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Flannigan Finds Success Early At Lafayette

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Flannigan Finds Success Early At Lafayette

By Andrew Cato, SMT Sports Editor

Adjusting to life in college can be a difficult task for any freshman - you have more free time on your hands, your professors are much more laid back about your assignments than the typical high school teacher, and you don't have your parents there to guide you.

It can be a rough transition for some. The difficulty of the transition is exponentially increased when you're a student-athlete.

A young man from Dexter is going through that transition right now, but he's doing one heck of a job with it.

Alan Flannigan is the 18 year old son of Charlie and Jana Flannigan of Dexter. He's a 2011 graduate of Dexter High School, and he's currently playing NCAA Division I basketball at Lafayette College. Alan isn't the first collegiate athlete to come from his family - his father, Charlie, played football and was a high jumper at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wis., and played basketball for the Coburg Giants, the 1977 Australian national champions.

Lafayette, a four-year Patriot League school, is located in Easton, Penn. The college has an enrollment of over 2,300 students - more than 10 times the size of Flannigan's graduating class. Life in Easton, a town of over 30,000 people, is quite different from small-town Missouri life.

"It's quite different up here - all of my teammates joked with me a lot when I first got here about my accent, about how I talked so much slower and dress differently," Flannigan said. "Everything moves so much faster; [my teammates] listen to genres of music that I'd never even heard of before I came here."

Flannigan noted that the biggest change at Lafayette wasn't the culture; it was changing positions on the court.

"I was a guard throughout the fall and the first few weeks of practice, and then while I was out with a concussion they moved me to four," he said. "I had to relearn everything and all the plays and sets. The four in our offense is a post player - not necessarily just a 'sit on the block and call for the ball' post, but we get out on the perimeter and handle the ball a lot. Everybody has to be a point guard on our team, the way that we play."

With a new team comes a new coach, and Flannigan was quick to point out the expertise of his new coach, Fran O'Hanlon.

"Coach O'Hanlon has years and years of experience at the Division I level, and he played in the NBA and overseas," Flannigan said. "I've learned more to this point than I thought I might ever be able to know about basketball, and there's three and a half years to go."

"Our coach knows things about basketball that you wouldn't even think would have any significance, but when he explains them, you understand why being half a step to the left or the right makes a huge difference in opening up lanes or gaps for shots," he continued. "It's been really fun from a 'learning the game' aspect for someone that loves the game as much as I do."

Flannigan's admiration of his coach is a two-way street. Coach O'Hanlon spoke very highly of the freshman, despite his early setbacks with injuries.

"Alan was going to get played more as a 3 or 4 in our vernacular, but I see him more as a 4 or 5 after watching him in practice. [He was] out for a week with a concussion, then came back and sprained his ankle. That gave him some setbacks," O'Hanlon said. "We aren't a very good rebounding team - he's come back and given us some energy off the bench, and got three boards in five minutes of play when we faced Delaware."

"Alan is a good rebounder, and he is aggressive inside. We have a number of scorers right now; he has the ability to score, but that isn't what we need from him right now," he continued. "Alan has put up big numbers in high school - all our freshman right now were stars on their high school team, but I think he has the ability to score better once he gets acclimated. Where that leads to in the next few years is the million dollar question. I'm happy with where he is right now - he's gotten more minutes than a lot of freshman, and he's doing some great things for us off the bench."

O'Hanlon did point out some aspects of Flannigan's game that need improvement, but noted that they were all common areas of concern for most incoming freshmen at the Division I level.

"His outside shot needs to get more consistent, but I can say that about several guys on this team," O'Hanlon said. "The speed of the Division I game is so much quicker than high school, especially coming out of a smaller town. It's not an overnight thing adjusting to that, it's not something you can turn on and turn off. All of our guys - not just the freshmen - can do a better job of taking care of the ball, identifying plays, being able to make the big plays when they need to be made."

When asked about the biggest differences between his on-the-court experiences in high school and college, Flannigan quickly echoed his coaches sentiment about the speed of the game. He also noted the increased physicality and sheer size of his opponents as key differences.

/images/Sports/Athlete Features/Alan Flannigan/Lafayette_Logo.jpg

"Everything is so much quicker. There were things I could get away with in high school I can't even try in college. Instead of getting guarded by a 6'3 kid, it's 6'9", 240 pounder," Flannigan said. "Everyone at this level has skill - even the big guys can drive to the basket and shoot. [Everything is] more physical, too. You're guarding guys that could just as easily be playing defensive end on the football team as they could be playing power forward. It really turns you from having been one of the better athletes in your high school to just like everyone else."

"The guy I was matched up with when we played Delaware was 6'6", 260, and had muscles in places I didn't know you could have them. I realized quickly that I wasn't that tall at 6'6", he recalled, laughing. "It's how big and strong and physical a lot of post players are at this level. The weight room is a necessity, as well as being tough. [You have to] work your butt off while you're off the court to get bigger and stronger. "

Flannigan also pointed out the increased complexity of the offensive system that Lafayette utilizes, and noted that a quick mind is just as advantageous as a quick body.

"You can't have gaps, you can't stop and think - always have to think on the fly, think faster than your opponent. We aren't as athletic as a lot of teams that we play - we're thinking quicker and not just moving quicker," he said. "There's lot more decision making - offense in high school was pretty cut and dry - took what the defense gives you and play. This offense has a lot of options - fundamentally is the same, but there's a lot more options. Every person's route is planned out, and there's about five options based on every other person on the floor's position."

Flannigan was quick to note the efforts of his high school coaches - weightlifting coach Aaron Pixley and basketball coach Rob Nichols - as being keys to his early successes in college.

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"The lifts we did in high school definitely prepared me for college. Coach Pixley did a great job getting me bigger and stronger, especially during my freshman and sophomore year in high school when I was really small and weak. The intensity he expected us to work at helped me a lot," he said. "Off the top of my head, there's so many things Coach Nichols taught me - there's so much general stuff about basketball that I learned from him. We play a version of the matchup zone that we played all through high school and middle school - it's made the transition a lot easier for me."

"Coach Nichols taught me how to be humble with success, how to bounce back from disappointments. We had great success in high school and great disappointments - he was really good at teaching me how to be a little bit of a leader in those scenarios and how to bounce back," he continued.

Flannigan has already played some very prestigious schools at this early point in his career - the Leopards boast a win over Penn State, and have lost close games to Sacred Heart and Princeton - and despite being 4-6, Flannigan and the Leopards could just as easily be 9-1.

“We could also have lost a few of those close games. I’m proud of where we are, and I’m happy with what we’ve done do far,” O’Hanlon said of his team. We lost our starting guard and our 4 and 5 man last year, but it’s given me the opportunity to get some of the younger guys some minutes that some of our older guys have usually gotten. It can be a disaster when you lose guys when the young ones aren’t ready.”

The Leopards are off until December 21st, when they head to Nashville, Tenn., to face off against the Vanderbilt Commodores, currently ranked No. 25 in the nation. It will be the closest that Flannigan - and teammate Ryan Willen, a senior forward out of Notre Dame Regional High School in Cape Girardeau - will play to home this season.

“Our schedule is very challenging - I know a lot of people are excited to be able to come watch both Alan and Ryan Willen from Cape Notre Dame when we play Vanderbilt,” O’Hanlon said. “Vandy isn’t an easy game - they’re ranked in the top 25, and are expected to make the NCAA Tournament. It will be a tough test for this team.”

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Raiders To Return To The Coliseum

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Raiders To Return To The Coliseum

POPLAR BLUFF – Three Rivers College and the Black River Coliseum have announced plans to host a day of basketball at the Coliseum facility downtown.

The men's and women's basketball teams from Three Rivers will play Mineral Area College on Jan. 7. Three high school girls' basketball games will precede the event: Eminence vs. Senath at 11:30 a.m., Clearwater vs. Scott City at 1 p.m., and Couch vs. Gosnell (AR) at 2:30. The Three Rivers Lady Raiders will play Mineral Area at 5 p.m., with the men's Raider team to follow at 7.

Tickets for entry into the Coliseum for this afternoon of basketball are \$5. The reserved seating offer for those with Raider season passes will be honored. Tickets can be purchased in advance at the college Business Office, Bookstore, and the Coliseum box office.

"Basketball hasn't been played at the Coliseum since 2006," said facility manager Bobby Godwin. "Years ago, Three Rivers played there, and it was a good recruitment tool, good for the city, and it appealed to the people who don't always get to the campus to watch ball games. With this event, we are appealing to the city of Poplar Bluff, and hopefully this will draw more fans."

Associate Senior Athletics Administrator and Raiders Assistant Coach Will Durden has fond memories of playing basketball in the Coliseum, and looks forward to seeing his team in action there.

"When I was in high school, I played in several preliminary games at the Coliseum, and then went on to play there for the Raiders when I was a Three Rivers student. I enjoyed my experience there, and I want to share that with our current players. I think this will also give fans a taste of what we can look forward to when the new Event Center is completed."

"The city of Poplar Bluff, which owns the Coliseum, is partnering with Three Rivers to provide this community event," said Godwin. "We'll see how this goes. If it goes well, we may host one or two games next year, if everyone is satisfied. With new leadership at the college and at the Coliseum, we're trying to stir up excitement for the city of Poplar Bluff and for Raiders basketball."

For more information on Raiders Athletics at Three Rivers College, please visit RaidersAthletics.com!

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LBB Blows Out Fredericktown In District Contest

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LBB Blows Out Fredericktown In District Contest

By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

FREDERICKTOWN - The Lady Bearcats came out with a bang during their first District contest of the 2011-2012 season on Monday night. After a long road trip to Fredericktown, the Lady 'Cats were able to pick up wins on both the JV and Varsity levels against the Black Cats.

In the JV contest, things looked like they might be ugly for the Lady Bearcats early on in the game. Fredericktown shut out the 'Cats in the first quarter, but a late run in the second quarter helped Dexter cut the lead to 12-8 at the half.

The Lady 'Cats were able to outscore Fredericktown in the third, 8-7, to cut their advantage to 19-16 after three quarters of play.

The JV 'Cats battled back to within two with under two minutes left in the contest, when Katie Reiker hit two free throws to tie the game at 26-26.

Alexis Smith hit a jumper from the elbow with under a minute left in the game to seal the Lady Bearcat victory and improve the JV squad's record to 3-1 on the season.

The Varsity contest was eerily similar to last Thursday's 94-20 shellacking of the NMCC Lady Eagles; the Lady Bearcat offense was firing on all cylinders, while the full-court press was highly effective on the defensive end.

"Offensively, I thought we had a great game just like that Thursday," head coach Chad Allen said after the game. "I thought our girls did a great job of finding the open man and really looking at getting the ball inside."


Allen was pleased with his team's continuing effort to find the open man and not force bad passes - one of his key areas of improvement in the preseason.

"At times, when we were denied inside, I thought our guards did a good job of recognizing that, not forcing it in there and taking an open shot," he continued. "I thought we had a great outside game tonight as well."

The Lady Bearcats dominated in the paint throughout the contest; Brittany Harris had a double-double, with 19 points and 13 boards, while Paige Patterson had 13 and 6. Mollie Whitehead rounded out the middle attack with 8 points and 5 boards.

Perimeter shooting was 'business as usual', with Alison Jarrell hitting 4 of 6 from beyond the arc and Erica Cobb knocking down 3 of 4.

Hannah Noe also had a double-double for the Lady 'Cats, with 12 points and 11 assists.

The Lady 

'Cats have been hard at work on their full-court press defense in the last few games, and have really shown great skill in it. Noe and Katelynn Frazier were both very effective in the trap game, and Allen was proud of how his girls worked the press.

"It was very effective, picking up full court tonight. I thought our conditioning looked really good, and hopefully we can keep that up," he said. "We like to keep pressure on other teams, and eventually they'll wear down. We definitely like to try to get up and down the court offensively and put as much pressure as we can on other teams defensively."

With the 97-44 victory, the Lady ‘Cats move to 5-2 on the season, and they will be in action again Thursday night against the Sikeston Lady Bulldogs. Allen noted the similarities between the two teams, and feels the better-conditioned squad will emerge the victor in another District contest.

”Sikeston is a lot like us; they want to pressure you full court and they like to push the ball offensively,” Allen said. “Its going to be a fast-paced game. Hopefully we’re in good enough condition to last all four quarters as fast as that game is going to be.”

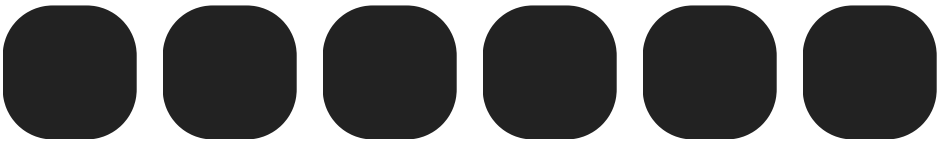
The JV contest will tip at 6:00 p.m. in the Bearcat Event Center, with the Varsity game immediately following.

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Warren, Lady Raiders Knock Off Shawnee

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POPLAR BLUFF - It may have taken the Three Rivers Lady Raiders a little time to get going Saturday, but once they did they were unstoppable.

Three Rivers ran off 27 straight points in the second half to turn a 16-point lead into a runaway to roll past the Shawnee Lady Saints 92-54 in a Midwest Community College Athletic Conference game at the Bess Activity Center.

“The 27-0 run was kids being in the right spots and doing the right things on offense and defense,” Three Rivers coach Jeff Walk said. “When that takes place, good things happen.”

The Lady Saints trailed 47-31 after Michelle Greaney’s basket with 18:07 left in the game, but the Lady Raiders (6-4) tightened up on defense, keeping Shawnee scoreless for over 10 minutes as their offense caught fire.

Three Rivers did it with balance too, as eight different players put points on the board during a 27-0 run that was capped when Brooke Godsey sank a pair of free throws with 8:39 to go that made it 74-31.

“We had four kids in double figures – three with 16 points,” said Walk. “That’s hard to play against.”

The first half was a different story, however.

Whitney Mills’s 3-pointer with 16:03 left in the opening half put the Lady Raiders up 10-4, but back-to-back treys from Kaylin Goins tied the game approximately a minute later.

Back-to-back baskets by Godsey and Carolyn Overton ignited an 11-2 run to make it 21-12 on an Overton bucket with a little over nine minutes left before halftime, but Shawnee answered again, cutting the lead to 23-20 on Destiny Dillow’s bucket with 8:14 left in the opening session.

“They’re going to compete,” Walk said. “That’s what they do every day in practice. They’re not just going to come in and lay down.”

Godsey then stepped up again, sinking back-to-back baskets to spark a 10-0 run that made

it a 33-20 game on **Abbie Warren's** field goal with 5:24 left in the opening half – her first points of the season after missing time with an injury – as the Lady Saints came no closer than nine points the rest of the way.

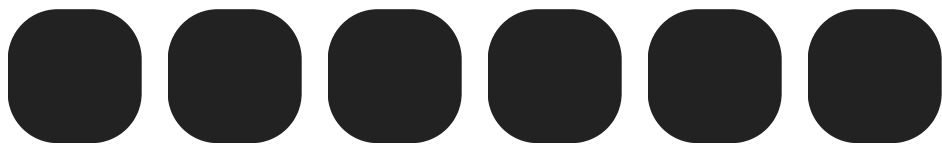
Overton, Mills and Godsey led Three Rivers with 16 points each, while Hower added 12. Overton pulled down 13 rebounds for a double-double, while Mills made a run at a triple-double with seven boards and eight assists.

The Lady Raiders are back in action Tuesday when they host Arkansas Baptist. Tipoff is set for 5 p.m. at the Bess Activity Center.

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Flannigan, Leopards Fall To Sacred Heart

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Flannigan, Leopards Fall To Sacred Heart

FAIRFIELD, Conn. - After a solid first twenty minutes, Sacred Heart took control of the game in the second half and held off Lafayette for an 84-79 victory at the Pitt Center. Jim Mower led all scorers with 24 points, but it wasn't enough as SHU shot 50 percent from the field in the contest.

The home side jumped out to a 22-14 lead after Louis Montes connected on a three pointer with 8:12 to play in the frame. Trailing by eight, Lafayette (4-6) strung together a 14-2 run over a 4:01 span, making the score 28-24 with three minutes to play before halftime. The spurt was capped by Mower's up and under reverse layup and the Leopards' took a 33-29 lead into the break.

In the second half Sacred Heart (6-6) scored eight of the first 10 points to take a 37-35 lead. At the 15:30 mark Joey Ptasinski sank a triple to put Lafayette back ahead by a point, but Sacred Heart answered with a three of its own, claiming the lead for good. SHU then extended its advantage to 11 points, 71-60, on Phil Gaetano's layup and free throw with 6:13 to play.

Lafayette would not go away, going on a 10-2 spurt in 3:06. Two Ryan Willen field goals, a Nick Petkovich three ball (playing with four fouls) and a Seth Hinrichs corner three pulled Lafayette within three (73-70) at the 3:07 point. SHU scored the next five, but Hinrichs drained another three-pointer, Rob Delaney made a free throw and then pulled up and hit a straightaway three with 1:05 showing to cut the deficit to 78-77.

On the next possession, Shane Gibson took the shot clock down to single digits and knocked down a three from the top of the key, effectively sealing the game. Gibson paced Sacred Heart with 22 points and collected seven rebounds as the Pioneers held a 37-30 advantage on the glass.

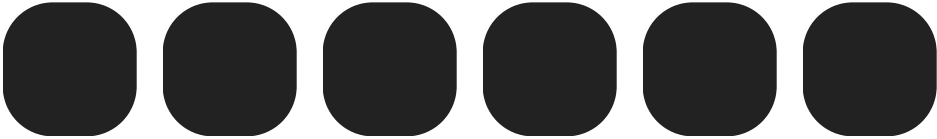
Hinrichs netted a new career-high, scoring 17 points while Willen and Delaney chipped in 12 and 10 points, respectively.

Dexter native Alan Flannigan got two defensive boards during his seven minutes in the game.

Lafayette continues its three game road swing when it travels to Vanderbilt on Dec. 21. Opening tip from Nashville, Tenn. is scheduled for 8 p.m. ET.

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