

Washpun, Bohannon shine as UNI stuns No. 1 Heels

Written by Mike Condon

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CEDAR FALLS - A North Carolina tradition continued here Saturday afternoon.

The Tar Heels have made it a point to schedule road games close to the homes of their senior players.

Coach Roy Williams' tribute to Marcus Paige was a game against the University of Northern Iowa, a school about 60 miles away from Linn-Mar.

The storyline extended to the match-up where Paige would be going up against former teammates from high school and AAU days in UNI's Matt Bohannon and Wes Washpun.

Paige's broken right hand, suffered earlier this month, kept him from playing, but his former teammates not only played, they shined.

Washpun, Paige's AAU teammate, had 21 points and eight assists while Bohannon, who played three seasons with Paige at Linn-Mar, had 18 as the Panthers upset No. 1 North Carolina, 71-67, at the McLeod Center.

"Needless to say, I wish Marcus would have been able to play because that is why we came," Williams said. "If you had told me he was going to break his hand and not be able to play, I wouldn't have scheduled the game."

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Washpun and Bohannon had a lot to do with Williams' team leaving with a loss.



The fifth-year seniors fueled a second-half charge that saw UNI come back from a 16-point deficit in the final 17 minutes to pull the upset.

"How many times do you have the No. 1 team in the nation come to your home floor?" Bohannon said. "It's a pretty special feeling."

Washpun was asked about not being able to play against Paige, who was coached by Washpun's dad, Troy, as a youngster.

"I was able to shake his hand and wish him good luck the rest of the season," Washpun said.

He added that he wished his former teammate had been on the floor.

"Of course," he said. "You always want to get a team when it is at full strength and it would have been great to battle Marcus one last time. It would have been good to have gone one more round against him."

The loss to UNI was first and foremost on Paige's mind, not the performance of his former teammates.

"I was definitely not admiring what they were doing on the floor," Paige said. "I was really focused on what we needed to try and do to counter them."

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"I'm sure a lot of my people were able to have fun with what they did today," he added. "I would have loved to have matched up against them because I had played with both of them for so long and never had the chance to play against them (in college)."

Paige warmed up with the team and was introduced to the crowd prior to the tip, receiving a warm reception.

"Coach Williams and (UNI) Coach (Ben) Jacobson talked about it before the game," Paige said. "They both talked about it and they thought it was a great idea. It meant a lot to my family.

"It was cool, the fact that Coach does this does this for seniors who don't get to play in their area," Paige added about returning to his home state. "There aren't any ACC teams in Iowa so the fact he scheduled this was great being able to see all those who have been so supportive of me."