

Sun Devil Women's Hoops: Tyi Skinner brings moxie to team (by Jenna Ortiz, [azcentral.com/Dec. 24, 2022](https://www.azcentral.com/story/sports/2022/12/24/sun-devil-womens-hoops-tyi-skinner-brings-moxie-to-team/7011117002/))

There are unmistakable things that stand out surrounding Tyi Skinner.

Yes, she's typically the smallest player on the court with a 5'5" frame. But it's not just her smaller size that grabs attention.

It's the speed and spark that Skinner brings. It's all the things that gave her the nickname, Showtime.

Whether it's a much needed 3-pointer to end a dry spell or drawing a foul to get to the line, the junior point guard brings a myriad of attributes to Arizona State women's basketball's young team.

For the entirety of her career, she's been overlooked for her lack of height. But with all the doubts surrounding a smaller point guard's ability, she silences with her game.

"You can take what's on paper: she's short, she doesn't have this or that," Skinner said. "But I think that my will to win and my mentality to make it not just for me, but for my family, I think that's always going to motivate me and drive me to become the best."

One person who didn't doubt Skinner's abilities was Natasha Adair, who was then the head coach at Delaware.

When Skinner initially stepped into Adair's office as a high school junior on a recruiting visit, she told her about plans to play professionally after college.

"She told me, Well, if you're trying to get there, I'm going to get there and make sure you're set up off the court and in the future," Skinner said. "Ever since then, I was like, this is the coach I want to play for."

The relationship carried on when Adair accepted the head coaching job at ASU and Skinner entered the transfer portal soon after. Adair still had to recruit Skinner, a Washington D.C. native, to leave the East Coast, but it came down to the trust Skinner has for Adair with her career.

Her fearlessness and selflessness have grown even more this season.

When ASU was down by 10 points heading into the fourth quarter at a packed GCU Arena, Skinner didn't shy away from the bright lights. Instead, she knocked down a 3-pointer to cut GCU's lead in half. When the dust settled, she scored 15 of ASU's 35 points which were the most points scored in a quarter in program history.

"She's always going to be that player that always has a chip on her shoulder because people will look at her height and dismiss her talent," Adair said. "Or they think that they will not let this 5'5" player go off. But now, she's commanding the double teams, the triple teams, and she's able to create. She's a three-level scorer."

Skinner can score from off the dribble, along with flexing a strong perimeter game. She's taken the most 3s and has the team lead with 27-of-74 going in.

The Sun Devils dealt with a non-conference slate marred by injuries, even dressing seven players for the loss to Stephen F. Austin on Dec. 11. But Skinner was consistently at point guard throughout the

stretch. Her 20.6 points per game not only puts her as the team's scoring leader, but in the top 20 in the NCAA and third among Pac-12 players.

"She comes in with this moxie and fearlessness about her," Adair said. "She's a winner. She might be 5'5" in height, but she's 6'5" in her presence on the court."

Now in her third season with Adair, she's shown a team-first mentality. Given the established relationship between the two, Skinner could have named herself as the leader. But instead, she relied on junior Jaddan Simmons, ASU's only returning starter, to steer the team in the right direction.

The two have not only connected well on the court with 63 of the team's 120 assists, but they've stood up to create a more communicative environment.

"I like that we really communicate and talk with each other and we all can take constructive criticism on and off the court," Skinner said. "When adversity comes, it really shows who you are and how we are going to be as a team together when we bounce back."

Winning became something Skinner was used to at Delaware with only 13 losses over two seasons. ASU (7-4) had its ups and downs in non-conference play, including three consecutive losses while the team battled through injuries. The Sun Devils will face its toughest task yet when Pac-12 play begins in Tucson on Dec. 29.

"I've been wanting to play against the top," Skinner said. "I feel like that comes with just being a competitor in general and playing at this level and seeing everybody who is great and me competing against them, I feel like that will definitely improve my game."