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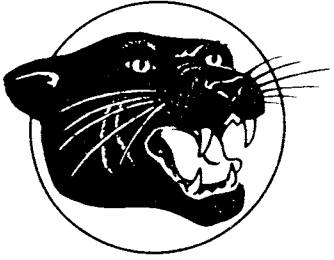
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Panther Sports News

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, Charleston, IL 61920

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Feb. 19, 1982
LS-AS-Hometowns

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--If Leigh Hankins's (South Beloit) basketball skills were graded solely on improvement, no question he'd get an A plus.

The 6-6 Eastern Illinois University senior is light years beyond the skills exhibited as an awkward walk-on freshman five years ago.

Prior to the start of the season, head coach Rick Samuels had said, "He's put on some weight so if he asserts himself around the basket, he could make a contribution . . . he just needs to realize his potential."

That he has done. He is the only Panther to start all 23 games, currently is averaging just under double figures (9.4) and leads in shooting percentage (54.5%), free throw percentage (72.9%) and rebounding (5.7).

Already this year he has doubled (217) his three year point totals (111), and accomplished this against NCAA Division I competition.

Hankins growth on the court coincided with Samuels' arrival as head coach in 1980. It was a new lease on his basketball life. "When a new coach comes it's likely to be wide open for everyone. My confidence and aggressiveness has improved . . . simply because Coach Samuels has played me a lot more."

His first two years here Hankins saw little playing time as veteran Panther units forged into their fifth and sixth straight tournament appearances in 1978 and 1979.

"I was fairly patient my first two years because we had a lot of depth on the front line . . . Coach Eddy (prior to Samuels) redshirted me my junior year and I wasn't too hot on that but it has worked out okay."

Definitely. He has scored in double figures 11 times this season, popped a high of 20 against Olivet Nazarene, 18 against Eastern Kentucky and combined for 26 in the Evansville Holiday Tournament against Murray State and Tennessee Tech.

EIU - Leigh Hankins
ADD 1

He had a high of 11 rebounds against Campbell University and 10 each against Howard, a Division I tournament participant last year, and East Carolina. His seven assists against Kent State ties Kevin Jones for a season single game high, also.

"I worked hard on my shooting last summer . . . for the first time I stayed down here instead of going home and that helped," Hankins explained.

"The facilities here are much better . . . there weren't that many around for pickup games but Kurt Lorenzen and I shot around on a regular basis."

"More playing time has played a major role in his improvement but he has worked hard," Samuels said. "It's rewarding to see someone progress as Leigh has this season."