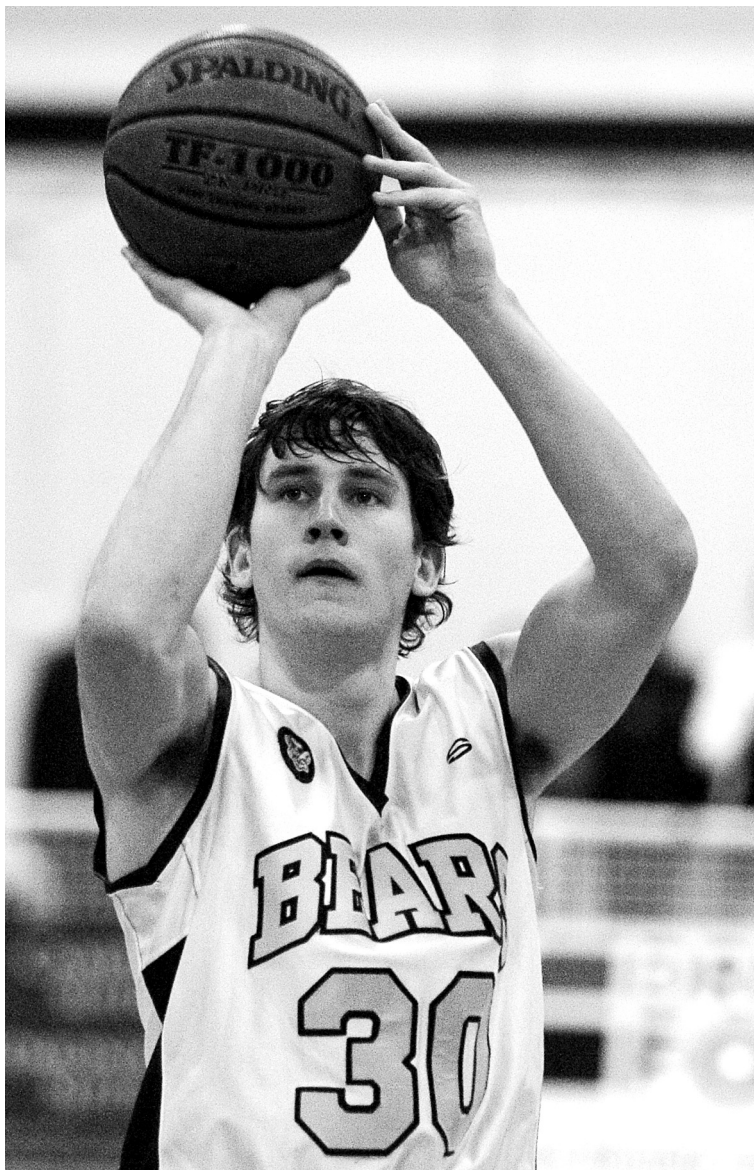


Former Bear now basketballen in Germany



FILE PHOTO: NEAL WILDING

WHAT DO YOU CALL A BASKET IN GERMAN? Former U of A guard James Hudson spent part of last season playing as a forward for the Citybasket team in Recklinghausen, Germany. He hopes to play at an even higher level this season.

ROBIN COLLUM
Sports Editor

Though some of his past teammates have hung up their sneakers, former basketball Bear James Hudson hasn't given up on his hoop dreams. The University of Alberta grad moved to Germany this past winter to play, and is now able combine two of his favourite activities: playing basketball and seeing the world.

"I just wanted to get some experience, and I really wanted to travel," Hudson said. "So if I can play basketball and travel, and maybe have a bit of money in my pocket, what could be better?"

Hudson graduated from the Bears in 2006, and started looking for opportunities to play in Europe after he moved home to Vancouver. His lucky break came as a phone call from a former opponent: Chris Wright, who finished up with the University of Calgary Dinos the same season Hudson left the Bears, was playing for Citybasket in Recklinghausen and wanted to know if Hudson was interested in joining him.

"He knew I was looking to play in Europe and hadn't had anything going, so he called me up," Hudson explained. "You don't get recruited per se [in Europe]. You go to camps, or you send tapes, or get an agent, and they find something for you.

"Networking is the most important thing over there. You meet one person, then ten people down the line hear about you, and one calls you."

Citybasket were impressed enough by the forward to invite him to join

them for the last part of the season. He was with the team for two months, and played eight games for them. Of course, playing on a different continent meant having to adapt to a lot of changes.

"The basketball is different there," he said. "It's hard to explain, and I don't know if it's different for a spectator, [but] there are a couple of small things—just general rules of the game—that are different. I've had to make little tweaks in my game, but it's not a huge difference."

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JAMES HUDSON

Hudson says that it's not the technical things that are the hardest to get used to, but rather the off-court differences.

"The language barrier would actually be the biggest thing [to adjust to]," he said. "Luckily, in Germany they speak really good English, so that helped a lot. In most countries, they don't speak English, so you have to use hand gestures and try to learn the language as much as possible."

As well, he noticed that the nature of the team experience is

different there than it was with the Bears squad.

"One thing the U of A is known for is team unity. On the court you know the guys, and off the court you know the guys. The team is your whole life," he said. "When you leave university, the camaraderie of the team sort of changes. It's certainly more job-like."

Having Wright in Germany made it easier to be so far from home, but at the end of the day, Hudson wasn't too bothered by loneliness.

"The whole reason I'm doing this is for a life experience. I love playing basketball, and realistically, the idea is to see Europe and have a good time with it," he said. "If I make the decision that that's what I'm looking for, the isolation of it all is a little easier to handle. I'm not going in order to make friends. It's just like if anyone else would go and travel, except I get to play basketball and don't really have to pay for my travel."

Hudson is currently exploring his options for next season. He could stay with Citybasket, but he hopes instead to move to a higher level of play, or even to another country in Europe, but he doesn't know yet what will happen.

"There was something going on in Italy, but I don't know if it's going to happen, and there are a lot of possibilities in Germany," he said. "It's a funny thing, though, because I'm saying this right now, but literally tomorrow I could get a phone call and something could happen.

"Right now I'm just working and playing, trying to stay in shape, and talking to the people that I know in Europe, talking to the people might know about different possibilities."

CIS girls come in fourth at Pan Am

DAN PLOUFFE
Should be part of the team

RIO DE JANEIRO (CUP)—The Canadian women's basketball team, featuring three of the top CIS athletes of the past few years, have settled for a fourth-place finish in the eight-team Pan American Games tournament, held in Rio de Janeiro from 20–24 July. Sarah Crooks, Uzoma Asagwara, and Devon Campbell showed their skills, but were unable to help their team overcome some tough international opponents.

The game that essentially knocked the Canadians out of the gold-medal contest was a 77–63 loss to Brazil in their final preliminary round—an exciting game played before 13 700 enthusiastic spectators—which caused a semifinal match-up against powerhouse Team USA.

Canada, currently ranked eleventh in the world, opened the Games with wins over Mexico and Jamaica, but followed up their loss to Brazil by falling 75–59 in the semifinal to the first-ranked Americans, and then lost 62–49 to eighth-ranked Cuba.

For many of the players, the highlight of the tournament was facing the Brazilians and playing in front of their passionate fans, who cheer as loudly for a successful free-throw as Canadian observers might expect for a championship win. They received a less than warm welcome at that game, but the Canadians had nothing but smiles on

their faces during warmup.

"There was a huge, huge berating of boos," said Asagwara, a 2007 All-Canadian guard with the University of Winnipeg. "That was different, but we knew it was going to happen—we were totally expecting it—so we just laughed it off; it wasn't a big deal."

Crooks, a former University of Saskatchewan Husky and 2006 and 2007 CIS Player of the Year, said it was the loudest atmosphere she's ever experienced playing basketball.

"Whether they're booing or cheering, we're just happy there's so many people out because we won't get that in Canada, so it's very exciting. It's really a lot of fun."

There was one moment when the venue went relatively quiet, though, as Canada went on a 10–2 run, building a 29–21 lead after the first quarter. It wasn't too long before the place was rocking again, though, as the Brazilians were impossible to slow down once they got going, and quickly erased the Canadian lead.

The Brazilians, eventual silver medalists, dominated thanks in large part to several towering players, whose giant quad muscles were on full display since the Brazilian women chose volleyball-style spandex shorts instead of the usual, looser, basketball variety.

"I'm lucky I didn't have to bang in there with the big girls," said Campbell, a 2006 Simon Fraser University grad. Nevertheless, she was stunned by an elbow to the face

on a third-quarter play when she was whistled for a foul.

"They're tough, they're quick, they're aggressive, and we knew it was going to be a tough fight," she said. "I think we did well at the beginning. We were executing our plays and were spacing well and moving the ball. Our defense is a constant—we feel like we can rely on that all the time. But as the game progressed, our shots just weren't falling, and we were unlucky in that regard."

All three recent CIS athletes played significant minutes for the national team over the course of the tournament, averaging about 20 minutes per game. For Campbell, who will return to Spain to play professionally for a second season this fall, the chance to suit up for Canada was "a lifelong goal."

"It's awesome. Every time I put on the uniform, I want to do something good for my country. It's an amazing experience being here and being a part of the senior team for the first time. I'm learning a lot and am loving it," she said.

Asagwara said she'd never before experienced the energy that she did at the Pan Am Games.

"The closest thing for me would be when we hosted the national championship," said Asagwara, a 2005 CIS tournament all-star when Winnipeg hosted the tournament. "That was crazy, but this is something completely different."



FILE PHOTO: KIM SMITH

MY BALL! GET YOUR OWN U of W's Uzoma Asagwara here in January.