, AW staff writer on December 30, 2019, an article *Makem Can Make It: The Girl From Cameroon*, wrestling didn’t exist in Nina Makem’s homeland. “In Cameroon, a Central African country of 26 million people on the Atlantic coast just north of the equator, the main sport is soccer. Makem played on the dusty fields in the hot sun like most African children do, but she also had dreams of wrestling, at least the kind she saw on TV from time to time.” Nina remembered “I watched WWE growing up which gave me the idea that I wanted to do that when I grow up.”

When she moved to Minnesota, Nina Makem eventually found out that her school offered wrestling, though it took her a while to notice. “I started going to West Junior High in Shakopee,” she explained. “I didn’t know that

they had wrestling as a sport in school until [the end of] 9th grade.”

When she first signed up for wrestling, she was only the second female on the Shakopee team and was nervous about what to expect. But lucky for Nina, wrestling ended up being a family event. Duplex and Randy, her older brothers, were also part of the Shakopee wrestling team. And her younger sister, Joel, also was on the team.

According to Levendusky, “Working hard was not a foreign idea to Nina Makem, as the culture in Cameroon is marked by a hard-working people. Even small tasks could be difficult for some in Africa, like getting water or basic travel to any location, which is often on foot. Her father was a farmer, spending his days in ‘his offices’—the fields where he grew his crops. Makem would join her father in the work and often walk long distances for daily activities like school, the market, or visiting friends.”

Her family was excited about her opportunity

to wrestle, as they welcomed exercise back into her life. “My family feels great about me having the opportunity to wrestle,” said Nina. “Back home [in Cameroon] I did a lot of exercise from working in my family farms and walking from one place to another, often for long distances. However, in the United States, I can’t walk everywhere because of the highways and awful snowy weather!”

For the three years that she competed, Nina mostly competed against males. She is also a member of the Minnesota Storm wrestling club where she takes the mat against other females.

According to Martin’s article, Nina was used to wrestling. “Growing up, I watched a lot of WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment, Inc.) I liked it and was inspired by it,” she said. “My older brother started wrestling in Shakopee and would tell us about it, so I joined too. In WWE, I liked that the wrestlers jumped off ropes and hit each other. When I joined the high school team, I found out it was much different. I went into the wrestling room and there weren’t any ropes or people on jumping on each other, but I liked it. It seemed much

