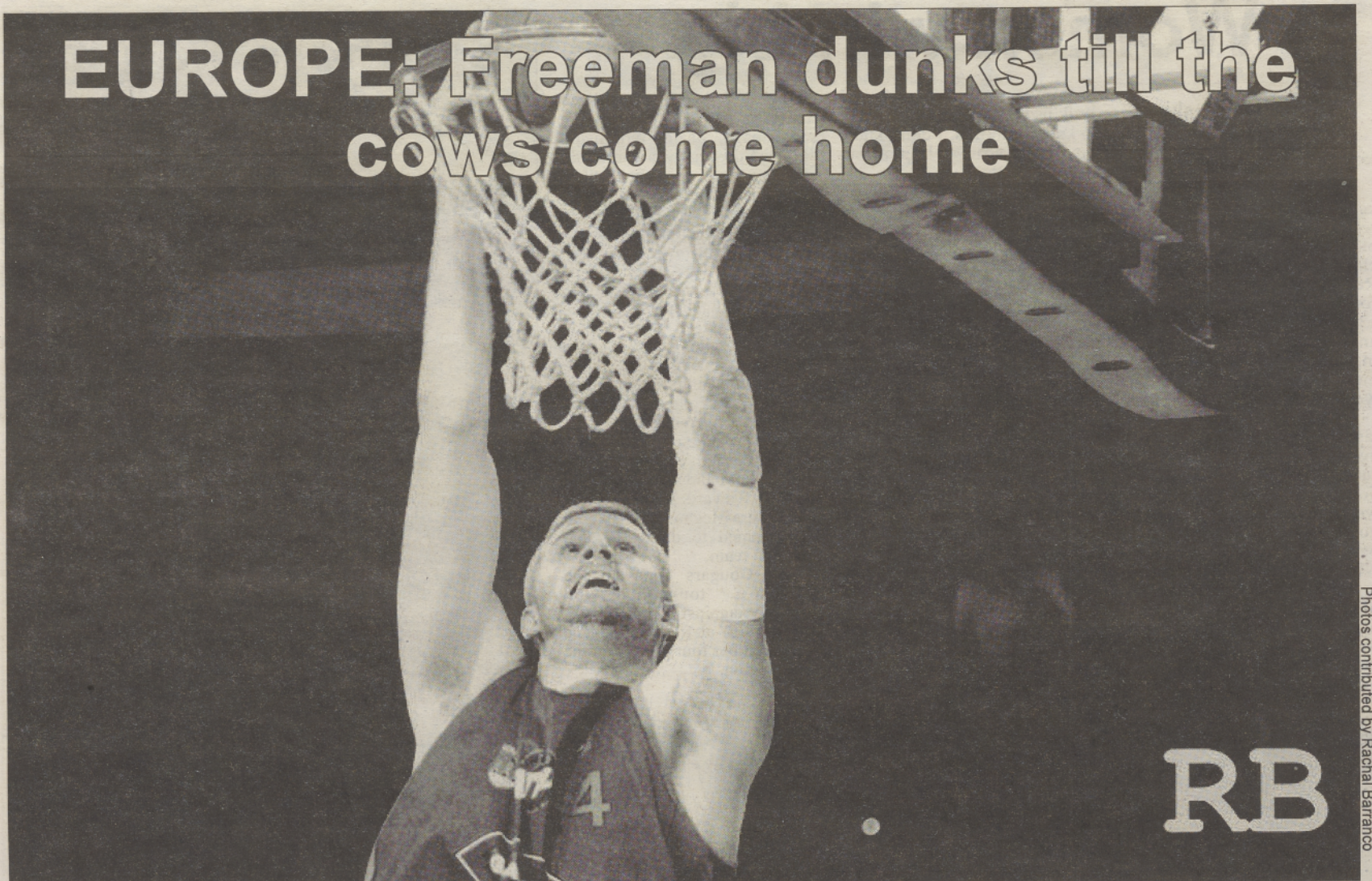


EUROPE: Freeman dunks till the cows come home



Photos contributed by Rachael Barranco

Former Cougar and MVP Brian Freeman shows his fierce prowess and skills as he slams one home while playing for the Lourdes, a pro basketball team in France.

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Freeman, 2007 Cougar alum, has played in Austria, Holland, Poland and France since leading Clackamas to the 2007 NWAACC Championship. Freeman, at 6-foot-10, 240 pound post player, was named MVP of the Southern Region and MVP of the NWAACC tournament that year. He had averaged 18 points and 14 rebounds per game.

Freeman's coach from West Albany High School, Everett Hartman, is really proud of his former player.

"Brian is not just a good basketball player; he is a quality young man. He was a late bloomer. When he played for me in high school, he probably didn't weigh 200 pounds," said Hartman. "But he was always working hard to get better. He is a great story about perseverance and hard work."

Freeman has dual citizenship (U.S. and Holland) and is currently playing for Lourdes in France.

"He's in France again this year," said Wegner. "Last year his team went 21-1 and he was named MVP."

Freeman stated in an email that his team is 40-4 over the past two seasons and he is very happy to be where he is, after a few ups and downs early in his career overseas.

"I was the MVP last year," stated

Freeman. "I'm having another very strong year this year. I think I have found a situation that is perfect for me and I will probably end up spending most of the rest of my career here."

Freeman's schedule for the past few years has him overseas from mid-August to mid-May playing with his team. He rarely gets free time during the season, but has taken advantage of Christmas breaks to travel in Italy, Spain and England.

"I do not travel after the season though," stated Freeman. "I usually go home immediately after our last game because by that time I'm missing my friends and family back in America and I want to get back as soon as I can."

Freeman is hoping he can play as long as his body will allow him to.

"I will just continue to stay out here and make money and gain experience for the future until either my body does not hold up anymore or something better comes along to keep me in the States," stated Freeman.

Kuebler, 2002 Clackamas alum, averaged 18 points per game at Hawaii as a senior. He attracted interest from the NBA coming out of college due to his 6-foot-5 frame and sweet outside shooting touch. Although Kuebler didn't make it

to the big show, he has carved out a successful career overseas for the past eight years.

"Michael Kuebler was a skinny little kid out of Salem that really nobody else recruited except for some smaller Division II and Division III schools," said Wegner. "We really liked the kid and when we got him here, I realized he was better than I even thought. He just got better and better. He was a phenomenal kid, a player of the year, a scholar athlete and he went on to have a great career at Hawaii."

Kuebler is currently playing for his fifth different team in Poland

after previously playing in Israel and Finland. Kuebler is averaging 6.7 points and 1.7 rebounds in 18 minutes per game for AZS Kozalin in Poland's top basketball league.

"He's had a great career overseas," said Wegner. "He's having a fabulous time and has a great contract. His team in Poland won the national championship last year."

Freeman shared a funny story about meeting Kuebler for the first time.

"We had never met before until we found out on a basketball court in Poland that we both happened to be from the Northwest," stated

Freeman. "Then we got to talking and it was funny who he turned out to be and that we had both played for Wegner at Clackamas."

They may not be household names or having million dollar shoe contracts, but these former Clackamas basketball players are having the experience of a lifetime as they live their dream of playing professional basketball. Hartman summed it up best when he told me what Freeman said to him last time he was home.

"He said, 'Coach, I'm single, I'm making good money and I'm living my dream,'" said Hartman.

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Brian Freeman shoots past an opponent as he blazes down the court. Freeman's run with the Lourdes ended with a record of 21-1 last year.