

Jugando al Baloncesto Profesional

Or, playing pro basketball—in Spain—according to John DiBartolomeo '13, point guard for Majorca's Palma Air Europa.

Interview by Karen McCally '02 (PhD)

When I graduated from Rochester, I knew I wanted to play pro basketball abroad, or at least give it a shot.

I heard that Spain had the highest level of play in Europe, and I'd always wanted to go to Spain. I'd never really been to Europe except when I was in college, with the team, going into my senior year.

I got an agent, and last summer, I participated in the Eurobasket Summer League in Madrid.

I played six games or so. I made a decent showing, and that's when I got some interest from coaches. After that, my agent got me signed.

Spain's number one sport has always been soccer, and I don't think anything's ever going to change that.

But I was pleasantly surprised by turnouts at games. There are fans who bring drums and horns to the games, so it's deafening inside the gym. On the court, you can kind of communicate. We use a lot of hand signals.

John DiBartolomeo '13

Hometown: Westport, Conn.

Living in: Palma de Majorca, Spain

Major: Financial economics

Occupation: Point guard, Palma Air Europa

Quick facts: First Team All-American, Division III, and Player of the Year (D3Hoops.com and *DIII News*) for 2012-13; in Rochester men's basketball, third all-time top scorer and second in assists and steals.

The biggest difference from college is the speed of the game.

In college, we have a 35-second shot clock, which means the offense has to shoot the ball within 35 seconds of gaining possession. Here it's 24 seconds. It obviously goes a lot faster. You get a lot more possessions in.

The speed makes the game much more tiring for the point guard. Just about every guard in the league is told to press full court.

That means that when you start defense, you guard the entire length of the floor, rather than letting the team sprint with the ball to half court. If you can slow them down for three or four seconds, it takes them that much longer to get the ball over half court and start their play.

As a spectator, at first I didn't like the speed. But now that I'm used to it, I definitely like it more.

I find myself watching American college games and feeling like the game's going pretty slowly. Teams can run two to three plays in one possession and then start over and do one more thing.

There are multiple leagues in every country. Right now, I don't play at the highest level in Spain, and my goal is to do as well as I can and play at the highest level I can.

Each year a team can move up or down a league. The top team in each league after the regular season moves up a league automatically. Teams two through nine play in the playoffs. The playoffs winner also ascends to the next league. The bottom two teams in any league go a league lower.

My other goal is to learn Spanish.

I took a little in high school. When I found out I was coming here, my grandmother bought me a Rosetta Stone program. Between that and talking with the players, I've learned a little bit more. I can understand a little more than I can speak. My head coach speaks little to no English, but I have an assistant, and two of the other coaches speak pretty good English. They've been very accommodating. 

