

Grayson 'The Professor' Boucher joins semipro team

BY BRIAN SMITH

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Grayson Boucher, who was born and raised in Keizer and played high school ball at McNary and Salem Academy, attended a press conference Saturday to announce his signing earlier this week to play for the IBL's Salem Stampede.

A event at the Courthouse Fitness Center on Lancaster Drive drew about 50 friends, fans and family members.

Boucher looked proud and content as he was introduced as the Stampede's newest member.

"This feels like a family reunion," a smiling Boucher said as he addressed the crowd. "It feels great to be able to start my professional career in my hometown."

Boucher, who came onto the scene through his participation in the streetball-style And1 Mixed Tape Tour, also is known as "The Professor" and graduated from Salem Academy in 2002.

"It came down to a phone call," said Stampede owner Anthony Veliz. "Grayson called me and brought the idea up. The IBL season works with his (And1 Tour) schedule, so it's a no-brainer."

Perhaps the only question that surrounds Boucher's play is whether he will translate his off-the-cuff-style to the more structured play of professional basketball.

"I've actually got real game," Boucher said. "The main thing that I've got to do is bulk up. I'm at 150 pounds right now, and I'd like to get up to 165. Other than that, I'm fine. I can drive and penetrate, shoot and pass, and that's the same thing that guards do in pro ball."

Stampede head coach Bruce "Bubba" Jones is as confident as Boucher is that IBL ball will come easy to the Keizer native.

"As a team, we're looking good on paper," Jones said. "And adding Grayson is just going to make us better. He's got a lot of experience and he sees the floor well. The kid can play."

And with Boucher now in the team picture, Veliz feels like he has put together a team that the Salem community can rally around.

"It's a really exciting day for the Stampede and for the city," said Veliz. "Grayson's a great person, a great player, and having him play for us is something that Salem can be proud of."

The Stampede's first game is March 18 in Woodburn. For more information, visit www.SalemStampede.com.