

Mount Mercy lands 3 top players from AIB

Written by Jim Ecker

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Three of the best basketball players at the AIB College of Business needed to find a new home after their old school in Des Moines abruptly dropped its entire sports program this year.

Goodbye AIB, hello Mount Mercy.

Keanu Glover, Mykhael Brawner-Henley and Chris Ford have transferred to Mount Mercy and will be eligible to play for the Mustangs this season.

Glover and Brawner-Henley made the Midwest Collegiate Conference all-star team this season as honorable mention selections and Ford was a part-time starter at AIB.

Mount Mercy and AIB were both members of the Midwest Collegiate Conference before the league disbanded this spring, and Mount Mercy Coach Paul Gavin has a good relationship with AIB Coach Cory Jenkins.

Gavin was saddened to hear the news that AIB was being absorbed by the University of Iowa and would be dropping all of its teams.

"I called Coach Jenkins right away and expressed my disappointment and sorrow and so forth," Gavin said Wednesday. "And I said, 'Hey, if your good kids need a good place to play, I'd be more than happy to help them

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out."

Mount Mercy and AIB met twice this past season in conference games, so Gavin was familiar with AIB's players. In fact, AIB handed the Mustangs their only loss in MCC games this season and finished second behind Mount Mercy in the league standings.

Glover scored 21 points against Mount Mercy in one of those games. Brawner-Henley nearly had a double-double against the Mustangs with eight points and eight rebounds and Ford had nine points and seven assists against Mount Mercy.

Glover and Ford will be juniors at Mount Mercy this season and Brawner-Henley will be a sophomore.

The Mustangs caught another break this year when Benedictine University in Springfield, Ill., decided to drop its sports program due to financial reasons. Gavin was able to land Thomas Dillard, a 6-foot-4 wing player who was a first-team selection in the America Midwest Conference for Benedictine.

Gavin is confident that Glover, Brawner-Henley, Ford and Dillard will help the Mustangs this season.

"When you get transfers, you have to make darn sure they can help you right away," he said. "You always worry about kids fitting in, but they'll help quite a bit."

Mount Mercy University decided in February to begin a formal junior varsity program in men's basketball and Gavin was asked to increase the size of his total roster to help make it happen. As a result he has signed 16 new

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players for the 2015-2016 campaign, including 12 transfers and four freshmen. He also expects six walk-ons to join the program.

Gavin expects 15 players to return from the 2014-15 squad that went 27-5, cracked the top-10 of the rankings and reached the second round of the NAIA Division II national tournament. That would give him a total roster of 36 players, although they'll be split into two groups -- varsity and junior varsity -- after the initial evaluation period during preseason drills.

Jake Anderson and Jon Anderson, 6-foot-7 twins from Mexico, Mo., are transferring to Mount Mercy from Moberly Community College, which is one of the top junior colleges in the midwest. CJ Parker, a 6-5 forward, is joining the Mustangs from Johnson C. Smith College.

The four new freshman are Josh Koeppel, 6-3, from Williamsburg; Emilio Villagrana, 5-10, from Solon; Nick Harden, 5-11, from Parkwood, Ill., and Christian Allen, 6-4, from Orion, Ill.

"There will be some great competition. That's what I'm looking forward to," said Gavin. "As a coach, one of the fun things to do is putting a new team together and evaluating talent and seeing how they all fit."

Here are the 16 new recruits:

+ Nick Melton, 6-2, Jr, Kishwaukee C.C

+ Jake Anderson, 6-7, Soph, Moberly C.C.

+ Jon Anderson, 6-7, Soph, Moberly C.C.

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+ Keanu Glover, 6-3, Jr, AIB

+ Chris Ford, 5-11, Jr, AIB

+ Mykhael Brawner-Henley, 6-4, Soph, AIB

+ Jacobe Julien, 6-1, Soph, William Penn

+ Thomas Dillard, 6-4, Sr, Benedictine-Springfield

+ CJ Parker, 6-5, Jr, Johnson C. Smith

+ Malik Williams, 6-3, Soph, Southwestern C.C.

+ Diamond Hood, 5-8, Jr, Kishwaukee C.C.

+ Tyrone Smith, 6-2, Soph, University of Dubuque

+ Josh Koeppel, 6-3, Frosh, Williamsburg

+ Nick Harden, 5-11, Frosh, Parkwood, Ill.

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+ Christian Allen, 6-4, Frosh, Orion, Ill.

+ Emilio Villagrana, 5-10, Frosh, Solon