

sports

Noble a huge part of Eagles success

The story behind one of the best big-men in D-II



SUBMITTED BY: NICK BAPST

Noble's (35) teammates erupt as he hits a potential game winning three against Ferris State in a game in Kates Gymnasium last February.

NATE POWALIE & ZACH READ
@AUCollegian

It is Feb. 10, 2018, and Kates Gymnasium is packed as the Ashland University men's basketball team hosts the No. 3 team in the country, Ferris State.

With 1.5 seconds left in regulation, the Eagles nail a corner three right next to the bench to put them up 76-73. There is pandemonium in the gym. The Eagles bench storms the court.

The player who hit the shot for the Eagles was none other than junior forward, Drew Noble, who walked to the bench with no emotion while his teammates erupted around him. In the words of his teammates, it was the most Drew Noble thing he could have ever done.

"Drew was being Drew when he was out there. He walked back into our huddle like nothing had even happened while everyone was jumping on him," Noble's teammate Nick Bapst said. "He's got a straight face walking straight over to the bench like he just hadn't hit the biggest shot of the season."

Noble, the starting five-man for the Eagles, has developed into a leader on and off the court for the number one team in the GLIAC and a Top 10 team in Division II men's basketball.

Noble's career began at Louisville High School just outside of Canton, Ohio. In his senior season, Noble averaged 20 points and 13 rebounds a game, leading the Leopards to a 19-5 record, while also earning All-Ohio and North-eastern Buckeye Conference Player of the Year honors.

"My senior year was just about coming in with that chip on your shoulder every game because we were always the smallest team that played against the big schools in the area," Noble said.

Noble also finished as Louisville's all-time career leader in points, and rebounds and blocked shots and was a four-year varsity letter winner in basketball.

The Eagles began recruiting Noble early on and knew that he would be a huge recruit for the program. The Eagles coaching staff began to watch Noble during the spring and summer of 2014 when AAU travel basketball season was in full swing.

"At first we were like, he is going to go Division I, there is no way he is not a Division I player." AU head coach John Ellenwood said. "The

more the summer went on the more he wasn't getting the Division I looks that were appealing to him. He seemed to be one of those guys that liked the small campus, close to home feel that Ashland provided."

Noble knew that a small school such as Ashland and a school that was close to home would be the prime fit for himself rather than a

record.

During the summer between his freshman and sophomore seasons, Ellenwood wanted to add an outside game to Noble's arsenal, which became the focus for the big man. Noble worked on his outside jumpshot while at school but also at home over the summer.

"It's cool to watch him grow as well," Bapst said. "He came here



DAVID AMSDEN

Noble shoots a free throw in a game against Saginaw Valley State earlier this season in Kates Gymnasium.

Division I school.

"After my first couple visits I got to play a couple of open gyms, it really stood out to me that they have a great group of guys, and they really sold me on that," Noble said.

With his hometown of Louisville being just an hour from Ashland, Noble knew that he would fit right in at AU and committed in August of 2015 just before his senior season of high school.

During his freshman season, Noble served mainly in a back-up role behind then junior Teddy Metzen. He appeared in 29 games and averaged four points and three rebounds in 11.3 minutes per game.

Noble's freshman season gave him the opportunity to learn and grow from the veterans while also contributing to the Eagle's 19-10

playing behind a couple of older guys but after last year coming into that starting role he really transitioned and blossomed."

Going from not shooting any three's his freshman season, Noble shot 87 three's throughout his sophomore season in which he made 27 percent of those. However, the shots that Noble took came in big moments for the Eagles.

Not only did Noble work on his outside jumper going into his sophomore season, he also developed defensively and added stronger post moves to his game. With the help of Ellenwood, who was an All-American postman at the College of Wooster, the Eagles knew Noble was going to be a threat heading into his sophomore season.

"Offensively, he's expanded his

game. He's added a three-point shot and the ability to score off the dribble, which is something you don't see often from a big man," Ellenwood said.

Along with scoring quickly off of the dribble, Noble has the ability to exploit mismatches and take advantage of double teams when they arise in the post. Ellenwood said that Noble has the ability to absorb the double team and make a pass out to the open man.

"Whenever a double-team comes, Drew can kick it out to someone else who is open," Ellenwood said. "Not only is he a great post-scoring big man, but he is also one of the better passing big men that I know."

After his sophomore season, the Eagles had some huge roster moves that would put Noble into a larger leadership role on the team. The graduation of Wendell Davis, Teddy Metzen and Marsalis Hamilton left a huge void down in the post in which Noble would have to fill 35-40 minutes each game.

However, during the offseason, Ellenwood went out and brought in a Division I post transfer from Bowling Green State University, sophomore Derek Koch.

Ellenwood said when he recruited Koch he would compliment the current roster really well, and that has proven to be true with the Eagles current record of 18-1 in the 2018-2019 season.

The tandem of Noble and Koch in the post have been deadly throughout the season as they have the ability to work together on the floor or give the other a breather when a rest is needed.

Noble realizes the success that the team is currently having but knows that the work is not over yet.

"I just want to finish out this season on another streak and see if we can win out the rest of the season and have the best record in AU history," Noble said.

Noble said one aspect that contributes to the team's success is the culture of the team and how everyone is goofy and gets along that way.

"He's a fun guy to be around. He is light hearted and he is a guy that has a great sense of humor all of the time," Ellenwood said.

Along with earning recognition as one of the best post men in Division II college basketball, Noble just tries to come in with a new set of goals each season, but in a particular way, so that he can continue to improve and hold himself accountable.

"Obviously personal and team goals are what drives you so I just try to set them as high as possible that way I can reach high potential," Noble said.

As far as legacies go, Noble is all about winning and wants to leave his mark in the win column at AU, but he also recognizes that it is more than just about wins.

"I want to be remembered as a great guy, a great teammate and a winner," Noble said. "If I leave here and people say that the teams I was a part of were great guys, we were great leaders on campus, we carried ourselves the right way on the court and we won. I think that's the biggest legacy I want to leave."



DAVID AMSDEN

Noble runs out for starting lineups in a game earlier this season at Kates Gymnasium.