

Wes Washpun picks Tennessee

Written by Jim Ecker

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Wes Washpun had two important phone calls to make Sunday afternoon, one of them easy and one of them hard.

The easy call went to Tennessee Coach Cuonzo Martin. The hard call went to Iowa Coach Fran McCaffery.

Washpun, the talented point guard from Cedar Rapids Washington, committed to Tennessee Sunday and needed to inform both coaches.

The call to Martin was easy. "He was really happy," Washpun said.

The call to McCaffery was hard. "It was definitely hard," Washpun said. "Not only have I grown up a Hawk fan, he's a good guy and I respect him as a man and what he's doing with the Iowa program."

Martin beat McCaffery to the punch. Martin offered Washpun a scholarship to join him at Missouri State and quickly extended the offer after he became the new head coach at Tennessee this spring.

"I had a relationship with Coach Martin since late November or early December, while Iowa has just come on late," Washpun said. "Him getting the job at Tennessee didn't slow down his recruiting of me at all. He called me the day after he got the job and told me he wanted me to be his guy down there."

McCaffery offered Washpun a scholarship early last week and met with Washpun for the first time on Thursday night.

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Washpun's decision to attend Tennessee means he won't be joining Cedar Rapids Washington teammate Josh Oglesby at Iowa. Oglesby campaigned on Washpun's behalf with the Iowa coaches and gently tried to steer Washpun toward Iowa City.

"It really was a tough decision," Washpun said. "Iowa was in the picture the entire time (the past week). It all happened so fast, with Coach McCaffery coming on like he did. He came on really strong. It was just a tough decision to make."

Instead of playing in the Big Ten, Washpun will play in the Southeastern Conference against teams like Kentucky and Florida.

"I know it's going to be tough, it's going to be competition night in and night out," he said. "It's just going to be a constant battle, but I'm excited for it."

Washpun said he'll be competing for playing time at Tennessee with two other young point guards, one a sophomore and the other an incoming freshman. "It will be a playing time battle, but I'm up for the competition," he said.

Washpun struggled academically at Washington as a junior, but rebounded as a senior and said he's "100 percent qualified" to compete at Tennessee as a freshman.

Washpun averaged 18 points, 5.4 rebounds, 4.0 assists, 3.4 steals and 2.1 blocked shots for the Warriors as a senior.

Washpun is the third Metro star to pick an out-of-state college instead of the Hawkeyes. Cedar Rapids Jefferson senior Jarrod Uthoff is heading to Wisconsin and Linn-Mar junior Marcus Paige has committed to North Carolina. Linn-Mar senior Matt Bohannon has signed with the University of Northern Iowa.

Washpun can sign his national letter-of-intent with Tennessee on Wednesday.