

Collegians, not pros, the American Dream Team

Dream Team II beat the U.S. Goodwill Games team of collegians by 38 points on Sunday. Members of Dream Team II are predicting that they will win the World Championships in Toronto next week by an average of 40 points over every team they play.

Big deal. Seen it, lived it. Let's move on.

I'm tired of these Dream Teams already. Yes, we all know you're NBA All-Stars and the future of basketball as we know it, but watching teams get annihilated by 40 points every time gets old after a while. Show me something different.

We all sat and watched with amazement as the original Dream Teamers brought home the gold in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics with relative ease. There really is no need to have a Dream Team II; we got the point the first time. The United States has proved that it has the best basketball players in the world.

Big brother has already shown us it can be done. Now let's build up the collegiate ranks again to play for the United States.

To me, USA Basketball is a bunch of gritty, hard-nosed hoopers the world knows little about, yet who play with Amer-



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ican pride and determination. They play with emotion and excitement and their followers get to rise and fall with them through their trials.

The games are left unresolved until the closing minutes, while you're left sitting on the edge of your seat, screaming for defense. This emotional nervousness and fear leaves you standing in your living room filled with American pride and hope.

It is time to get back to the days where you play for your country first, before all others. The top collegians and recent draftees into the NBA should want to play for the United States. It should be seen as an honor and a privilege.

Professional teams should encourage their recent draftees to play USA Basketball and not place the fear of potential injury in their heads. Most injuries occur when playing out-of-shape, less talented players in

summer camps who are trying to exhibit skills they may or may not have to get NBA recognition.

In the World Championships, Goodwill Games or the Olympics, these potential NBA stars would be playing among the elite players of each country who are skilled at playing within a team concept.

If the NBA teams can take out insurance policies for rookies so they will come to their summer basketball camps, why can't they do the same for their rookies who are chosen to play USA Basketball? The experience would be better for the player and the exposure would be good for the players and their respective teams.

There just needs to be some incentive or encouragement for these players to be a member of a USA Basketball squad. Bill Russell missed his summer camp with the Boston Celtics his rookie year and it didn't seem to hurt his career.

I think the public would tune in and support an American team built of true collegiate stars and not just the leftovers.

Throw Glenn Robinson, Grant Hill and Jason Kidd into this past Goodwill Games squad. Just those three players could have made an enormous impact on how the medals were awarded.

The USA Basketball team, without those three superstars, still lost only one game in St. Petersburg. One game was the difference between contention for the gold medal and a need to

tice as before to make their squad much more cohesive and able to deal with their international counterparts.

More care should also be taken in determining who will

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have NBA players for the World Championships. The teams faced by both squads will be the same, so why not give the collegians a chance? Isn't that what America is for?

What USA Basketball needs also is more time together. The team is always going up against an older, more experienced squad that has spent a lot of time building up its team chemistry. Practice for the U.S. team usually does not begin until two weeks before a tournament.

Why is that? Coursework is finished for the summer by the second week in June and the tournaments are usually not until the fourth week in July or later. The U.S. team can easily fit in twice the amount of prac-

coach the USA Basketball squad and who will play for the U.S. team. A quality team begins with a head coach who knows how to get the job done and who is able to surround the USA Basketball team with quality individuals and players.

When all is said and done and these propositions have all been met, then the United States will have a true American squad. A team of hope, emotion and enthusiasm. A team of collegians doing what they do best for their country. A team that truly represents the American dream.

Kris Henry will be a sports reporter for the Emerald in the fall.

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