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Kennedy: Magic Won't Settle in Search for Big Man

By: Alex Kennedy Last Updated: 1/4/11 9:56 AM ET | 4770 times read

Immediately after completing their roster overhaul several weeks ago, both Stan Van Gundy and Otis Smith admitted that their biggest concern with their new-look team was the lack of size on the bench. Since then, the Orlando Magic have weighed their options and quickly discovered that talking about acquiring a reserve big is much easier than actually doing it.

While Smith originally stated that the Magic would try to find another big man over the course of one month, the search has been much more difficult than expected. Meanwhile, the need for said big seemingly increases with each passing day.

With Brandon Bass limited due to left knee discomfort and Malik Allen still sidelined with an ankle injury, Orlando's frontcourt is thinner than ever. While the team isn't convinced that Bass' injury will require surgery, he will still be playing through pain and having another big to spell he and Dwight Howard would be extremely useful going forward.

However, sources close to the situation insist that the team will continue to stick with the players currently on their roster and wait for the right trade to present itself before bringing in another big man. Smith isn't looking for a temporary replacement; he wants someone that can have a significant role for the remainder of the season which is why Orlando has been linked to veteran pieces such as Portland's Marcus Camby.

The Magic aren't interested in any of the available free agent bigs, including seven-footer Earl Barron, and would rather increase the minutes of reserves Ryan Anderson and Earl Clark as they continue to look for a trading partner than signing somebody who will only serve as a body.

Orlando has shown zero desire to bring in someone that would only help in the short term which is why they didn't sign anyone to a non-guaranteed contract and will likely sit out when teams can start signing free agents to 10-day contracts on Wednesday.

The Magic continue to shop the same players - Chris Duhon, Quentin Richardson, and Jason Williams - in their search for a center but league sources believe the team may have to part with J.J. Redick if they're eyeing a veteran big who can contribute much more than just six fouls each night.

Orlando has several options, but they're not going to settle on a center that won't play a significant role for the team. Until they find their man, they'll continue to stick with what they have on the roster and hope for the best. The Magic aren't in any rush to make a move because they're focused on making it count.

Isaiah Lewis' Coming Out Party: The City of Palms Classic is one of the biggest high school tournaments in the country. Each year, plenty of NBA-bound prospects from around the country come to prove themselves against other top competition.

This year, the field was as talented as ever. Ten defending state champions were competing and top prospects such as Mike Gilchrist, Quincy Miller, Austin Rivers, James McAdoo, Rakeem Christmas, Marshall Plumlee, and Adonis Thomas looked to guide their teams to victory.

But by the end of the week, another name was being mentioned alongside the top seniors. Isaiah Lewis, a 6'3 point guard from Christ the King in New York, turned the event into his coming out party despite the fact that he's only a sophomore.

Against the best that high school basketball has to offer, this sixteen-year-old was able to turn heads and solidify himself as one of the top prospects in the Class of 2013. Lewis had back-to-back twenty point games and averaged 16.0 points and a tournament-high 5.7 assists during the week.

"It gives me a lot of confidence. I think my maturity and mindset going into the tournament was huge for me. My coaches kept me confident by putting the ball in my hands and then helping me look over all my mistakes and right decisions. That was really something that motivated me. Also, I get really motivated by big crowds. Every game had a big crowd and I had a ton of college coaches in the stands watching me. My coaches had told me that throughout the tournament, there would be a lot of guys watching so I had to produce and show my maturity to the coaches. That's really what I did and I made sure I maintained focus even when we were losing. I tried to rally my guys and we came out with one win so that was the best part of the tournament," Lewis told HOOPSWORLD.

It didn't take long for Lewis' performance to change everything from the number of schools calling to the amount of friends he has on Facebook. When asked which colleges have expressed interest in him, Lewis gives a list that goes on and on.

"North Carolina, Arizona, Kentucky, N.C. State, Arizona State, Florida State, Ohio State, Xavier, Georgia Tech, Virginia Tech, Arkansas, Florida, Miami, Georgetown, West Virginia, Villanova, Seton Hall, St. Johns, Providence, Texas, UCLA," Lewis says in just a few breaths.

One program that is missing is Syracuse, which Lewis calls his "dream school." While assistant coach Mike Hopkins has been to one of his games and promised to stay in touch, Lewis continues to wait after falling in love with the team's fan base and New York location.

As a combo guard, Lewis studies players like Deron Williams, Tyreke Evans, DeMar DeRozan, John Wall, and Chris Paul as he expands his repertoire. While he is still growing, he believes that he'll definitely be playing one once he joins the college ranks.

"I think at the next level I'm going to be a point guard. I'm still growing so we'll see, but I think growing more will just help me because I'll be a bigger guard. I think I'll definitely be a point guard," he said.

Where a top point guard prospect begins to emerge, Kentucky isn't too far behind. Young players like Lewis look at the success that John Calipari's prospects have had in the NBA and can't help but wonder if they would be next if put in that situation.

"It's really attractive," Lewis admits. "You want to go to a college that has a coach and team that will get you ready for the NBA and Kentucky has done a great job of getting Derrick Rose, Tyreke Evans, John Wall, and even low first round picks like Eric Bledsoe and guys like that to the NBA. That tells me a lot because if you want to get the NBA and go play big time, I think Kentucky is definitely somewhere where you chase your dream and then make it to the league."

Lewis is a sophomore, but he doesn't play or carry himself like one. He surrounds himself with many older players and embraces the opportunity to show his maturity.

"I think I'm very ahead of the curb," he admits. "With me just turning sixteen and being a sophomore, I think one of the things that I have to show in order to make it to the NBA is that I'm not just a regular sixteen year old kid. I'm somebody that's going to do the extra work and show a different amount of maturity in games. I want coaches that come and watch me to remember me as the kid that didn't play like a sophomore but instead played more like a senior or even a college sophomore. I really try not to act my age around the older guys, scouts, and people like that. I just try to be mature about things."

His friendship with five-star senior point guard Myck Kabongo, who has committed to the University of Texas, has not only helped him mature but also eliminate distractions as he climbs in the rankings and becomes one of the most coveted recruits in the nation.

"One of my closest friends is Myck Kabongo. I'm really close to him and Myck has told me that right now, I can't get rattled by all of the little things people say and all of that now that I'm getting noticed and in the rankings. He said to stay intense, keep the mindset that I have now, and know that I haven't reached my goal until I make it to the NBA which is what I'm doing right now. I'm really not fazed by all of the media and all of that," he said.

Lewis will have the chance to prove that the hype doesn't faze him when ESPNU will feature Christ the King's game on January 16. The combo guard is prepared to follow up his City of Palms performance and prove to the country why he's one of the most coveted recruits in the Class of 2013.

Or, as he puts it, "I'm going to put on a show for everybody."

NBA News and Notes: Here are some items from this week's news and notes bin.

- Former Boston Celtics forward Tony Gaffney has parted ways with Türk Telekom B.K. of the Turkish Basketball League, according to sources. After the team hired a new coach and new management, the team agreed to pay Gaffney a large percentage of his season salary. Other European teams showed interest and made large offers but after receiving his salary in the buyout, he decided that joining the D-League was a no brainer because of the chance to return to the NBA through a call-up. He will now join the D-League's player pool and try to resume his NBA career which came to a halt when the Celtics waived him in October.
- The NBA released their awards for the month of December yesterday and many familiar names were included. LeBron James and Dwyane Wade shared the Player of the Month award in the Eastern Conference and Kevin Durant received the honor in the Western Conference. Blake Griffin and Landry Fields were once again named Rookies of the Month. Erick Spoelstra and Gregg Popovich were named the Coaches of the Month.

- On Monday night, Hedo Turkoglu recorded his third career triple-double with 10 points, 10 assists, and 14 rebounds against the Golden State Warriors. All three of Turkoglu's triple-doubles have come with the Orlando Magic. The last time he accomplished the feat was March 10, 2008 against the Atlanta Hawks.

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