Brandon Osborne

Growing up in Charlotte, Da’Naria Erwin Spencer seemed poised to have a good basketball career. Her mother knew it from the moment she started playing. “We always knew she would be great because when she was younger she always played with the boys, and beat them all the time” said her mother Tamekia Lotta.

Erwin Spencer was finishing up her senior season at East Mecklenburg High School when she started to think about where she could play college basketball. A major factor in her decision to come to Radford was that it was close enough to home that her family could watch her play.

“In high school my family was at all my games and just being somewhere they can see me play is a big motivation,” Erwin Spencer said. Head Coach Tajama Ngongba said that you can hear her family at every home game cheering for Erwin Spencer.

Coach Ngongba remembers the first time she watched Erwin Spencer play and she was impressed by her demeanor. “She didn’t drop her head if it was a bad play; she kept playing at a high energy,” the coach explained.

Erwin Spencer got off to a fast start at Radford during her freshman season. She started in every game she appeared in as well as being named to the Big South All-Freshman team.

She did experience some growing pains that first year as the transition from high school to college wasn’t easy. “The game was faster and the players were stronger even players my size were stronger,” she explained.

She said she had to work extremely hard in the weight room to get stronger help her compete.

Erwin Spencer would continue her success the following season as she would lead Radford in scoring, assists, steals and free-throw percentage. That season she was named First-Team All-Big South.

The Highlanders also became stronger that year as they improved from six wins the previous season to 14. “It means a lot, I have to credit my teammates because without them I wouldn’t have those accolades,” Erwin Spencer said about her first-team selection.

Her junior year she would once again be named First-Team All-Big South as well as being one of the finalist for Player of the Year in the Big South Conference. The team also improved its win total to 16. She was also named to the all-tournament team.

Unfortunately her season would end in the Big South Tournament semifinals. That loss really hit her and the team. “When we sat in the locker-room after that loss, it really stung,” Ngongba said.

That loss has led to the teams desire to win the Big South this season. “Our seniors you can see are practicing so that they don’t have that feeling again,” said Ngongba. Da’Naria said she wants to see her career at Radford end on a positive note.

“I would love to win a ring,” Erwin Spencer said. “I feel that we have the best team in our Conference and we should win the Big South as long as we keep working hard.”

Her coach feels the same way. “She has the talent to be Player of the Year and the talent to get us the Big South title.”

Her family has always been there supporting her in basketball and they know she deserves it. “We’re so proud of her and all that she has accomplished. We've always pushed her to be and do her best and we know it’s going to pay off sooner or later,” her mother said.

Da’Naria hopes to continue her basketball career after college by playing professionally. “I would love to try to go overseas and play for a couple of years.”

Coach Ngongba has played professional basketball and said she believes Erwin Spencer could thrive overseas. “Da’Naria in her ability to score and throw up points could help someone at the next level.”