



Let us help you get the right coverage at the best rate possible & help you shrink your auto premium!

Sarah Duffer Dan McCloud Nancy Hickey

Click here to visit our Bowling Green agent's websites.

[Home](#) / [Sports](#) / [WKU Sports](#)

[http://www.bgdailynews.com/sports/wku/stansbury-bassey-s-wku-signing-about-relationships/article\\_c2867704-9845-50bc-9a01-c57f6150b814.html](http://www.bgdailynews.com/sports/wku/stansbury-bassey-s-wku-signing-about-relationships/article_c2867704-9845-50bc-9a01-c57f6150b814.html)

TOP STORY

WKU MEN'S BASKETBALL

## Stansbury: Bassey's WKU signing 'about relationships'

Hiltoppers' coach recruited star center since 2015

BRAD STEPHENS [bstephens@bgdailynews.com](mailto:bstephens@bgdailynews.com) 8 hrs ago



Rick Stansbury took a hard-earned victory lap Thursday night at Indian Hills Country Club.

A hand-drawn chalkboard sign inside the door welcomed his arrival. Red and white balloons decorated the club's dining room. "Stand Up and Cheer" played on a loop during dinner.

Western Kentucky's coach had been scheduled for a month to speak Thursday at Indian Hills and give fans an offseason update on his program. But the news that broke a day before Stansbury's speech gave the night a feeling of celebration.

After all, it was news three years in the making.

Thursday marked the first time Stansbury spoke publicly since five-star center Charles Bassegy became a Hilltopper.

A top recruit in the Class of 2019, WKU announced Wednesday afternoon that Bassegy reclassified to the Class of 2018, signed with the Toppers and enrolled in school.

Fans asked about their new star freshman Thursday as soon as Stansbury took the microphone.

"Who's that?" WKU's third-year coach cracked. "I didn't think I'd have any questions about that tonight."

Stansbury's recruited Bassegy for three years but, due to NCAA rules, is unable to talk about recruits until they officially sign with a school.

With Basseyy reclassified, signed and enrolled, Stansbury got to tell Hilltopper fans Thursday all about the star player he's been chasing.

"People want to know the reason why he came to Western Kentucky," Stansbury said. "Well, it's about relationships."

In this case, Stansbury has a longstanding relationship with Basseyy's guardian, Hennssy Auriantal. The two share connections to Mississippi, where Stansbury spent 22 years at Mississippi State and where Auriantal worked a stint as a Jackson State assistant.

Basseyy is the third Auriantal-connected player Stansbury has signed in his time at WKU.

Junior Lomomba, a guard on the 2016-17 WKU team, is Auriantal's nephew. Auriantal has also served as guardian to Moustapha Diagne, a forward entering his redshirt junior season at WKU.

Auriantal helped bring Basseyy to the United States from Nigeria in the summer of 2015. Stansbury, then a Texas A&M assistant, was at a camp in Houston when Basseyy arrived and said he was the first college coach to greet the talented young prospect.

Basseyy settled in at a school in San Antonio, a three-hour drive from the Aggies' campus in College Station, Texas.

"I remember driving from College Station to San Antonio three mornings in about a four- or five-week span and watching him work out at 5:30 in the morning," Stansbury said.

Stansbury stayed in touch with Basseyy after leaving Texas A&M in March 2016 for the head coaching post at WKU.

Basseyy arrived in the Bluegrass State a year later, leaving San Antonio before the 2017-18 school year. He moved to Louisville and took classes at DeSales High School while playing for Aspire Academy – a prep school that doesn't participate in KHSAA athletics.

Bassey's recruiting profile grew thanks to big performances on the prep and AAU circuits. The 6-foot-11 center averaged 19.4 points, 12.8 rebounds, 3.4 blocks, 2.9 assists and 1.7 steals per game as a junior at Aspire.



ESPN and Rivals rated Bassey as the No. 3 prospect in the entire Class of 2019. Kansas and UCLA were among the schools who offered scholarships.

But Stansbury was there to recruit Bassey before anyone else. And his three-year courtship paid off.

"Rick Stansbury was the first coach to offer me, and I'm comfortable here," Bassey said Wednesday in a news release. "I know Coach Stansbury will push me and I want to be a part of rebuilding this program. I'm looking forward to the challenges that college brings and hope to help us win the conference."

Stansbury talked up his new recruit Thursday as a talented basketball player on the court and a high-character person off it. He referenced Bassey's 3.9 high school GPA and called him "a great young man."

Bassey's decision to reclassify was based largely around his desire to face better competition, Stansbury said.

"He didn't feel like he was getting challenged enough in high school or in the AAUs he plays in," Stansbury said. "He's ready to take that next step."

One question from the audience asked if Stansbury was worried about a repeat of the Mitchell Robinson saga from 2017.

Robinson – like Bassey, a five-star center – arrived at WKU in July amid questions concerning his commitment to the program. He abruptly left school later that month, re-enrolled and rejoined the Topper program in August, then abruptly left again weeks later to pursue a pro basketball career.

"It's a totally different situation," Stansbury said of Bassey. "... It's been a long relationship.

"I really lay my head down and think about it (zero), where last year I never laid my head down. If I did, I had one eye open. It still didn't matter. Anything's possible, but no."

---

– Follow Daily News sports reporter Brad Stephens on Twitter @BradBGDN or visit [bgdailynews.com](http://bgdailynews.com).

## MORE INFORMATION



+9



Hilltoppers sign 5-star center Bassey in 2018 class

## **Brad Stephens**

Bowling Green Daily News sports reporter primarily covering Western Kentucky football and men's basketball.