Community leaves lasting mark on Tulane Athletics Hall of Famer

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Mariam Kurdadze (BSM ’12, MBA ’15) will be inducted into the Tulane Athletics Hall of Fame at a special induction ceremony at the Audubon Tea Room on Sept. 25.

When Mariam Kurdadze (BSM ’12, MBA ’15) began searching for a school in the United States where she could play tennis and earn a business degree, she found more than she expected.

Now, as the four-time All-Conference USA selection and 2012 Louisiana Player of the Year prepares to be inducted into the Tulane Athletics Hall of Fame, she reflects back on the community she found at Tulane and the lasting impact it has had on her personal life and career.

“I feel very grateful that I can be a small piece in the athletic department’s history, where I can come back and still see my name,” says Kurdadze, who returns to New Orleans for a special induction ceremony Sept. 25 at the Audubon Tea Room. “It’s a lot of athletes’ dream just to be able to get to that level. I’m more than just excited, I have a lot of appreciation for it.”

A native of Tbilisi, Georgia, Kurdadze turned down scholarship offers from other large SEC universities to help restart Tulane’s women’s tennis program following Hurricane Katrina. She went on to establish herself as one of the most dominant players in the history of the program. In addition to earning All Conference USA and Player of the Year honors, she was awarded Louisiana’s Freshman of the Year in 2009 and ranked No. 7 in the Southern region as a senior.

“For me, it was a balance to be able to go to a good school, get the degree that I wanted and play tennis on a competitive level,” she says. “You don't need to go to a big school to feel that competitive nature, because Tulane has it. It's very competitive on every level and has that good balance. That's really what I'm most proud of.”

Kurdadze says the community she built at Tulane during her seven years in New Orleans helped her adjust to life in the United States. She spent weekends and even holidays with her teammates and coaches, as well as coaches from the baseball and football programs, the athletic director, and Tulane donors. That close-knit network, she says, was a defining quality of Tulane.

“I only have good things to say about the whole experience. The community and atmosphere at Tulane—not too many universities can compare to it,” she says.



Mariam Kurdadze was a four-time All-Conference USA and All-Louisiana selection who consistently played at No. 1 throughout her career at Tulane.

Kurdadze now resides in Chicago, where she's lived since being recruited by Arnie Fielkow, former executive vice president of the New Orleans Saints, to work in operations for the National Basketball Retired Players Association. For the past five years, she's worked for American Express in client management, where she is a trusted business consultant to C-level executives and business owners.

Kurdadze credits not only Tulane Athletics but also the Freeman School for the network she developed and the role it's played in her success.

"I really used the business school network just to explore, to figure out what's the best way to connect outside of the university, so I could find my path," she says. "I think that network was a big part of how I always stayed ahead."

Kurdadze is familiar with staying ahead. She consistently competed at No. 1 throughout her tennis career, but winning was only one part of the legacy she built at Tulane. Her commitment to the New Orleans community earned her the 2012 Conference USA Spirit of Service Award, which recognizes the community service

efforts of the league’s student-athletes.

Terri Sisk, who served as Tulane’s women’s tennis head coach from 2007 to 2017 and became an important support system for Kurdadze, credits her for being well-rounded on and off the court.

“Outside of her being a fantastic tennis player, her credentials as a human were even better,” Sisk says.

To be selected for induction into the Tulane Athletics Hall of Fame, nominees must demonstrate outstanding sportsmanship, character and integrity. Sisk says Kurdadze excels in all three areas.

“She embodies all of those things, from a level that some people will never understand,” Sisk says. “She's got it.”

Sisk, along with many of Kurdadze’s former teammates and members of her Tulane community, will be in attendance at her induction on Sept. 25.

“I am thrilled that this honor's being bestowed upon her, because, what an incredible kid she is. What an incredible ambassador for Tulane,” Sisk says.

For Kurdadze, her induction is an opportunity to renew her love for the university and share the experience with her family.

“Tulane is just a special place to be,” she says. “I feel like if you come here, you really have everything at your fingertips.”