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JOSEPH CHARTOUNY

LEBANESE-CANADIAN BASKETBALL STANDOUT IN THREE COUNTRIES AIMS FOR THE NBA

Joseph Chartouny was on his way to a basketball game when he learned his grandfather, Antoine El-Khoury, was dying.

"I heard he was going to the hospital and that it was really bad. So I just booked a flight right away from New York. I went HOME," Chartouny said.

That HOME for Chartouny was Montreal, Quebec.

At the time, in 2017, he was 22 years old, lived in the Bronx, New York, was playing Division 1 men's basketball at Fordham University. Chartouny moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 2018, where he is now a graduate student at Marquette University and a starting player on its nationally competitive Division 1 team, the Golden Eagles.

As a highly-touted Lebanese-Canadian basketball player who has played for prominent teams in three different countries, Chartouny now considers HOME court to be anywhere with a hoop.

Yet when Chartouny points to a map of Lebanon, HOME is Harissa.

He was born in Canada in 1994, four years after his Lebanese parents, Amale El-Khoury and Christian Chartouny, fled Lebanon during the last year of the Civil War. His grandparents left, too. In Montreal, they all lived together under the same roof.

Chartouny said his dual-identity can be hard to explain, especially in the United States.

"If I'm in Canada, people know I'm Lebanese," Chartouny said. "But people in the United States think I'm Canadian."

"Both of my parents are Lebanese. I'm Lebanese. I was born in Canada, but I'm very proud that I'm Lebanese."

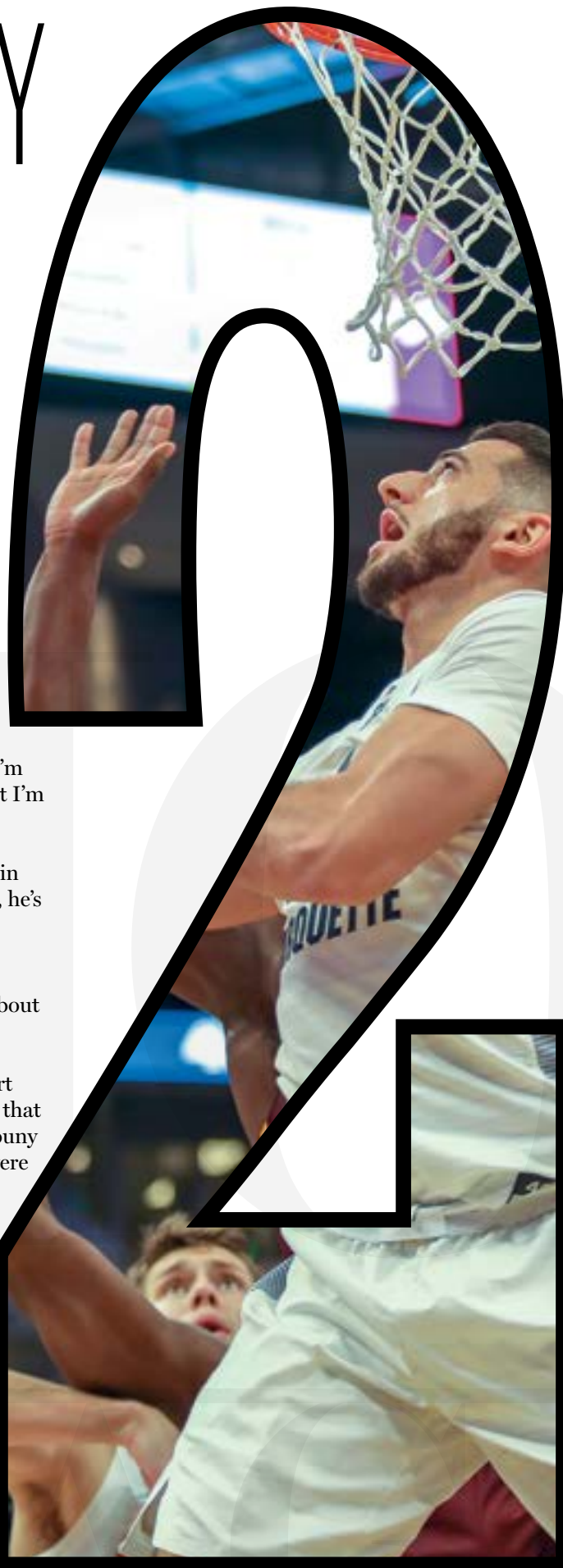
Chartouny still has plenty of family in Lebanon, and in the past four years, he's made the trek back each summer.

The first visit was for a cousin's wedding. The latter three were all about basketball.

"The first time that I got on the court with the Lebanese National Team – that was a really proud moment," Chartouny said. "I was very excited. The fans were just going crazy. It was packed."

At 21, Chartouny was one of the two youngest men to make the national team roster.

"Lebanese fans are so nice, whether you play zero minutes or you play 40 minutes," Chartouny said. "They just love us. My first year, I didn't even play that much. But I was going to restaurants and people would come up to me and they'd know me."



His newfound fame shocked Chartouny.

"It is crazy because I'm not even a professional basketball player. It's the fact that you play for the national team, you're like a hero. A lot of kids even come and ask for your signature."

Before Chartouny was receiving praise on the national level in Lebanon, he was attracting increasing attention in American collegiate basketball. He led the entire country in steals in his last season at Fordham, with 97.

"And when I first got to Fordham four years ago, I could barely speak English," Chartouny said. He's fluent in French and speaks Arabic at HOME.

It's not the only time Chartouny felt atypical.

"I'm different from other players," Chartouny said. "I like when people come to watch me play and think I'm good, but I like it more when they say I make an impact on the game."

"I want to be that guy. I don't want to just be a passer or a rebounder or a scorer. I want people to look at me and think I'm a winner."

Chartouny's recipe for success is simple – maintain a never-give-up mindset.

"I always tell people it's winning the game of infinity," he said. "Whatever I'm doing, I need to win. If it's a shootaround, I need to make the most shots. If it's a game of cards, I can't lose."

I hate to lose. Every day I try to win in whatever I'm doing."

That winning mentality was a factor in Chartouny choosing to enroll in Marquette. He finished his undergraduate degree in business administration at Fordham in three years, giving him one season of collegiate basketball eligibility remaining.

"I want to play professionally," Chartouny said. "Last year I

realized that to give myself the best chance to do that, I had to play somewhere like Marquette with more exposure and competition.

"My goal is to play in the NBA," Chartouny said. "If that doesn't work out, I'll go overseas and play in Europe or Lebanon."

Even if it's not for basketball-related reasons, a HOMEcoming to Lebanon is in his plans.

"I'll definitely be back to Lebanon," Chartouny said. "I haven't had Lebanese food in months. I haven't seen my family there in months. When I'm here in the U.S., I feel disconnected from it."

Some of Chartouny's favorite Lebanese dishes include *tabbouleh* and *fatoush*. When he was in Lebanon last summer with the national team, he'd wake up in the mountains and have *kanafeh*. They'd spend the day at the beach and head to practice at night.

"Sometimes we would have to practice without any lights," Chartouny said, recalling the scheduled power outages in the country. "Can you imagine practicing without any lights?"

Gametime was a different story. The lights shone brightly in the team's new arena, Nouhad Nawfal in Zouk Mikael. Among the more than 10,000 attendees were some familiar faces; it was the first time his family in Lebanon was able to see him play.

"I love to spend time with my family; that's the main thing that I miss everyday – just getting to be around my family. People who really know me know how important family is to me," he said.

Chartouny's late grandfather was never able to see him play for Lebanon.

"One reason why I wanted to play with the Lebanese National Team was to honor my grandfather," Chartouny said. "He was really proud of what I was doing."

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