



Basketball odyssey

Andre Joseph has returned to Eugene after traveling the world and playing at all different levels of professional basketball following a passion to play the sport that he loves

By: Jeffrey Dransfeldt

Posted: 6/1/07

Andre Joseph has shared the same basketball court as NBA stars Kobe Bryant and Tim Duncan. He's also donned a jersey for the CBA's Pittsburgh Xplosion.

The differences between the upper echelon of professional basketball - the NBA - and lower levels - IBL, CBA - isn't as important as Joseph's willingness to continue playing the game he loves, wherever that may take him.

The Houston native, who spent two years as a member of the Oregon men's basketball team, has joined the Eugene Chargers for the rest of the season.

That Eugene is his latest stopover is refreshing for Joseph, who is coming off a sprained left Achilles injury and can get in shape in the company of former Oregon teammates and current Chargers Jay Anderson and Adam Zahn.

"I miss the fans - the community," Joseph said of Eugene. "It's a nice environment. I've been across the world and back now, and I know this is one of the best places I've been."

Joseph suffered the injury playing for a team in Mexico. Initially, he was reported to be joining the IBL team in Portland. Joseph says he considered it, but never told the team he was coming.

He began talking with Anderson and Zahn about Eugene a month ago and decided to join the Chargers two weeks ago. He is accompanying the Chargers on a four-games-in-four-nights road trip that started Thursday at Chico and continues through Sunday at Tri-Valley.

Chargers General Manager Carl Berman said he expects Joseph will be the starting point guard once he's in shape.

So does Anderson.

"He can do a lot of different things," Anderson said. "He can shoot very well. He attacks in transition. He doesn't turn the ball over."

The passionate Joseph always played in college with his emotions near the surface. He had to be restrained, coincidentally by Anderson, at the end of a game against Washington and was suspended another game for arguing with an assistant coach.

"I think he's got more control of his emotions," Zahn said. "I feel like he's matured in that area a lot. His game has tightened up. His jumper is looking really good."

Joseph filled the two-guard position in college alongside Luke Ridnour and Aaron Brooks, but has spent the last year adjusting to the position of point guard.

"I'm more of a creator now more than just a spot-up shooter and defensive player," Joseph said. "I can still work on my ball handling and I can do a lot more things and open up my game a lot more. It will be exciting to see. It will be a different Andre Joseph than the fans saw at Oregon."

The old Joseph, who arrived in Eugene from Lee Junior College in Texas, averaged 9.3 points and three rebounds in 2003 and 12.6 points and 4.5 rebounds in 2004. His .441 three-point percentage during the 2003-04 season still ranks seventh all-time in Oregon's single-season history.

Since leaving Oregon three years ago, Joseph has bounced around the world, making stops in Austria and, most recently, Mexico. Each stop is a new learning experience.

"I've learned a little German, a little Spanish. You see new, different things," Joseph said. "Things you got to cherish (and) might never see again. I probably would have never seen a lot of places in Europe if I'd never played basketball. Even though you don't make the NBA, I'm still living my dream. I'm still playing basketball."

He spent last summer in Austria. When he came back to the United States, his agent set him up with an open run with the San Antonio Spurs. Joseph was one of 20 guys working out for the Spurs, including the team's mainstay in Duncan, and was trying to be one of 19 players participating in the team's training camp in France. Other Spurs stars Manu Ginobili and Tony Parker weren't there, Joseph said.

Decision time arrived and Joseph was left behind. Coaches gave him suggestions on what he needed to improve.

"They were just saying I need to work on my defense," Joseph said. "I need to work on my stamina. Little things. It wasn't nothing major."

The Spurs recommended Joseph to the Los Angeles D-Fenders, a member of the NBDL.

"It was all kind of a chain reaction," Joseph said. "It helped me get there."

The D-Fenders selected Joseph with pick No. 114 in the 10th round of the 2006 NBDL Draft on Nov. 3, 2006. But less than a month later, the D-Fenders waived Joseph on Nov. 27 when the team acquired Brian Chase, who used to be with the Utah Jazz.

Joseph then joined the CBA's Pittsburgh Xplosion. Joseph played there with Kevin Pittsnogle of West Virginia, and made an impact. Joseph made 13-of-20 shots, including 5-of-5 from three-point territory, in a 33-point, 6-assist effort against Yakima on Dec. 27.

But he followed that with a 1-for-10 effort at Utah, a 4-for-19 night at Butte and 3-for-9 performance in a home game against Albany. He recovered with an 11-point, 11-assist effort against Albany on Jan. 3, but had eight turnovers and never found consistency.

Joseph left Pittsburgh after about a month and a half and joined a team in Mexico. It was there that Joseph strained his left Achilles in February. The last couple months have been spent rehabilitating and recovering.

Joseph had the option of rejoining the D-Fenders two weeks after they released him, but bothered by the business aspect of it, stayed away. He thinks he'll give the NBDL another shot next season.

"Certain things just didn't work out this year, but I think it's a great opportunity to be playing with them," Joseph said.

Joseph is well aware that he is getting older and faces long odds to make an NBA roster. Should he make it, he says he knows he'd have to play a role and understands he's not taking 30 shots per night.

"If I get out there, I'm going to be an eighth, ninth, tenth man, somebody who will come in and change the flow of the game," Joseph said.

Joseph is able to take inspiration from former teammate Luke Jackson, who struggled with injuries in his first NBA stint with the Cleveland Cavaliers and bounced around the NBA and minor leagues until he landed with the Toronto Raptors.

"I know that a lot of people counted him out and the guy kept working," Joseph said. "He had two back surgeries and he got through it and he signed another contract. A lot of people probably didn't know what he went through, but I know for him to work back ... it shows a lot of people you shouldn't give up."

Joseph plans to keep playing basketball, so long as his passion for the game continues.

"I'm going to keep playing forever until the love stops, but I still love it and I'll always love it, no matter what," he said.