

NOV 26   TBA Men's Basketball at Minot State University	DEC 6   TBA Men's Basketball vs Bemidji State University	DEC 7   TBA Men's Basketball vs St. Cloud State University	DEC 14   TBA Men's Basketball vs University of Mary	>	🗄
---	--	--	---	---	---

OFFICIAL ATHLETICS SITE OF THE **UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA CROOKSTON**



Nicolau Drives Baseline in a game earlier this season against Concordia-St. Paul

## From Castellón to Crookston: The Story of Javier Nicolau

2/20/2020 2:42:00 PM

By: **Hunter Plante, Assistant Director of Marketing/Communications**



**Crookston, Minn.**—Castellón, Spain isn't tiny; In fact, you could fit 73 Crookston's into the city of Castellón. It's a beautiful city on the coastline of Spain and it's where Minnesota Crookston center [Javier Nicolau](#) resides from.

When Nicolau came to Crookston, it was his first time ever stepping foot inside of the United States. Coming from the sunny, gorgeous weather of Spain all year round, to cold, sometimes bitter weather of Northern Minnesota could be a scary transition for someone, but for Nicolau, it was something he embraced.

"It was different coming over here, but a huge reason as to why I chose to come to Crookston, was to get better at basketball," said the lanky Spaniard.

When Nicolau made his way to campus in August of 2017, one of the biggest issues for Javier was the language barrier.

"Literally everyone in Castellón speaks Spanish, but when we were growing up, we had to take an English class," Nicolau mentioned. "When I got to Crookston, I thought I was fluent in English, but I realized that I had some more learning to do."

Nicolau's parents are [Javier Nicolau](#) and Paz Aledon and although his mom is "average" height as he said, his dad and uncle are both 6 feet 7 inches.

Are his parents where he got his tall and lengthy stature from?

"I honestly don't know where I got this height from," Nicolau said with a giant smile on his face.

Being from the home country of Rafael Nadal, arguably the best clay tennis player of all-time and Andrés Iniesta, arguably one of the best Spanish soccer players of all-time, it's understandable why Nicolau wasn't all that interested in trying to put the ball in the basket.

"I was actually really interested in tennis and soccer until I started was about 14 or 15, when I really started to grow," Nicolau said. "When I got to be tall, my parents thought I should try basketball and it turns out, it was the best choice for me."

It really was the best choice for Nicolau. Instead of following the shoes of Nadal and Iniesta, he decided to put down the racket and soccer cleats for basketball shoes and follow in the footsteps of his uncle, who played for Real Madrid, who are consistently one of the best teams in the EuroLeague.

Although being thousands of miles away from his home country, it wasn't all that different for Nicolau, because he would live three to four hours from his home in Castellón playing club basketball for UCAM Murcia, located in Murcia, Spain. The drive from Murcia to Castellón is about a three hour drive along the coast of Spain.

Although his parents weren't able to make it to every game while playing club at UCAM Murcia, they were able to make it to games when Nicolau would play closer to his hometown.

In his second and final season playing for UCAM Murcia, Nicolau opened some eyes, averaging 21.1 minutes per game, 7.7 points per game and 4.7 rebounds per game, while also shooting 55 percent from the field.

That season that he had opened up the recruiting for Nicolau and relied on a video editing business, who would edit game highlights and send it to programs all across America.

"Different Universities had some different interest in me, but the guy who edited my video knew (Assistant Coach) Beamish," said Nicolau.

"Beam and I started talking every day and I felt like they wanted me and it felt like a great fit, but to be honest, I didn't look at the weather," he once again said with a grin.

Sure, fit had something to do with it, but how come Nicolau didn't try to test the waters of Division I basketball? The answer is simple, he wanted the chance to be a big fish in a small pond, rather than vice-versa.

"Talking to my parents throughout this entire process, I had D-I offers, but I wasn't sure if I would be able to play as much as I am here," Nicolau mentioned.

Turns out, Nicolau seemed to make the right choice by coming to Minnesota Crookston. Nicolau has raised his points per game each season. His first season playing college basketball, Nicolau averaged 3.1 points per game, improving it to 4.1 points per game a season ago. This season, Nicolau is currently sitting at 7.1 points per game with three, hopefully more to go.

Maybe more impressive than his individual numbers, is what he has done for the program. In Nicolau's first season, the Golden Eagles won 10 games for the first time in school history. His junior year, the Golden Eagles won a program-high 17 games, winning their first ever NSIC Playoff game and advancing to the Sanford Pentagon.

Was that game in the Pentagon fun?

"No doubt about it, that was one of the more fun basketball games I ever played in," said Nicolau.

This season, the Golden Eagles once again have double-digit wins with 11, with three more games to play. Minnesota Crookston picked up their first sweep of the NSIC season last weekend with wins over Minot State and the University of Mary.

As Nicolau gets set to play two final games inside Lysaker Gymnasium this weekend, he has a bond with fellow senior [Malcolm Cohen](#) that will be strong for life.

"My first year, I roomed with Mal in McCall Hall and him being from Detroit and me being from Spain, it was an interesting pairing," said Nicolau. "We just knew that being so far from home, we had to rely on each other and that's why our bond is so strong."

As for this weekend's games with Minnesota Duluth and St. Cloud State and a time difference of seven hours, will Nicolau's family be watching the games?

"Absolutely, I don't think my mom has missed a game since I've been here," said the senior from Spain.

Whether it's been the cold weather, his business major, basketball or becoming best friends with someone from Detroit, Mich., it's been quite a journey for Nicolau and he hopes that his playing career isn't coming to a close just yet.

### Related Stories

**[Minnesota Crookston Men's Basketball Adds Versatility and Size with Signings of Landon Dimler From Mankato and Brayden Carlson From Woodbury](#)**

04.10.24

**[Minnesota Crookston Has Six Named to NSIC Winter All-Academic Teams](#)**

03.29.24

**[Hoverson Named CSC Academic All-District](#)**

03.27.24

**[Blaize Sagna Named to All-NSIC Second Team After Finishing Season Fifth in Conference in Points Per Game](#)**

02.29.24

