

by karen buscemi

photos provided by the WNBA



▲ WNBA star Swin Cash takes a shot for the Detroit Shock. Photo by Garrett Ellwood (NBAE/Getty)



▲ Swin with 14-year-old mother Aisha Moore and 2-month-old Asiah Moore at the WNBA Detroit Shock Resource Center at the Ferguson Academy for Young Women



▲ Cash presents a check from Cash for Kids to Principal Asenath Andrews' students of the Ferguson Academy.

Serious Cash

WNBA star scores points for Detroit – both on and off the court

When the Detroit Shock snagged Swin Cash in 2002, they were right on the money. The 6-foot-1 forward has been a pivotal force on the court ever since her first season, when she led the team in field goals (144) and finished third in WNBA Rookie-of-the-Year voting. She helped the Shock win their first WNBA championship in 2003 and again in 2006.

But when Cash, a Pennsylvania native, first learned of her new team, she was a little nervous. Then 22, she admits she wasn't crazy about moving to the Motor City. "I didn't have my family with me, and the team wasn't doing too well," she says. "It wasn't really stable and I didn't know what the future held for me."

Fortunately, head coach Bill Laimbeer gave her a sales pitch she couldn't turn down. "He sold me on Detroit – how it was a great sports town, and what I could do not only for the Shock, but for women's basketball and young girls if I stayed

here," Cash says. "He said, 'If you invest in this town, they'll invest in you.'"

Four years later, Cash has become a major player in Detroit – and not just in basketball.

CASH FOR A CAUSE

Cash founded her charity, Cash for Kids, to help kids in metro Detroit and Cash's hometown, McKeesport, Pa., "get in the game."

"I wanted to do something that was close to my heart and give back in the way I *wanted* to give back," she says.

The organization provides youth agencies and schools with programs in athletics, arts and culture, and youth development, through funding from the clothing line Cash started, the Swin Cash Collection.

"I decided to design a couple of things and have all the proceeds go to the charity," says Cash. "It's been very successful and I've been

happy with just how *much* people support it."

Recently, Cash for Kids teamed up with the Detroit Pistons-Palace Foundation for the funding of the new WNBA Detroit Shock Resource Center at Ferguson Academy for Young Women, in Detroit. The academy is one of only a few in the country where female students who are pregnant or have children can bring their kids to school while working toward graduation.

Cash's own mom, Cynthia Cash, gave birth to her daughter when she was a senior in high school. Cash says her mom's passion to keep moving forward has been an inspiration.

"She still went ahead and played her senior year of basketball, and she put herself through college and got an associate's degree," she says. "And even though she never had a lot, she always helped people out. That inspires me not only to do great things, but also to give back to my mom."

"Our humble beginnings are the things that make us who we are. Once we get there and get the fame and glory, whether you are a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher or whatever you're going to be, you always should give back." — Swin Cash

CASH ON THE COURT

Cash will start the 2007 WNBA season with four solid years as a starter for the Shock and two championships under her belt.

But she says one of her proudest moments was when she won the gold as a member of the 2004 U.S. Olympic Team.

"It was overwhelming to win the gold medal," she says. "This skinny, bowlegged girl from McKeesport and the support that I got, and then to be on that stage representing my country – it was one of the greatest feelings ever."

Shock guard Katie Smith, 32, who played for the Minnesota Lynx at the time, was also Cash's U.S. Olympic teammate.

"She has a lot of energy and she's kind of relentless," Smith says. "She keeps coming at you, and you have to be aware of where she's at. Her energy helps us all," Smith says. "It adds another dimension to the team. We know that she's out there doing her job."


DID YOU KNOW ...

- Cash's full first name is Swintayla.
- She's one of only six women to have won an NCAA championship, a WNBA championship and an Olympic gold medal.
- She's got a passion for fashion. "It was this secret thing about me. When I was younger, I thought being a tomboy meant you were cool and an athlete ... As I matured, I really ended up liking fashion a lot. People want me to model now, and it's funny."

CASH INCENTIVES

Cash hopes that her charity, as well as her being a role model, will help inspire the younger generation.

"I want kids to learn that you can think outside the box," she says. "People are always telling kids to do this and do it that way, and for me, I always did things the way I felt I had to do them.

"I want to inspire kids to do great things and always give back to the community. Our humble beginnings are the things that make us who we are. Once we get there and get the fame and glory, whether you are a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher or whatever you're going to be, you always should give back." 

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Visit www.swincash.com and click on "Cash for Kids," for information on donations, or on "Swin Cash Collection," to check out Cash's cute clothing line. Prices range from \$25 for a long-sleeve T-shirt to \$50 for a hoodie.

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