

# Sports

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IBL

## **Chargers call on 'Beast' to help punish foes**

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For millions of years, the world has survived a number of scary beasts.

Take T-Rex, for example. Or the Woolly Mammoth. Sasquatch. Nessie, the Loch Ness Monster. Editors. Teletubbies and telemarketers.

You get the idea.

For the next three months, the Eugene Chargers are hoping Charles Easterling will be just as frightening in the International Basketball League.

After a modest introduction last week, "The Beast," as Easterling is affectionately known, makes his IBL debut with the Chargers at 7:15 p.m. Friday at the Morse Event Center on the Northwest Christian College campus. Even as an undersized forward - he's listed at 6-foot-2, 220 pounds - Eugene officials are confident The Beast will feast in the fast-paced IBL game.

"This will be a good place for him to showcase his talent," general manager Carl Berman said. "He can take anyone off the dribble. He's only 6-2, but he'll match up against 6-7 guys. He can jump over everybody and he's very strong."

From tentative to tenacious, Easterling transformed his soft-spoken off-court demeanor into a fierce on-court competitor in the Chargers' first week of practice.

He's expected to start at small forward in Friday's opener, but coach Scott Jones wasn't too sure of that initially.

"The first couple practices he was really reserved," Jones said. "But he's really opened up the last few days. He's talking with his teammates and he's smiling and having a good time."

The smile only adds to The Beast's scary makeup, as if he knows something you don't. It's accompanied by a broad, bearded jaw and a steely stare.

"The nickname is appropriate," Jones said. "He's so strong. I expect him to punish the other guards."

At heart, Easterling says he's a good-natured jokester.

"I'm just a happy person," he said.

Easterling, 24, is from Hartford, Conn., where he led two different high school teams to state championships before graduating from Weaver High in 2002 as a first-team all-New England selection.

His college options were limited by his academic status.

"He's a guy, if you look through his history, that fell through the cracks. A lot of it's an education-type thing," team owner Ron Ingalls said.

In his only season at Kilgore Junior College in Texas, Easterling displayed a well-rounded game, averaging 14.0 points, 7.9 rebounds and 4.6 assists in 2003.

He left Kilgore after that season following a dispute with the coach, who Easterling said was dealing with off-the-court problems.

Other players left the team as well, Easterling said.

"It was crazy," he said. "I went to another school, but (the Kilgore coach) wouldn't release me, so I couldn't play. ... Going through that only made me better. It made me work harder."

Easterling played briefly in a league in Mexico but left because he wasn't being paid. Last summer he played in the Rucker Summer League in New York City, where he said he averaged about 30 points.

For the past three years he took part in the Hartford Pro-Am against players from the NBA and Division I schools.

"He's really fun to watch play; he's really explosive," Ingalls said. "I think he missed his calling - he would've been a good running back."

The Chargers expect him to be an even better Beast.

### **Zahn joins Chargers**

Former Oregon forward Adam Zahn has signed with the Chargers, the team announced Wednesday. The 6-foot-8 Zahn averaged 2.5 points and 2.1 rebounds per game this past season for the Ducks.

"We're very excited to bring in someone with local ties, and Adam will be a key contributor for us inside," general manager Carl Berman said