

Victor Ojeleye

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

First Team All-Big 12. Achieving such an honor is a tremendous accomplishment for any athlete. Today we'll meet a Big 12 athlete who made the First Team with his achievements in the classroom, while contributing on the basketball court and the campus. His leadership extends all the way from rural Kansas to the Big 12 Conference. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Victor Ojeleye is a senior on the K-State basketball team. As his last name suggests, he has international roots. Victor was born in Nigeria where his family originates. When he was two years old, he moved to Kansas where his father was studying medicine.

The family eventually moved to Ottawa, where his father, Dr. Ernest Ojeleye, became a family physician. Victor's mother Joy is trained as a nurse and is active in community projects. Victor went through Ottawa schools. The Ojeleyes also bought land on the south side of Ottawa, in the direction of the rural community of Princeton, population 315 people. Now, that's rural.

This small-town Kansas upbringing would have an influence on Victor. "It taught me values," Victor said. "We've learned to value the things we've been given."

"I learned to work hard. My parents taught me that work ethic," Victor said. "We have a lot of hard-working people in Kansas."

It also taught Victor to have high aspirations. "All our elementary schools in Ottawa had names of presidents, like Eisenhower and Lincoln," he said. Victor learned the importance of study, faith, and community service. And of course, he loved basketball.

Victor was a four-year letterman at Ottawa High School, setting new school scoring and rebounding records while becoming valedictorian of his senior class. After a year at the Patterson School in North Carolina, he enrolled at Kansas State and joined the basketball team where he has been a key reserve player ever since.

Victor is one of only two seniors on the roster. He has already completed his required credits and will go through graduation in spring 2012.

On the basketball court, Victor has seen action in almost every game this season. He scored a season-high eight points against Texas Tech and grabbed 10 rebounds against Iowa State. But when the coaches talk about Victor, they talk about the intrinsic values of discipline, toughness, energy, and unselfishness. He lives the team concept.

One assistant coach commented that Victor might have been MVP of the team a year ago, in the sense of providing leadership when the team faced adversity.

Victor also gives leadership in other ways. He leads a Bible study for players on the team and is active in student-athlete organizations.

"I got involved in the student-athlete advisory committee at K-State," Victor said. "Two to three representatives from each school were sent to a Big 12 leadership conference."

Ultimately, Victor was elected by his peers to serve as Vice-Chair of the Big 12 Student-Athlete Advisory Council during the 2011-12 athletic season. "This council is

intended to speak up for the welfare of student-athletes,” Victor said. “We serve to bridge the gap between administration and the athletes.”

The term “student-athlete” really applies in Victor’s case. In addition to his contributions on the basketball court, his accomplishments in the classroom are remarkable. While maintaining the hectic schedule of a Big 12 athlete, he earned the conference’s inaugural Dr. Gerald Lage Award, which is the Big 12’s highest academic honor. Victor has consistently been on the Big 12 Commissioner’s Honor Roll.

In fact, Victor made the Big 12 Conference Academic All-Big 12 men’s basketball First Team – not once, not twice, but three years in a row. He is only the seventh player in school history to be a three-time recipient, and the first since the year 2000. He has done so while earning a double major in accounting and finance. Wow.

First Team All-Big 12. That’s a remarkable achievement. Victor Ojeleye has earned these accolades in the classroom. We commend Victor for making a difference by earning those grades and encouraging his teammates, while serving in a supportive leadership role for athletes in all sports across the conference. He has become First Team with an attitude of putting the “team first.”

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.