

Sports

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Kayla: C'est magnifique!

Milton's WNBAer now brand ambassador for The Tall Boutique and playing winter ball in central France

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

There's times when even the most rugged and intense female athlete just wants to shed the sweats and look stylish.

But what happens when your fashion options don't measure up — pun intended — to your stature? Kayla Alexander is all-too-familiar with this dilemma.

"Being 6-foot-4 with long legs and arms, I find shopping incredibly frustrating," said Milton's WNBAer — a fourth-year centre with the San Antonio Stars. "Most clothing brands forget that us tall women do exist and want to look good too."

With that in mind, the 25-year-old jumped at a recent opportunity to become the brand ambassador for Talltique: The Tall Boutique — a deal that followed a meeting/fitting with creator Helen Pappas set up by a Stars teammate.

"We talked about the idea (of being a brand ambassador) and then a few weeks later it became official. I'm all for promoting a brand



Above, Kayla Alexander sports some stylish clothes by The Tall Boutique. At right, Alexander competes with San Antonio this past summer.

Above photo by Julie Nations
Photo at right courtesy of NBA Entertainment / Getty Images

that caters to tall women because when I was younger my mom and I struggled to find clothes that fit."

Coincidentally, Alexander now finds herself just a short drive from one of the fashion capitals of the world — Paris. After three fall/winter seasons in Russia, her love of travel has landed her in central France, playing for the defending EuroCup champion Tango Bourges.

She's visited the country twice before, and this latest stint allows her to brush up on the French she took throughout school and minored in while tearing up the court at Syracuse University.

"I can speak and understand the language fairly well, but am nowhere near fluent," said



Alexander, who writes a regular blog (kaylaalexander.net) about her basketball, faith and all other aspects of her life. "So far I have absolutely loved my time here. I've had so many fun experiences and I've barely been here a few weeks. I'm extremely thankful that basketball has allowed me the gift of travel."

That cheery disposition is in stark contrast to the anxiety and concern she faced through the late summer and early fall.

In the late stages of one of her better performances with the Stars August 28, Alexander either tripped or was tripped by a host Washington opponent on an 'up and under' and crashed to the floor chin first.

"The next thing I know I'm sitting on a hos-

pital bed and it's 1:30 a.m. For the next three hours I would suffer from short-term memory loss (due to concussion). Think '50 first dates', only within minutes instead of days. And I would lose a six-hour span of my memory completely."

The next few weeks involved a constant state of helplessness, with chronic headaches keeping her sidelined — and worried about her Tango Bourges contract, and basketball future at large.

"With each passing day I'm losing my conditioning, endurance and strength! Why God, WHY?" wrote the former NCAA Division 1 standout in her blog. "I had no control over how long the healing process would be, and I could see all of my plans and excitement for the remaining and upcoming seasons slipping away."

"Once again, I had to be reminded of God's promises for my life, and trust that He has a plan, purpose and reason for everything. Even in this situation I was only seeing a small part of an even larger picture."

Eventually cleared for a return to play earlier this month, Alexander is now hoping to build on a 2016 WNBA season that while disappointing from a team perspective — with San Antonio finishing in last place at 7-27 — did see her make noticeable progress offensively. With a significant increase in playing time, she more than doubled her point total (200, 8PPG) from the previous season and set new career highs in rebounds (113) and assists (13).

"This past year (in San Antonio) was another rough one. Losing always sucks," said Alexander, the Stars' first-round, eighth-overall draft pick in 2013. "Personally I think I was finally able to show what I'm capable of on the court, getting good minutes and being productive while I was out there. I'm hoping to continue to build on the strides I made this year and continue to grow and improve as a player this year in France and going into next summer."

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