



# Carmen Maciariello

## Leaving A Trail

By Jenna Caputo | Photos by Angela Mia Photography & Contributed by Siena Athletics

Carmen Maciariello has always loved playing basketball, even as a young kid growing up here in Clifton Park. He also played soccer, rescued animals, loved anything Star Wars, and collected sneakers—especially Air Jordans. He got his first pair in the fifth grade, and like most kids at that time, hoped to emulate Michael Jordan while wearing them. Every year since, he would anticipate the new release and would get up early to wait in line for the limited shoes. Since having kids and less closet space as an adult, he's not as active in the sneaker game, but it's still a treasured collection. It's a symbol of all he has achieved since the time he attended a summer basketball camp at Siena College in fourth grade, when he was told that he would not be a good basketball player and to find another sport. "The moral of the story is to don't let anyone tell you that you can't do something. Always believe in yourself!" he says. And luckily, that's exactly what he did, even though initially, he didn't expect to end up in the professional world of basketball.

As a student at Shenendehowa High School, Carmen helped

guide their team to a 22-2 overall record and a Section II championship, receiving the Albany Times Union's Player of the Year award. He went to college at the University of New Hampshire on a full scholarship but transferred to Siena when he had a chance to play on their team instead, graduating magna cum laude with a marketing and management degree in 2001. During his time at Siena, Carmen and his team celebrated 20 wins and the MAAC Regular Season Championship during his senior year. It was a dream come true to not only play with Siena, but to prove everyone wrong from that camp so many years earlier that said he would never make it as a basketball player.

After school, he took a job as a financial advisor at Merrill Lynch but quickly realized that he didn't enjoy that type of work. "You must have a passion for what you love, and I had the courage to move on from it," he says.

He realized he needed to get back to basketball. There was something he always loved about the sport—being in the gym



and having the ability to perfect his own individual game. He had an opportunity to play professionally in Italy and decided to take it. Playing pro had always been a dream, and he knew he needed to see where it would go. Since his grandfather was an Italian immigrant, he was able to get dual citizenship. It was an incredible experience. He especially enjoyed playing in Ragusa and just relishing in competing against so many good players while visiting the various cities within the different regions.

He learned that Europeans played basketball differently, having a more fluid style of play with much more passing and cutting than here. During this time in Italy, however, he discovered that he wanted to coach. And while he had a fantastic experience, it could be incredibly lonely being so far away from his family and friends. So after he sustained a knee injury, he decided not to go back to Italy for the next season. Instead, he took a job as a teacher's aide for special needs students in North Colonie School District while he coached as a JV coach at Albany Academy and also for the Albany City Rocks AAU program where he led several future Division I players and professional stars before Carmen went on to coach at the college level. Over the years, he helped guide the teams at Fairfield University, Boston University, and George Washington University through incredible seasons, which included many wins, tournaments, and championships.

In 2005, Carmen began as the Siena Director of Basketball Operations under the direction of Fran McCaffery, a 2017 Siena Athletics Hall of Fame inductee. During that one season, the team had a nine-win improvement, which laid the groundwork for the greatest 3-year run in Siena history, which included three MAAC Championships and NCAA tournament appearances.

In 2012, Carmen received an induction into the Capital District Basketball Hall of Fame. "It was such a great honor," he says. "It was nice to be recognized. I wouldn't have been able to accomplish anything without such great teammates and coaches."

In 2018, he returned to his alma mater, taking a position as assistant coach and helping guide Siena to a 17-16 overall record, including an 11-7 mark in the MAAC. They finished in a second-place tie in the MAAC that year, placing them nine spots higher than their preseason poll prediction. This was a tie with UT Arlington for the largest national improvement. When the current head coach, Jamion Christian, took an opportunity at a job closer to his family, Carmen was promoted to Head Coach at Siena, creating an intensely special moment in a story that began there so many years before.

In his first season as Head Coach of the men's basketball program, Carmen led the Saints through an unprecedented season, posting a 20-10 overall record with a 15-5 record in the MAAC—the program's 8th MAAC Regular Season Championship and their 6th MAAC Tournament title. He was the only coach of the 61 new Division I head coaching hires that year to lead his team to an outright conference regular season championship, and he was quickly named one of the "Top 12 Most Immediately Successful Hires of the 2019-2020





Season” by CBS Sports’ Matt Norlander. Carmen was the first rookie head coach in the program’s history to lead Siena to an outright MAAC Regular Season Championship in his first season, and his 20 wins tied for the most of any first-year Siena Head Coach. His season-ending 10-game winning streak ended up being the third longest in the program’s 80-year history and the 7th longest active win streak nationally. They posted a perfect 14-0 mark at the Times Union Center, making them one of only 13 teams nationally to hold an undefeated home record. The excitement was contagious throughout the community and the fans showed their support, creating the top average attendance of games out of all 56 Northeast mid-major programs.

Carmen sees every day as a gift, and his passion for his job shows in everything he does. “No two days are the same,” he says. “I get to do what I love for work and even though there are many challenging aspects to coaching, it’s an honor and privilege. I love being a mentor and leader to my players and hopefully leaving a lasting impact on them as well as the game of basketball.”

The pandemic obviously brought a unique set of challenges this past year. The schedule of games often changed in addition to the requirement for the team’s frequent COVID testing. They often had to “pause” all activities due to a positive test as well, but the team continued to thrive despite the changes, and Carmen looked at it as an opportunity to grow and come together as a team. Being a part of a team is not just about what happens on the court, and in addition to the team keeping a stellar team grade-point average and winning the program’s first NABC Team Academic Excellence Award for the 2019-2020 season, they also worked together to help make a difference throughout the community. They participated in more than 50 local community service activities in the 2019-2020 season and continued throughout this year as well. Some of their activities included delivering food and supplies to first responders during the height of the pandemic, serving meals at Ronald McDonald House, and partnering with Play It Forward 518—helping kids with various illnesses and giving them the opportunity to interact and engage with the team as well as being an honorary captain before their home games. They also work with Make-A-Wish, CAPTAIN Cares, Troy Boys & Girls Club, and they organized the Second Annual Autism Awareness and Sensory Friendly Game, winning the 2020 Autism Action Award by NYS Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara.

Carmen also co-founded Coaches 4 Change, an organization that helps engage, educate, empower, and evolve the college student athlete on issues such as the power of voting, systemic racism, and social injustice. Their first initiative educated their athletes about all things voting, including researching local politicians. Carmen says the program has been instrumental for the coaches as well as the athletes. “It has been a great network for coaches across the country involved in college athletics. It helps get coaches involved with public speaking as well as various other leadership roles. We use each other as resources and have created a supportive network for all to share and learn with all that comes with coaching and leading.”

Off the court, Carmen has been enjoying time with his family. He met his wife, Laura, at Eastern Standard in Boston when he worked at Boston University.



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She is now a nurse practitioner in Siena's Health Services. They have two children, Reese (5) who loves gymnastics and soccer, and Matteo (11 months), and they're looking forward to returning to their summer swim lessons here in Clifton Park. In addition to savoring time together outdoors or swimming in the pool, the Maciariellos enjoy the many things the Capital District has to offer including visiting Lake George in the summer, hiking Prospect Mountain in the fall, attending the Saratoga Racetrack, biking on the Zim trail, and enjoying fantastic food, especially at Lake Ridge Restaurant in Round Lake as well as a hot roast beef sandwich at Maurice's in Albany on game day.

They are looking forward to traveling again as they often spend time in Gloucester, MA in the summer and visiting friends and family in Boston. Carmen likes anywhere with a beach and especially enjoyed their trip to Barbados as well as to St. Lucia for their honeymoon.

Carmen is so proud to be back at his alma mater, a true basketball school surrounded by a passionate fan base. It was a storied tradition he grew up following, and he's excited to now continue the story himself. "All that on top of the energetic and passionate faculty teaching our student athletes daily leads to a great experience for all of us," he says. "So many doubted me and said I couldn't do it. The fact that I believed in myself is a great life lesson."

As Ralph Waldo Emerson said—"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail"—Carmen is just starting his momentous trail. He is far from done.



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