



Blast, hometown IBL veteran set for ignition

Chad Carlson hopes to help expansion pro team in his season in Holland

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Carlson

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Chad Carlson can't get enough basketball.

He starred at Holland High at Holland High School then moved on to Hope College, where he was also a three-year varsity starter. He's now coaching the Hope College men's junior varsity but he's not done playing either.

The 6-foot-3 guard is a member of the Holland Blast, the International Basketball League franchise that tips off its inaugural season at 7:15 tonight against the Lansing Capitals at Holland Civic Center.

This is Carlson's second season as a pro. He was a member of the IBL's Grand Rapids Flight last year.

"This has been a lot of fun," Carlson said. "To go out there and run around and stay in shape and play competitive basketball is fun."

Carlson graduated from Hope with a reputation as a defensive specialist, but

with 1,034 points, he is 24th on Hope's all-time scoring list.

But now that he's being paid by Hope to be a coach, he's seeing the game from a somewhat different perspective.

"I think, playing in a league like this, it's going to help my coaching a lot," Carlson said. "You see how different coaches do different things and some of these coaches are very detailed in how they plan their practices and what they want us to do on the floor."

The Blast is coached by veteran Mike Ahrens who has nearly three decades (27 years) of coaching at different high schools and small colleges around Michigan.

One of his assistants, Terry Smith, split 18 years between Lake Superior State and Grand Valley State universities, both NCAA Division II schools. Hope plays in Division III.

"We've got three guys here with a wealth of experience spanning almost three decades and I think I can learn a lot from them," Carlson said. "Also, coming through here (the IBL) I just enjoy playing still. It keeps me active and it's fun and so far we've been fairly successful."

Carlson just finished his second season at the helm of the Hope junior varsity and he said that being around the players and actively participating in practices has kept him in "pretty good shape.

"I get a chance to run around with my guys a little bit, but most of the time I'm standing out there learning as I'm going," he said. "It's a different transfer of your knowledge to other guys and that's why it's good to get some experience from other sources.

"(Hope) Coach (Glenn) Van Wieren and (Holland High) coach (Mark) Werley have been terrific as well as the rest of the Hope staff.

"But I'm learning from these guys as well."

Though Carlson has one year of IBL experience behind him, he and his Blast teammates still need reminders that the International Basketball League is different.

"One difference is the speed of the game, probably more than anything else. The other is the physical contact," Ahrens said. "The players are not going to get the same calls they did in college when they're in the paint. But good players adjust. The same with coaches, we've got to adjust to what's going on."

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