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## Worldly Knights

Bill Broderick  
The Enquirer

The Battle Creek Knights and the International Basketball League are a place for players to compete, but more so to get noticed, in an effort to continue their professional basketball career.

Several players from last summer's IBL-championship Knights squad used the opportunity given to them on the Kellogg Arena floor to land other pro hoop job overseas.

▼ADVERTISEMENT ▼ Ben Reed, a Battle Creek Central graduate and star at Western Michigan University, played guard for the Knights and is now on a roster in the TMN League in Portugal.

Mike Williams, a former MVP of the Mid-American Conference while at WMU, led the Knights in scoring and is in the Professional A League in France.

For both of those players, the Knights was their first full season of pro basketball and the experience with the Battle Creek squad helped them land their current jobs. And landing those current jobs became even easier since the Knights went undefeated on the year and won the inaugural IBL championship.

"I'm very excited for them, they are very talented young men and it's good to see that they are getting an opportunity to continue to play," said Knights head coach Greg Williams.

"Us winning the championship was a benefit to all of them. I think that gave them an opportunity to get noticed, getting a little bit of the spotlight on them. And that can always help when you are trying to get notice from the scouts."

Also continuing his pro career is Bobby Madison, a former WMU player, who started for the Knights and is now playing for Deportes Castros in Chile along with Knights center Logan VanderVelden, who is also on that team.

Not going overseas, but still playing pro ball is Jamel Gooding, who is in the Continental Basketball League with the Michigan Mayhem of Muskegon.

"It's what it is all about. Our whole mission is to get these players who need to refine their skills and get them ready for the next level, whether that is the European leagues or the NBA," said Knights co-owner James King. "That's worked out very well for our team. I think we are the only team in the IBL that has had this many players get jobs overseas and get some nice change."

Reed has been starting for Ovarense Aerosoles Ovar, which is in first place in the TMN League in Portugal with a record of 7-2.

The former All-MAC guard is averaging 12.3 points per game.

Williams, a 6-foot-8 forward, is coming off the bench for Le Havre in the France Professional A League. Le Havre is 6-7 on the season and Williams is averaging 8.2 points per game.

Madison and VanderVelden helped Deportes Castro finish 10-12 in the the Chile Demayor League. Madison finished the season third in the league in scoring with 28.1 ppg.

Gooding has helped the Michigan Mayhem to a 2-5 record in the early season in the CBA and is third on the team in rebounding.

The success of some of these players could mean that they won't be back with the Knights when the season starts at the end of March.

But that goes with the territory.

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John Grap/The Enquirer

Ben Reed of the Battle Creek Knights attempts a shot in a game last year. Reed and other former Knights are taking their games overseas to foreign leagues.

### Where Are They?

Several Battle Creek Knights are playing professionally in other leagues during the IBL's offseason.

Player Team Pro League (Country)

Ben Reed Ovarense TMN League (Portugal)

Mike Williams Le Havre Professional A (France)

Bobby Madison Deportes Castro Demayor League (Chile)

Logan VanderVelden Deportes Castro Demayor League (Chile)

Jamel Gooding Michigan Mayhem Continental Basketball (USA)

Robby Collum Cometas de Queretaro LNBT (Mexico)

- Get info on pro players overseas at [www.usbasket.com](http://www.usbasket.com)

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"With some of those leagues overlapping ours, we understand that we might lose some of those players and they won't be back. But that's our mission, to give these guys an opportunity to do that, and it's working for them - so that's great," King said. "But our coaching staff is impeccable and our connections across the country are great, so we think we'll be able to bring in quality players no matter what."

Of the top players mentioned, Madison, Vander Velden and Robby Collum, who plays in a professional league in Mexico, should return to the Knights because their alternate leagues will be finished before the IBL season.

The European leagues will mostly overlap, making Reed and Williams questions marks for the Knights.

"We are already looking to see what new players we can bring in, if we have to. We are looking at guys who are finishing up their senior seasons in college, like we did with Ben last year when he finished at Western," Greg Williams said. "Right now, we think Bobby Madison, Logan and Robby Collum will be back."

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