

Dualeh Fitting in Great With Panthers

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Sports Editor

When Awale Dualeh accepted Matt Davies' offer to play basketball at UPEI this season, he knew it would be different. But the transition hasn't been difficult for the fourth-year transfer from George Brown College in Ontario.

"There's been some challenges, but it's not a hard adjustment," says Dualeh. "It's different culture-wise, but the people are nice, so it's been easy to fit in."

Dualeh, a 6'8" forward from Toronto, has been a good option off the bench for the Panthers through seven games, averaging just over nine minutes and 3.1 points per game. That's not where his real value lies, though.

"I come off the bench and try to provide a spark by rebounding and blocking shots. I try to keep the team energized and do whatever I can to help."

Dualeh leads the Panthers with 0.57 blocks per game, good for eighth in the AUS, and sits fifth on the team with 2.4 rebounds.

Coach Davies said Dualeh has improved his game since coming to UPEI.

"Awale has worked hard at developing his ability to come from the helpside and alter shots," said Davies. "He needs to continue to emphasize boxing out and maximize his seven-foot wingspan to become a solid force on the glass for us."

Dualeh, who is working toward a business degree, said Davies' priorities and organization played a major role in his choice to come here.

"I like the way he coaches. He wants me to get my education as well as playing. I like that, so I came here. Everything's planned out well. We always have time to do things. We know what we'll be doing a month from now."

Dualeh says the Panthers have a

long way to go based on their 2-5 start to the season.

"We had a couple of bad games, but we're trying to pick it up. We had lots of chances to win, but we couldn't finish them. We're trying to change that. We have good chemistry. We work well together."

Dualeh says the team's other new recruits have helped balance out the scoring and made Sherone Edwards' job a lot easier.

"Brent's (MacLaren) a great

shooter. Coop's (Jonathan Cooper) been nice off the bench and (Jared) Budd made a big impact. It's better this way. If someone has an off day, someone else picks it up. And it takes the pressure off Sherone, which is good."

Much of that, says Dualeh, is due to the play of fifth-year forward Doug McKinney, who leads the Panthers with 17.1 points per game and is second behind Edwards with 7.4 rebounds.

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