

Semler accepts offer from UNI

Written by Jim Ecker
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Kasey Semler's dream has come true.

Semler has accepted an offer to join the University of Northern Iowa basketball team as a preferred walk-on for the 2013-14 campaign with a chance to earn a scholarship after that.

Semler, a 6-foot-1 guard, graduated from Marion High School in 2011 and spent the last two seasons at Kirkwood Community College.

He has always wanted to play basketball at an NCAA Division I school and described Northern Iowa as an ideal location.

"It's been a dream of mine," he said Friday.

Semler averaged 11.6 points and hit 44.8 percent of his 3-pointers this year, but he suffered a torn ACL in his left knee on March 2 and ended the season on the disabled list.

He plans to redshirt at UNI this coming season and then have two full years of eligibility with the Panthers.

Semler visited Northern Iowa Thursday.

"I was really blown away with everything they showed me," he said. "I just couldn't be happier to be going to Cedar Falls."

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Semler met with Coach Ben Jacobson and discussed his role on the team.

"He said he recruits a lot of combo guards who can play the '1' and the '2'," he said, referring to point guards and off-guards. "He said I'm the type of player they want in their organization.

"That means a lot coming from a guy like him. When he looks at you face-to-face and says that, it's hard to say no."

Semler selected UNI over Wayne State (Neb.), an NCAA Division II school that offered him a scholarship.

Semler had an operation on his left knee in March to repair his torn ACL. He thinks it makes sense to take a redshirt season in 2013-14 to give him a chance to get completely healthy, learn UNI's system and get ahead in school.

Semler will be the fifth player from the Metro area on the UNI basketball team next season. He joins Matt Bohannon (Linn-Mar), Wes Washpun (Washington), Max Martino (Kennedy) and Matt MacDougall (Prairie).

Semler played AAU basketball in high school with the Iowa Barnstormers, where Washpun and UNI center Seth Tuttle were two of his teammates. Now they'll be united again.

"I'm excited to get up there," he said.

Semler missed six games in December and January with a broken hand. He recovered and played the best basketball of his life coming down the stretch, averaging 18.7 points after Feb. 1 and hitting 50.1 percent of his 3-pointers.

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Semler improved all aspects of his game during his two years with the Eagles.

"I just got a lot stronger and a lot smarter and more efficient with my shot and defensively came a long way," he said.

Semler averaged 3.0 assists and 1.7 rebounds this season. He shot 56 of 125 on 3-pointers (44.8 percent) and hit 86.6 percent of his free throws. He was named first team all-Region.