

Broadus walks tough path to NBA dream

All-star rookie has had his fair share of hard times, but hopes stint with Chill has turned luck around

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Fans of the Edmonton Chill might have been surprised to see Rashaun Broadus named the team's rookie of the year after last Saturday's final home game of the season.

Not because the diminutive point guard didn't deserve the honour. Far from it.

It's just that Broadus looked the part of an experienced pro, racking up an average of 21.1 points, 5.2 rebounds and 4.7 assists through 19 games with the Chill.

But the 23-year-old, who was named an International Basketball League all-star earlier this month, is in fact playing his first year in what should prove to be a long and rewarding pro career.

And to think Broadus was overlooked by Portland before coming to the Chill's tryouts late last year.

"A very, very gifted and skilled player," was Chill head coach Paul Sir's first impression of Broadus when he saw him at the Chill's tryout. "The kid can flat out play anywhere in this league. I'm surprised (Portland passed on him), but I'm glad we have him."

The smallest player on the Chill's roster -- he's listed at six-foot-one, but looks more like he might be five-foot-10 -- Broadus has beefed up his resume more than any other player on the Chill this season. He'd be the first to tell you that he couldn't afford to have had it go any other way.

"I had to make it onto the team," he said. "I didn't know where to go after this."

His road to the pros has been a rocky one. As a high school senior in Mililani, Hawaii, Broadus was a team MVP who lettered in both football and basketball. He committed to attend NCAA Division II school Western Washington, but poor grades forced the school to rescind its scholarship offer. Late in the summer of 2002, he found a home at Western Nebraska Community College.

After one red-shirt year and two seasons played at Western Nebraska, Broadus left as a dean's list student and was recruited to play at Brigham Young University for coach Dave Rose.

Fifteen games into his senior season at BYU, and on the heels of his best game of the year -- a 19-point effort in a win over San Diego State -- Broadus was pulled over for speeding, then arrested after refusing to take a breathalyser test on his way back to Provo from Salt Lake City in the early hours of Jan. 7, 2007.

Broadus maintains that he wasn't drinking that night and was unsure of why he was stopped until after he had been handcuffed and placed in the back of the Highway Patrolman's car. He was driving 79 miles per hour in a 65 mile-per-hour zone.

"I didn't know that if you refused (the breathalyser) you automatically go to jail and you fail all your sobriety tests," Broadus said. "(The arresting officer) told (my friends) that I passed my field tests, but I didn't take the breathalyser test and he had to arrest me."

In court, the DUI charge was reduced to reckless driving, but the damage had already been done to his

athletic career. Rose suspended Broadus from the team for the remainder of the season, effectively ending his collegiate playing days. Broadus stayed on the BYU campus, earning his bachelor's degree in sociology in April of last year. With school behind him, his focus shifted to fulfilling his dream of playing professional basketball.

Without an agent or the profile he was hoping his senior season would have brought him, Broadus managed to get himself into a tryout camp with the Chinese Basketball Association last July. While he said he played well at the camp, Broadus was sent home empty-handed, as his first taste of semi-pro ball left him a little bit bitter.

"That's how everything is at this level: politics," Broadus said. "You can go around everywhere and play, but (other players) just got better connections than you and I guess that's what makes them better players in other team's eyes."

After securing an agent, Broadus then started looking at the IBL. He tried out for the Portland Chinooks, but coach Terrance Dickens had no room for Broadus on his roster. The only good news the coach gave Broadus was that Edmonton had a team and was in need of players.

With the Chill, Broadus's impact was immediate. A starter from Day 1, he's been instrumental in the team's success. Sir has said he's been amazed at Broadus's conditioning at camp and during the season. Already a strongly motivated person, Broadus also had a lot of facilities at his disposal to help him along his way, thanks to his father-in-law, Calgary pro-golfer Scott Allred.

"That's basically all I'd been doing (in Calgary), was working out and staying in shape, going to the Y every day. Plus my wife, her family actually has a (basketball court) inside their house, so it wasn't too hard to find a place to play," Broadus chuckled.

As Broadus heads into the final games of his first pro season, his success on the court suggests his hoop dreams have a chance to become reality. He's optimistic that his name could one day be mentioned in the same breath as Warren Moon, Jason Giambi or Tim Salmon--athletes whose journeys to the bigs had a pit stop in Edmonton.

"I'm used to building up from the bottom to the top," he said. "I went the junior college route first, I (lost) my scholarship in high school ... and I still got to where I wanted to go.

"That's the reason why I'm fully confident that I'll get to where I need to go: hopefully to the NBA."

Playoff Picture

- The good news is that the Edmonton Chill have qualified for the 2008 International Basketball League (IBL) playoffs. The bad news is that unless the first-year franchise storms its way through the playoffs and wins the Western conference, they've played their last game of the season at the MacEwan College gym.

- The Chill close out their regular season Thursday night in Tacoma. Then starting on Friday, the IBL will hold its East and West playoff tournaments -- an eight-team, single elimination bracket for each conference in the league -- with the West winner hosting the East winner on July 19 for the IBL championship.

- Currently the Chill have the third seed in the West, and if the standings remain unchanged, the Chill would face the Portland Chinooks in the first round of the playoffs.