

BCC men's basketball team ranked seventh nationally

Jersey Blues are currently 11-0

BY TIM MORRIS
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Brookdale Community College men's basketball opponents can't be blamed for seeing double.

Head coach Paul Cisek has as deep and talented a squad as he has had at the Lincroft campus, and he uses it. He keeps sending his players at opponents in waves.

"We're running more than we have," said Cisek. "We keep coming after you. We wear people down in the second half."

Along with wearing teams down by putting constant defensive pressure on them, Cisek doesn't just send numbers at teams, he sends talented players at them.

"For the first time, we have a backup at every position who is a good player," he pointed out.

Brookdale has driven its defense and talent to an 11-0 start to the 2011-12 season and the No. 7 ranking in the country according to the National Junior College Athletic Association's Division III poll.

"I think we're pretty good," said Cisek. "We're playing well."

"It's one of those years where things are starting to fall into place," he added. "I have a solid 11."

That solid 11 will become a solid 12 next month when Andrew Goldstein (Marlboro) joins the team. He's currently playing on the USA's Maccabi Team that is playing in the Pan-American Maccabi Games in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

"When Andrew joins the team, he'll help us a lot," said Cisek. "He had a decision to make and we supported him 110 percent."

Brookdale had a nice core of four returning players, three starters and a fourth who did start some games, to build around this year, led by point guard Chris Jetter (Mater Dei).

Khalil Bennett (Old Bridge) and Tunell Polk (Long Branch) were both All-Region XIX picks last year. Bennett is a two guard and Polk is a forward.

Lance Walker (Murray Bergstraum, Brooklyn, N.Y.) is the fourth returner. The forward provides a spark off the bench, and he has the experience of starting last year.

Two transfer newcomers complete Brookdale's starting five. They are Shawn McPaul (St. Rose) and Kevin Ohen (Nia Prep). McPaul is a 6-8 forward and Ohen is leading a balanced attack in scoring, averaging 17.1 points per game (ppg). They are also the team's top rebounders. Ohen is averaging 7.0 rebounds a game and McPaul 6.3. McPaul is averaging 1.7 blocks per game.

Off the bench, Lucas Glass (Rumson-Fair Haven) is the team's best shooter. He's averaging just under 10 ppg and leads the team in three-point field goals.

Justin Vital (Keansburg), Nate Pacius (Academy Charter), Rabir Bautista (Dickinson, Jersey City) are sophomore transfers who have fit in perfectly for Cisek. Everyone on the team is averaging between 18 and 24 minutes a game.

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Of the two incoming freshmen, Shakir Rhodes (Passaic) is making an impact now, and Goldstein is expected to.

Brookdale's depth is most reflected in scoring averages. The Blues have six players averaging eights points a game or more. Behind Ohen's 17.1, Polk is averaging 14.0 ppg, followed by Bennett (10.1), Glass (9.9), McPaul (9.7) and Vital (8.0).

Brookdale has scored 80 or more points seven times, with a season high of 110, because of its balance. Cisek said he has confidence in any unit he has on the floor.

"I go with the hot hand," Cisek pointed out. "We have [six] guys scoring near double figures. That's a real positive."



Jetter leads the team in assists (4.4) with Pacius dishing out 4.1 a game. They rank fifth and ninth in Region XIX.

Brookdale's defense has been a balanced team effort as well. They've been holding teams in the low 60s per game.

"We're playing much better man-to-man defense," said Cisek. "We're trapping more this year. We're playing hard-nosed basketball."

In addition to turning teams over with their defensive pressure, the Blues have been very good at coming up with steals with their traps.

Pacius is the Region XIX leader in steals, averaging 3.9 per game; Ohen (2.7) and Jetter (2.1) are averaging more than two a game.

The turnovers and steals have turned games into track meets for the Blues. They are out running the floor, getting easy transition baskets.

Brookdale is off until Jan. 10 when the Blues host Ocean, one of the teams it's competing with for the Garden State Athletic Conference title and Region XIX top seeding. Ocean has one conference and region loss. Tipoff is 5 p.m.

Camden, who has two GSAC and region losses, one at BCC, will host the Blues on Jan. 21.

Earning the Region XIX top seed is important to the Blues because Brookdale is hosting the Region XIX Final Four on March 1 and 3.