

The Columbian

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Volcanoes struggle through improved IBL

Thursday, June 22, 2006

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Proof that bad can descend to worse: A year after going 4-18, the Vancouver Volcanoes are 4-19 heading into their final two games.

That gives the franchise an overall winning percentage of .178 in its two-year existence.

Kevin "Pip" Bloodsaw has been there through it all for the Volcanoes, and the 6-foot-5 wing said records can be misleading.

"It's better than last year," Bloodsaw said. "We just have a better team all around -- athletically, better shooters -- but our record doesn't indicate that. Every game, we compete, and teams have to play well to beat us. It's just frustrating that it doesn't show up in our record."

All involved say the International Basketball League is improved overall, so there is one reason for Vancouver's dismal record.

Another is the team's lack of size.

Former University of San Diego star Jason "Beau" Keep was expected to provide big things in the paint, but the 6-10, 280-pound center played in only three games for the Volcanoes, scoring 48 points.

Keep simply was too beat up after his professional season in Argentina to get it done in the up-tempo IBL, Volcanoes majority owner Mikal Duilio said.

"He was a disaster for us," Duilio said. "With this league, I don't care who you are, if you come in three-quarters, you're gonna get killed. And he got killed."

Vancouver has relied on a perimeter quintet of Bloodsaw (18.5 points per game), 6-2 Brad Lechtenberg (25.0 ppg, good for sixth in the IBL), 6-2 Chris Neal (16.3), 6-5 Porter Troupe (18.0), and 6-2 Alto Virgil (15.7).

"We look at it like we're a Phoenix (Suns)-type team," Bloodsaw said. "We try to beat everyone with our speed. But then you look at defense and rebounds, and unless you're red-hot, you're not gonna win a lot of games."

The Volcanoes haven't, and their average margin of defeat has been 15.6 points, including five losses of fewer than 10 points.

Vancouver has scored 126.1 points a game, and allowed 136.2 a game.

Co-owner Terrance Dickens -- who assumed most of the coaching duties after Dave Waldow and his staff were let go following the season opener -- said the Volcanoes don't pay players as much as other IBL teams, thereby hurting their chances at landing a prime big man. Duilio said that may have to change next year.

A success for Vancouver was the play of New Jersey native Virgil, who earned a professional contract overseas in England and recently left the Volcanoes.

"A few guys come through and use it as a steppingstone," Dickens said. "That's what this league is for."