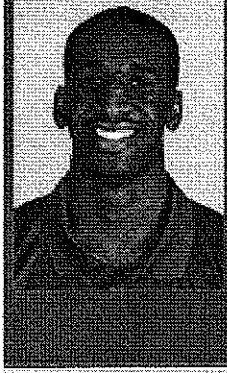




EKPE UDOH
BAYLOR

Ekpe Udoh

PROFILE



- ▶ **Class:**
Junior
- ▶ **Hometown:**
Edmond, Okla.
- ▶ **High School:**
Santa Fe HS
- ▶ **Last College:**
Michigan
- ▶ **Height / Weight:**
6-10 / 240
- ▶ **Position:**
F/C
- ▶ **Experience:**
TR

CAREER STATS (AT MICHIGAN)

Year	GP	GS	Min	Avg	FG	FGA	Pct	3FG	3A	Pct	FT	FTA	Pct	OR	DR	TR	Avg	PF	FO	Ast	TO	Blk	Stl	Pts	Avg
2006-07	35	7	710	20.3	76	162	.469	0	3	.000	24	41	.585	60	79	139	4.0	66	0	28	28	67	23	176	5.0
2007-08	32	24	832	26.0	76	174	.437	6	16	.375	33	56	.589	70	90	160	5.0	77	0	29	36	92	27	191	6.0

CAREER STATS (AT BAYLOR)

2009-10	36	36	1264	35.1	191	390	.490	7	26	.269	111	162	.685	129	222	351	9.8	87	2	97	87	133	29	500	13.9
Career	103	67	2806	27.2	343	726	.472	13	45	.289	168	259	.649	259	391	650	6.3	230	2	154	151	292	79	867	8.4

INTANGIBLES

Transferred to Baylor in June 2008 after spending two seasons at the University of Michigan • Born in Oklahoma but is of Nigerian descent • Full given name is Ekpedeme, which translates to 'Lion' • Pronunciation, first name: 'Epp-Ay,' last name: 'You-Doe' • Nickname is 'The Nightmare' • Wore No. 13 because his middle name is 'Friday'.

2009-10 [REDSHIRT JUNIOR]: BAYLOR

- All-American, third team (Yahoo! Sports)
- All-American, fourth team (FOXSports.com)
- All-American, honorable mention (AP)
- USBWA All-District VII
- NABC All-District 8, second team
- NCAA All-Tournament Team, South Regional
- All-Big 12, first team (Austin American-Statesman, Columbia [Mo.] Tribune, Waco Tribune-Herald)
- All-Big 12, second team (AP, Big 12 media, coaches, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Kansas City Star, San Antonio Express-News, Sporting News, The Oklahoman, Yahoo! Sports)
- Big 12 Newcomer of the Year (Austin American-Statesman, Big 12 media, coaches, Columbia [Mo.] Tribune, Dallas Morning News, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Kansas City Star, San Antonio Express-News, Waco Tribune-Herald, Yahoo! Sports)
- Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year (Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Sporting News)
- Big 12 All-Defense (Big 12 media, coaches, The Oklahoman)
- Big 12 All-Rookie (coaches)
- Big 12 All-Newcomer (Big 12 media, The Oklahoman)
- Phillips 66 Big 12 Rookie of the Week (Nov. 30)
- Phillips 66 Big 12 Co-Rookie of the Week (Jan. 4)
- Phillips 66 Big 12 Player of the Week (Jan. 11)
- Phillips 66 Big 12 Rookie of the Week (Feb. 15)

Enjoyed one of the most highly-decorated individual seasons in Baylor basketball history in his only season with the Bears • Declared his eligibility for 2010 NBA Draft on April 13, 2010 • Established Baylor and Big 12 Conference single-season blocked shots records with 133 rejections • All-American selection by three outlets - third team by Yahoo! Sports, fourth team by FOXSports.com and honorable mention by the AP • First-team All-Big 12 pick by three media outlets and second-team all-conference selection by league's coaches in addition to several media outlets • Named Big 12 Newcomer of the Year by coaches, Big 12 media and several media outlets • Tabbed to Big 12 All-Defensive and All-Rookie teams by league's coaches • Named to the NCAA South Regional All-Tournament Team after averaging 13.0 points and 10.5 rebounds in Houston • Named 2010 Big 12 Newcomer of the Year and second-team All-Big 12 after averaging 13.9 points, 9.8 rebounds, 3.7 blocks and 2.7 assists in 36 games • Became first Baylor player in the Big 12 named newcomer of the year and only third player in program history to garner top newcomer honors - Terry Teagle (1979) and Jerome Lambert (1994) were both named Southwest Conference Newcomer of the Year • His 3.69 blocks-per-game average ranks first all-time on Baylor's career list and second on the single-season chart • Posted team-best 16 double-doubles, while establishing career-best single-game and single-season marks in points, rebounding, assists and blocked shots • 351 rebounds rank fourth on Baylor's single-season rebounding list • Tallied six 20-point games, including career-best 25 vs. Texas (March 11) in quarterfinals of Phillips 66 Big 12 Men's Basketball Championship • Also posted 20 10-rebound games, 13 five-block games and 21 three-assist games • Finished the season ranked second on team with 97 assists - entered season with 57 career assists • Started season with eight consecutive games with 10+ points • Scored then-career-high 22 points, 16 rebounds and nine blocks Dec. 20 vs. UT Arlington • Pulled down career-high 20 rebounds in road win Jan. 2 at South Carolina • Two-plus blocks in 29 of 36 games and three or more blocked shots in 47 games

over career • Three game-winning shots - Nov. 15 vs. Hartford, Feb. 10 at Nebraska, Feb. 13 vs. Missouri • Recorded fifth triple-double in school history Jan. 6 vs. Morgan State with 18 points, 17 rebounds and career-high 10 blocked shots • Went for 23 points, seven rebounds and seven assists in Jan. 23 non-conference win vs. UMass • Had 25 points and eight rebounds in Big 12 Championship quarterfinal win vs. Texas (March 11) • Recorded 18 points, 11 rebounds in Big 12 semifinal loss to Kansas State (March 12) • Scored 20 points, grabbed 13 rebounds and dished out five assists in NCAA Tournament first-round win March 18 vs. Sam Houston State • Concluded season with 18 points, 10 rebounds, six assists and five assists in NCAA Elite Eight loss March 28 to Duke.

2008-09 [JUNIOR]: BAYLOR

Sat out the 2008-09 season to satisfy the NCAA's transfer policy to retain two seasons of eligibility.

2007-08 [SOPHOMORE]: MICHIGAN

Named to Big Ten All-Defensive Team • U-M's 2008 Wayman Britt Outstanding Defensive Player • Played in all 32 games with 24 starts, starting the final 24 games • Helped Michigan to a 10-22 record, winning five of its last 10 games of the season • Set the U-M sophomore season record with 92 blocks, which was also the second best single-season output by a Wolverine • Led the Big Ten in blocked shots (2.91) • Posted first career double-double with 14 points, 11 rebounds at Northwestern (Jan. 12) • Averaged 6.0 points, 5.0 rebounds, 0.9 assists, 0.8 steals and 2.9 blocks as a sophomore • Scored in doubles figures six times • Scored a career-high-tying 14 points at Northwestern after going 6-for-10 from the field and 2-for-2 from the free throw line • Collected 160 rebounds (5.0) - 70 offensive and 90 defensive • Had a career-high 11 rebounds at Northwestern • Had two double-digit rebound games - 11 at Northwestern and 10 at Duke • Collected a team-high 92 blocks (2.9) • Had at least one block in 29 of U-M's 32 games • Had 17 games with three or more blocks, with six games of five-plus blocks • Had 26 total multiple block games • Had a season-best six blocks, twice- against Penn State (Feb. 9) and against Ohio State (Feb. 17) • Shot 43.7 percent from the field (76-for-174), 37.5 percent on three point field goals (6-for-16) and 58.9 percent on free throws (33-for-56) • Sank first six three-point field goals of career • Made first collegiate three-pointer against Eastern Washington (Nov. 23) in the Great Alaska Shootout • Had a career-high six assists against Purdue (March 9) • Had a career-high four steals, two times - back-to-back games, against Ohio State and at Minnesota (Feb. 21) • Played in 26.0 minutes per game • Played a career-high 34 minutes at Northwestern.

2006-07 [FRESHMAN]: MICHIGAN

Played in all 35 games with seven starts • Started first collegiate game against Army (Dec. 28) • Started first career Big Ten game at Ohio State (Feb. 6) • Only freshman to play in all 35 games • Considered U-M's "Sixth-Man" • Helped Michigan to Postseason NIT second round, eliminated by Florida State (87-66) • Helped Michigan to a 22-13 record, its second straight 20-plus win season • Averaged 5.0 points, 4.0 rebounds and 1.9 blocks • Scored in double figures four times • Scored a career-high 14 points, two times - at Minnesota (Feb. 24) and at Ohio State (Feb. 6) • Had two other double figure scoring games - 11 points against Harvard (Nov. 17) and 10 points at N.C. State (Nov. 27) • Collected 139 rebounds (4.0) - 60 offensive and 79 defensive • Had a season-high eight rebounds against Delaware State (Dec. 9) • Had 21 games with four or more rebounds in a game • Collected a team-high 67 blocks (1.91) • Had at least one block in 27-of-35 games • Had eight games with three-or-more blocks • Had 22 total multiple block games • Had a career-high nine blocks against Army (Dec. 28), which was the second most in a single game by a Wolverine • Finished third in blocked shots in Big Ten with 1.91 per game • With his 67 blocks, helped the 2006-07 team set the U-M record for blocks in a season with 200 • Had season-best three assists at Ohio State • Had a season-high three steals at Illinois (Jan. 3) • Played in 20.3 minutes per game • Played in season-high 32 minutes, two times - at Illinois (Feb. 21) and at Ohio State.

HIGH SCHOOL

Oklahoma McDonald's All-State team (2006) • Class 6A All-State selection (2005, 2006) • Metro Conference Defensive Player of the Year (2005, 2006) • All-Metro Conference, first team (2005, 2006) • All-Edmond Basketball Team, first team (2005, 2006) • All-City, first team (2005, 2006) • Daily Oklahoman, first team (2005, 2006) • Texas/Oklahoma All-Star Game selection • For prep career, averaged 12.5 points, 10.5 rebounds and 3.0 blocks • Coached by Guy Hardaker at Edmond Santa Fe High School • hree-year starter • As a senior (2005-06), averaged 15.4 points, 9.5 rebounds, and 3.0 blocks • Had shoulder surgery Aug. 5, 2005 for torn muscle in right shoulder • Led Santa Fe to 21-6 record and No. 1 team ranking • Led Santa Fe to semifinal of Class 6A State Championship • As a junior (2004-05), averaged 11.0 points, 12.0 rebounds, and 3.0 blocks • Led Santa Fe to 25-4 record • Led Santa Fe to Class 6A State Championship • As a sophomore (2003-04), averaged 11.0 points, 10.0 rebounds, 3.0 blocks • Led Santa Fe to 20-6 record • Led Santa Fe to quarterfinal of Class 6A State Championships • As a freshman (2002-03), played freshman basketball for most of the season • Suited up for varsity basketball in January, did not play in the playoff rounds • Coached by Mitch Malone for AAU travel team, the Texas Blue Chips • Participated in 2005 Reebok ABCD Camp • Selected to Metroplex's All-AAU team summer of 2005.

PERSONAL

Full name is Ekpedeme Friday Udoh • Born May 20, 1987, in Edmond, Okla. • Son of Alice and Sam Udoh • Signed National Letter of Intent to play for Michigan, May 8, 2006 • Major is general studies.

Ekpe Udoh, Baylor -- 2010 NBA Draft Profile

Position: Power Forward / Center | **Height:** 6-10 | **Weight:** 240

Class: Junior | **Age:** 22 | **Hometown:** Edmond, OK

2009 Stats: 13.9 points | 9.8 rebounds | 3.7 blocks | 2.7 assists | Game Log

NBA Mock Draft Ranking: 11

Ekpe Udoh Scouting Report

Strengths: Nobody is riding the high of the NCAA Tournament more than Udoh right now. In leading Baylor to its first ever Elite Eight appearance (in the modern format) this March, Udoh established himself as a shot-blocking machine capable of disrupting any offensive attack with his quick strike leaping ability and frightening length. His 133 blocks this year set the all-time Big 12 single-season record, and we know how many good bigs have come out of that league. Udoh is also a vastly improved offensive player who plays well within the offense with great fluidity, and can even step away from the block and hit a mid-range jumper. With his back to the basket, he is pretty agile displaying decent post moves and a really quick first step. In addition to his defensive presence, he is a good candidate to play early in most systems given his atypical passing ability (nearly 3 assists per game) for a big man, both out of the paint and from the high post. Udoh is also a terrific rebounder who creates a horde of second chance opportunities because he is so active on the offensive glass, with almost 4 offensive boards per game.

Weaknesses: For a guy whose game is predicated below the free throw line, he often gets pushed around and doesn't always fight down low the way he needs to. He must add bulk, and given the fact that he'll have turned 23 by the draft, the potential to dramatically improve may not be there. Because he's still pretty thin, Udoh struggles with stronger players who body him up and force him away from the basket. This is a worry in the NBA where bulk and brute force is at the forefront of most big men. Udoh is also a bit turnover prone when trying to score, failing to evaluate the defense and read the floor a la DeMarcus Cousins.

Forecast: Think of Udoh as a much better Hakim Warrick; he won't ever be an All-Star, but in the right system he can be a valuable contributor as a starter or decorated reserve (a big man's James Posey?) With Carl Landry gone to Sacramento, Yao Ming coming off injury and fellow forwards Luis Scola and Chuck Hayes hardly shot-blocking threats, Udoh makes perfect sense in defensive-minded Houston. Even if the Rockets pass on him, the most he'll slip is into the late-teens. Udoh is a high energy guy already athletic and active enough to make a living off of put-backs and hustle points. His incredible length and intangibles will ultimately make him a very good pick in the middle of the first round.

INDYSTAR.COM

Udoh might be available for Pacers at No. 10

By Mike Wells

Posted: June 2, 2010

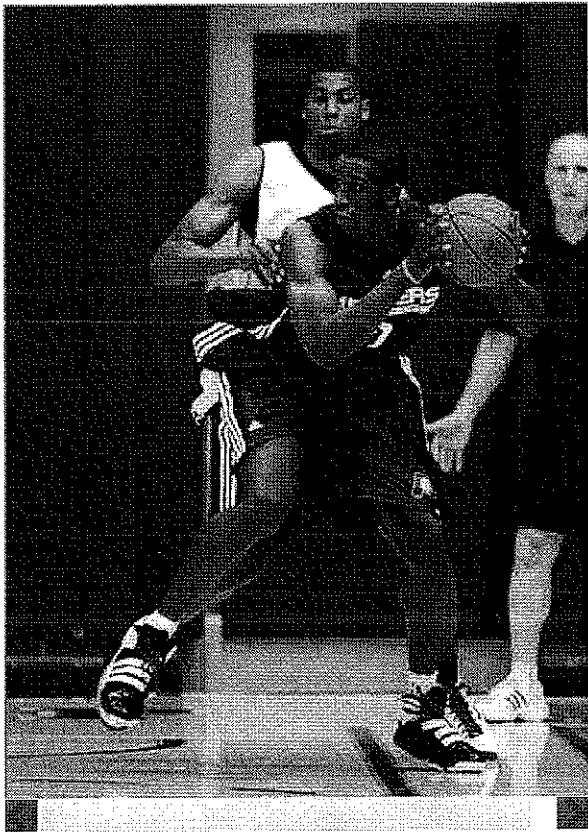
Ekpe Udoh isn't like a lot of the other high-end prospects in this year's NBA draft.

That's why Udoh didn't mind sitting out one season after transferring from Michigan after his sophomore season.

"I really wanted to give myself a year away so I could study the game even more," Udoh said Tuesday after working out for the Indiana Pacers at Conseco Fieldhouse. "I wanted to play in the right system and also be closer to home. Baylor chose me and I just worked hard in the offseason and it's paid off."

Udoh was the highest-rated player in Tuesday's workout. Some mock drafts have the Pacers selecting him with the No. 10 pick in the June 24 draft. He showed glimpses Tuesday against front-court players Derrick Caracter (Texas-El Paso), Daniel Orton (Kentucky) and Hassan Whiteside (Marshall), and guards Lance Stephenson (Cincinnati) and Chris Kramer (Purdue).

Whiteside led the nation in blocks at 5.7. Udoh was fifth at 3.7. Orton, a freshman,



That's showing them: Ekpe Udoh makes a move as Hassan Whiteside defends Tuesday during a workout for the Indiana Pacers. - Matt Kryger / The Star

He wasn't in a rush to leave Baylor.

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got scarce minutes at Kentucky but is viewed as a potential impact center in the NBA.

Not surprisingly, defense dominated the day. All three challenged shots in the paint, and all three had plenty of blocks.

"I'm a defensive guy that plays hard," Udoh said. "Just play hard. Everybody has game on this level. I just play hard and keep my motor always going."

Udoh (his name is pronounced EPP-ay YOU-doe) shot up the draft charts after averaging 13.9 points and 9.8 rebounds as a junior while helping lead the Bears to the Elite Eight of this year's NCAA Tournament.

The 6-10, 240-pound power forward said Baylor's run improved his stock. Udoh had two double-doubles and at least 10 rebounds in three of the four tournament games. He had 18 points, 10 rebounds, six assists and five blocks in Baylor's loss to Duke. The blocks, assists and rebounds were game highs.

"It let a lot of people see what was going on in Waco, Texas," he said. "What we did was seize the moment on that stage. Playing well on that stage was a plus, too."

Power forward is a position in flux for the Pacers.

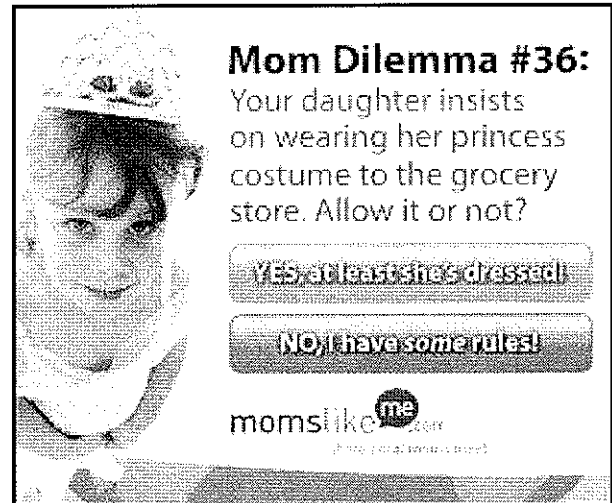
Troy Murphy has averaged a double-double each of the past two seasons and is a contributor in coach Jim O'Brien's perimeter offense. But the Pacers expect

to dangle his expiring contract as trade bait this summer. The verdict is still out on Tyler Hansbrough, whose rookie season was limited to 29 games because of an inner ear infection. Josh McRoberts has had a difficult time winning O'Brien's complete trust.

The Pacers have to get more athletic and add players who care more about defending than scoring.


That's where Udoh could fit in.

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Ekpe Udoh: "The year off made me realize how much I loved the game"

What do you think was the key in your improvement from your last year at Michigan to this season at Baylor?

Ekpe Udoh: Really working hard. That year I took off, I wasn't taking things for granted. With the coaching staff, we really hit it hard.

That year when you were not playing in actual games... How did you deal with that?

EU: It was tough. You really had to stay focused. I just realized how much I loved the game. You always love the game, but sometimes you don't cherish it as much. So that year off... I realized this was my business.

What was the feeling when you were able to play in a real game for the first time with Baylor after one year?

EU: I was a little nervous, but my teammates did a really good job with me. Our chemistry was very strong... It was a great time.

You went through the interviews with teams in Chicago during the draft combine. What was the strangest question you had to answer?

EU: Strangest question? One GM asked me, "Do you hate to lose or do you want to win?" He said, "You have to think about it." That was in my mind for a little bit. It's a little bit in my mind now.

But what did you answer?

EU: Hate to lose.

What was the atmosphere like among players at the draft combine? Are you able to make friends in that context or is it too competitive of an environment for that?

EU: Everybody was cool and having a good time. Really enjoying the experience and taking it in. That's something you only do one time. It was a blast, a priceless experience.

What do you think you will have to prove in the workouts leading up to the draft?

EU: That I'm a hard worker. Everybody probably knows already that I'm a hard worker, but just really show it. Show my hustle and being able to shoot the ball well.

Which teams are you going to work out for?

EU: I had a workout in Houston. I'm going to Indiana, then I have the Raptors. Then a West Coast swing with Golden State, Sacramento and the Clippers. Then I have Utah, Minnesota, New Orleans, Memphis, Oklahoma and Detroit.

Are you feeling nervous or anxious about it?

EU: A little bit, but I'm ready for it. It's what we do. We play the game of basketball and that's what I love. It's a good opportunity to go out and show what I can do.

What is the key to being a great shot blocker?

EU: Timing. You can be athletic, but if you don't have the timing it's not going to work out. Timing is the biggest aspect.

What type of player do you think you will be in the NBA? Do you think you're going to be a defensive specialist?

EU: Yeah, my main thing is playing defense. That's what I love to do. I love to play defense. Offense is always going to be a work in progress. I'll keep working on it.

Since you are already 23, you know some people talk about how you don't have as much upside as other players in the draft. What do you think when you hear that?

EU: I'm old, but we still play the game the same. Upside or not, it's about what you do.

If you read or listen to the Detroit media, it seems like they are in love with you there. How do you feel about the Pistons?

EU: The Pistons are a great team. They had some injuries, but I think they are going to come back because Dumars does a great job with that team.

Your parents are from Nigeria. Have you ever been there?

EU: I have been there once. It was nice, but it was different. You have to appreciate what you have in America because in other countries, it's just not the same. They are not as fortunate.

Celtics or Lakers... Who's winning the title?

EU: (Laughs) Oh man, that is tough! You know, I'm neutral. I'm not going to pick anybody. I don't want to go against the Black Mamba, but the Celtics are playing great basketball right now.



Posted: May 21, 2010

Ekpe Udoh grew as player after leaving Michigan for Baylor

BY VINCE ELLIS
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER

CHICAGO -- Michigan fans might have been stunned when they turned on the television during the NCAA tournament.

They saw this 6-foot-10, 237-pound power forward from Baylor with a versatile game become a matchup nightmare as the Bears rolled all the way to the Elite Eight, where they lost a close game to eventual national champion Duke.

That guy looked an awful lot like this guy named Ekpe Udoh, who for two seasons with the Wolverines was basically just a shot blocker wrapped in a thin, tall frame.

What folks saw on television was the result of work that Udoh put in during the year he sat out after transferring from U-M after the 2007-08 season because of NCAA rules.

But there's one guy who isn't surprised that Udoh has improved by leaps and bounds -- so much so that there's a good chance he will be among the first 10 players called during next month's NBA draft, which makes him definitely in play for the Pistons, who have the seventh pick.

Michigan guard Manny Harris, who was with his old teammate at the predraft combine Thursday, said he saw that guy all the time.

"The stuff I was watching, I don't know if people were just starting to see what he could do, but he always had it," said Harris, who played one season with Udoh. "The fact that he was facing up ... doing moves off the dribble and not just

playing with his back against the basket was good to see.

"He just felt so comfortable and free out there."

Udoh left U-M after playing one season under John Beilein, who replaced Tommy Amaker before the 2007-08 season. He was complimentary of Beilein's basketball knowledge, calling him a "genius," but he was looking for a place that was a better fit.

So he moved to Baylor and coach Scott Drew, where he had to endure a tough year on the sidelines.

"The year I had to sit out, I really started to appreciate the game even more," Udoh said. "I studied it more. I just fell in love with it.

"Sometimes you fall in love with something and sometimes you kind of get away from it, so that year really helped me for full perspective."

[Page 2 of 2]

Udoh didn't wallow in his sorrows. Working under Baylor assistant Matthew Driscoll (now the head coach at North Florida), Udoh's game blossomed.

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When he returned to the court, it showed. He averaged six points per game during his sophomore season at Michigan. That improved to 13.9 points for the Bears.

Udoh admits his offensive game is still developing. It's at the defensive end that he's NBA-ready. His 133 blocked shots this season set a Big 12 record, and Udoh has that rare ability to guard multiple positions.

That isn't surprising considering the emphasis Udoh places on defense.

"It's something I have to work on, but I can hold my hat on defense," Udoh said. "You can always improve, but I love to play defense."

As far as a move back to the Detroit area, Udoh would be cool with it. His cell phone still has a 734 area code and he has many friends locally.

"It's like a second home," said Udoh, who had a interview scheduled with the Pistons later Thursday and has a workout planned for the Auburn Hills practice facility. "I've built a base there. It would be great. It'd be a great opportunity to come in and play as a team and win games."

Contact VINCE ELLIS: 313-222-6479 or vellis@freepress.com. Read more in his Pistons blog at freep.com/pistonsblog.


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Defensive improvement keys Baylor men's basketball team's early success

By John Werner/Tribune-Herald staff writer

Thursday, December 03, 2009

For the last few seasons, Baylor won games with a turbocharged offense that flew past defenses.

With one of the deepest backcourts in the Big 12, the Bears let their scoring do most of the talking.

This year's team has a much different look: The Bears are taller, more balanced and better defensively.

BAYLOR at ARIZONA STATE

Tipoff: 9:30 p.m., Wells Fargo Arena in Tempe, Ariz.

TV: 9:30 p.m., Fox Sports Southwest

Radio: KRZI-AM 1660

Records: Baylor 6-1, Arizona State 6-1

Series: Tied 2-2

Last meeting: Baylor, 87-78 (2008, in Anaheim, Calif.)

The new-look Bears are off to a 6-1 start heading into tonight's game against Arizona State at 9:30 in Tempe, Ariz., as part of the Big 12/Pac-10 Hardwood Series.

With junior transfer forward Ekpe Udoh leading the way, the Bears might have their best defensive team in coach Scott Drew's seven seasons.

"Ekpe makes everybody better," Baylor center Josh Lomers said. "He's an amazing offensive and defensive player. We're longer inside, and if a player gets around our guards, they have a tough time getting the ball over us. But our guards have also done a good job of keeping people out of the paint."

With 25 blocked shots in seven games, the 6-10 Udoh is Baylor's most feared defensive presence since center Brian Skinner in the late 1990s. He's also a ferocious rebounder with a team-high 9.3 per game, and has been a surprisingly powerful offensive force with 15.4 points per game.

Udoh's defensive numbers are no surprise since he made the all-Big Ten defensive team as a sophomore at Michigan in 2007-08 before redshirting at Baylor last year.

"I've always loved playing defense," Udoh said. "I like to play a high energy, physical game."

The Bears have limited opponents to 34.9 percent shooting and have controlled the boards by a 44.3 to 31.6 margin. In their final game in the Old Spice Classic, the Bears held perennial power Xavier to 37.7 percent shooting in a 69-64 win Sunday.

While Udoh has clearly been Baylor's defensive leader, several other players have made an impact. Sophomore forward Anthony Jones is averaging 6.4 boards, while sophomore forward Quincy Acy is averaging 5.4. Led by freshman guard A.J. Walton with 16 steals, the Bears have collected 44 as a team.

"The guys in the middle are a whole lot better this year," Baylor guard Tweety Carter said. "The bigs always tell us (the guards), 'Don't foul them because we're there for you.' We're there for each other and go to war together."

The Bears will need another strong defensive effort to beat an Arizona State team that's off to a 6-1 start behind an offense that's shooting 52.5 percent and a defense that's limited opponents to 36.1 percent. The Sun Devils' only loss this season was a 64-53 decision against Duke on Nov. 25.

Guard Derek Glasser leads the Sun Devils with a 12.3 scoring average, while 6-10 center Eric Boateng is averaging 12 points. Forward Rihards Kuksiks is close behind with an 11.7 scoring average, while guard Trent Lockett is averaging 10.6.

Behind a 27-point outburst by LaceDarius Dunn, the Bears knocked off the Sun Devils, 87-78, last season in the 76 Classic in Anaheim, Calif. Baylor withstood a 32-point performance by guard James Harden, who is now playing for the NBA's Oklahoma City Thunder.

"They're like us in that they lost a lot of players last season," Drew said. "But they're obviously not down. Their returning guys have stepped up into their roles and their new guys have brought athleticism to the team. They lead the Pac-10 in defense, take care of the ball and take high-percentage shots. They like to work the clock, so they'll test us on the defensive end."

Baylor's Ekpe Udoh having a devil of a time

Rising Bears face Duke with a spot in the Final Four on the line.

NCAA TOURNAMENT

March 27, 2010

By Chris Hine/Los Angeles Times

Reporting from Houston — Mention Duke or Coach K to Baylor's Ekpe Udoh, and a broad, awestruck smile comes across his face.

"Coach K, man, I probably would have gone to Duke," Udoh said Saturday. "I just admire that man. He's a legend. Any time I'm in the same building I would like to shake his hand, just for what he has done for the game."

In fact, in 2008, when Udoh was transferring from Michigan, Duke Coach Mike Krzyzewski said the Blue Devils had interest in luring him, but Udoh said his desire to move close to his home in Edmond, Okla., led him to Baylor.

But, he added, "If I just would have opened it up, I probably would have been a Blue Devil."

Instead, third-seeded Baylor (28-7) and Udoh will square off Sunday in the NCAA tournament's South Regional against top-seeded Duke (32-5) with a trip to the Final Four on the line.

This level of success is something new for Baylor, and especially for the wide-eyed, 6-foot-10 junior who is taking the time to relish every detail of the Bears' run — from the police escorts, to riding around the stadium in golf carts and even getting his own interview table.

"I think the program has arrived and people are starting to see us as a national program now," Udoh said.

It also has been a heck of a year for Udoh, who has transformed himself from a transfer trying to find his niche to one of the best players in the country — and someone who has caught the attention of NBA scouts.

Udoh has a good relationship with former Michigan coach Tommy Amaker and decided to transfer after spending one year under current Michigan Coach John Beilein.

Udoh already had a reputation for being a solid defensive player, but while he sat out a season per NCAA rules, he molded his offensive skills with former Baylor assistant Matthew Driscoll. That aspect of his game surprised Krzyzewski when he watched Udoh (who averages 13.8 points a game) on film.

But then there's Udoh's meal ticket, his defense, specifically his propensity to block and influence shots. Udoh was tops in the Big 12 Conference this season and fifth in the country with 3.7 blocks per game.

"It's mainly timing," Udoh said. "At some point in your career, it has to become an art, something you truly love to do."

Udoh's favorite type of blocked shot is one where he can surprise his victim. Maybe he is driving the baseline, and doesn't see Udoh coming out of the corner of his eye, or maybe he's on a fastbreak and has to look to see if Udoh is on his trail.

"That's what I have on other people," Udoh said. "I just try to alter the game in different facets."

But Sunday, he isn't going to sneak up on Duke.

"He's one of the better players in the country and I can see why he's rated so high in the NBA," Krzyzewski said.