

Washpun, Eastern Iowa All-Star Games are slam dunk

Written by Jim Ecker

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Wes Washpun doesn't have any names for his gravity-defying dunks, he just does them.

Stupendously.

Washpun stole the show during the halftime Jamfest Friday night as part of the festivities at the 2011 Eastern Iowa All-Star Games at Linn-Mar High School.

Washpun is only 6-foot-1, but he's a superb athlete who jumps like someone who's 6-foot-6, sort of a mini-Michael Jordan when it comes to leaping ability and body control.

On one of his dunks, the Cedar Rapids Washington senior slammed the ball through the basket and draped his right elbow on the rim, hanging there for effect with his forearm inside the cylinder.

On another jam, Washpun positioned Waterloo West guard Trent Washington in front of the basket and leaped over the 5-foot-11 human prop to slam it home.

The crowd loved it.

"He's a freak of nature with his athletic ability," said Josh Oglesby, his teammate at Washington. "I don't think I've ever seen anyone jump as high as he can."

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Washpun performed a variety of dunks during the Jamfest, all different, but he doesn't name them and doesn't count them. "I just go out there and try stuff," he said simply.

This was the first year for the Eastern Iowa All-Star Games, which featured 36 girls and boys from the eastern part of the state, including 15 from the Metro area alone. Jamie Johnson, who put the all-star games together, called the night a success.

"You know, I didn't know what to expect," said Johnson. "I knew we had some good players coming and I knew that part would take care of itself. I wasn't sure what to expect with the crowd and I was pleasantly surprised.

"Between the boys and the girls games, about 1,000 fans tonight," he reported. "It's a good first start. It was good basketball on the floor and I think those that came out tonight got a good show."

Johnson, who runs Elite Sports USA and the Iowa Barnstormers AAU program, said he plans to stage the event again next year.

Cedar Rapids Washington teammates Alissa Oney and Tia Dawson combined for 26 points as the East defeated the West in overtime, 67-63, in the girls game.

The boys came out firing in the nightcap and never stopped as the East trimmed the West, 98-92, behind 25 points by MVP Tavian Pomlee of Davenport Central.

Linn-Mar teammates Josh Montague and Shane Benton combined for 27 points for the East. Kennedy teammates Kyle Lamaak and Jake Manning collected 23 points for the West, while Oglesby and Washpun contributed 15 points for the West.

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Washpun scored only five points in the game, but fans left the gym buzzing about his performance in the Jamfest. It was an exhibition, not a contest, but he was the hands-down winner.

On the other hand, Washpun is still waiting to see if he'll be a big winner in the Division I college basketball sweepstakes. He still doesn't have a school for next season, and the coach who offered him a scholarship to Missouri State just became the new head coach at Tennessee and hasn't called yet.

It's a "dead period" right now for college coaches, which means they cannot call recruits, so Washpun has to wait and see if new Tennessee Coach Cuonzo Martin will ask him to join the Volunteers. Meanwhile, the Iowa Hawkeyes apparently are still in the picture.

Washpun does not seem uptight about his situation, believing something good will happen.

"I've always been a pretty calm person," he said. "Things tend to fall as they should, I believe. And that's how things are going to pan out, I think."

Paul Lusk, who began his college basketball career at Iowa before transferring to Southern Illinois, will be the new head coach at Missouri State. Lusk has been an assistant at Purdue, and Washpun said he hasn't spoken with Lusk at any time.

Meanwhile, Oglesby has been trying to persuade Iowa Coach Fran McCaffery into giving Washpun a scholarship. Oglesby will be joining the Hawkeyes next season and he'd love to have Washpun by his side for another four years.

"I've told them to look at him and offer him," Oglesby said. "They said they were going to offer during the season, but that didn't happen. I wish they would."

"Me and Wes have been buddies since middle school. I would love to see him succeed and get

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the opportunity. I mean, he could be in the NBA one day."

Washpun declined to express a preference for college. "I just want to go play basketball," he said. "That's all I want to do."

They played a lot of basketball at Linn-Mar Friday night, and two guys who helped the Lions win the Class 4A state title this year contributed to the show. Montague, who has committed to Maryville (Mo.), tossed in three 3-pointers and scored 14 points, while Benton, who has signed with North Dakota, popped in two 3-pointers and netted 13.

Marion High School star Kasey Semler scored eight points for the winners. Semler said he could make his college commitment in about a week and is considering DMACC, Kirkwood, Upper Iowa and Truman State. He won the 3-point shooting contest Friday night.

Lamaak tossed in four 3-pointers and scored 14 points for the West. Manning, his former Kennedy teammate, scored nine points. Neither Cougar has picked a college.

Oglesby hit two 3-pointers and scored 10 points. He finished second behind Semler in the 3-point contest.

Oney scored 14 points and Dawson added 12 for the East in the girls game. Oney has committed to Maryville (Mo.) and Dawson is headed to Dartmouth in the Ivy League.

Xavier teammates Alex Saxen and Krissi Tow combined for 12 points for the East. Saxen has committed to Missouri Western, while Tow is considering DMACC, Kirkwood and Mount Mercy.

Kennedy senior Olivia Meier, who is headed to Upper Iowa, scored 13 points for the West team. Brittney Steffeny of Jefferson scored eight points and Kristin Kramer of Marion had four points. Jenna Eells of Linn-Mar played but did not score.

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Taylor Dicus of Mount Vernon scored 16 points for the West team and was named the MVP of the girls game.

GIRLS GAME

WEST (63): Olivia Meier 5 2-2 13, Megan Kluesner 5 0-0 12, Abby Lasher 1 0-0 3, Kristin Kramer 1 1-2 4, Liz Moerer 3 1-1 7, Taylor Dicus 7 2-3 16, Jenna Eells 0 0-0 0, Brittney Steffeny 4 0-0 8. Totals 26 6-8 63.

EAST (67): Alissa Oney 5 2-2 14, Moran Lonning 7 0-0 14, Alex Saxen 4 0-4 8, Carlee Grunder 1 3-4 5, Hannah Wilson 1 0-0 3, Katelyn DeWulf 3 0-0 7, Tia Dawson 5 2-4 12, Krissi Tow 2 0-0 4. Totals 28 7-14 67.

Halftime -- East 31, West 31. Regulation -- East 60, West 60. 3-point goals -- West 5 (Kluesner 2, Meier, Kramer, Lasher), East 4 (Oney 2, Wilson, DeWulf).

BOYS GAME

EAST (98): Trent Washington 1 0-0 3, Zach Velez-Westphal 2 0-0 5, Shane Benton 4 3-3 13, Kasey Semler 3 1-2 8, Zach Otting 5 2-2 13, Tavian Pomlee 9 2-2 25, Josh Montague 5 1-2 14, Regan Takes 2 0-0 4, J.T. Vonderhaar 3 0-0 7, Patrick Burmester 3 0-0 6. Totals 37 9-11 98.

WEST (92): Jake Manning 4 1-2 9, Brandon Voss 3 0-0 8, Wes Washpun 2 1-2 5, Kyle Denning 2 0-0 6, Michael Aldeman 6 1-1 16, Josh Oglesby 4 0-0 10, Gage Heffernan 4 0-0 8, Kyle Lamaak 5 0-0 14, Nate Wells 2 0-0 4, Okey Ukah 6 0-0 12. Totals 38 3-5 92.

Halftime -- West 54, East 48. 3-point goals -- East 15 (Pomlee 5, Montague 3, Benton 2, Washington, Velez-Westphal, Semler, Otting, Vonderhaar), West 13 (Lamaak 4, Aldeman 3,

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Voss 2, Denning 2, Oglesby 2).