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TOP STORY

WKU MEN'S BASKETBALL

Hilltoppers' Anderson working this offseason on playing PG

Stansbury: Position allows sophomore to 'play to his strengths'

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Western Kentucky Hilltoppers guard Josh Anderson (4) drives past UAB Blazers forward Lewis Sullivan (23) during WKU's 98-70 win over UAB on Thursday, March 8, 2018, at The Ford Center at The Star. (Austin Anthony / photo@bgdailynews.com)

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Rick Stansbury wants Josh Anderson playing to his strengths, even if that means playing a different position.

“What if I told you we were going to make (Anderson) a point guard?” the Western Kentucky coach said Thursday night at Indian Hills Country Club. “We’re going to make him one and we’re going to make him special.

“You know how quick he is with the ball when he’s on that wing. What if he’s got the ball in his hands coming down the court all the time? That ball speeds you up.”

Anderson played off the ball on the wing last season as a freshman for the Hilltoppers. He figures to see more time at point guard this season, adding to a rotation that includes redshirt senior Lamonte Bearden and freshman Jeremiah Gambrell.

It's not a role with which Anderson is totally unfamiliar. He played the point his senior year at Madison Prep Academy in Baton Rouge, La., helping his team in 2016-17 to a third straight state championship.

The 6-foot-6 guard averaged 7.4 points, 2.5 rebounds and 0.7 assists in 23 games last season. He missed WKU's first 15 games of the year while the NCAA reviewed his high school academics.

Anderson was at his best as a freshman when the ball was in his hands. He has a quick first step to get past defenders and tremendous leaping ability near the rim, as evidenced by some highlight reel dunks he threw down in his debut season.

As a point guard, Anderson could drive toward the basket and either score or kick the ball to open shooters.

Anderson may not be a traditional point guard, Stansbury said, but his skill set fits the modern game.

"Now he's in the center third of the court instead of the outer third of the court where he's so much harder to defend," Stansbury said. "... Point guards nowadays are those guys who can create, who can get to the rim."





Anderson is a guard “who’s a good passer and a willing passer,” Stansbury said. Those skills will be important for the 2018-19 Toppers in replacing the team’s leading assist man from last season, Darius Thompson (4.8 apg).

Anderson’s 6-6 frame also gives him length in defending other teams’ ball handlers, Stansbury said.

Going into his sophomore season, Anderson has spent time in the weight room bulking up. He played last season at 180 pounds and has added about 10 pounds so far this offseason.

Anderson shot 55.3 percent from the field last season, with most of those shot attempts coming near the rim. He struggled as a jump shooter and was 1-of-7 from 3-point range.

“He’ll never be a great shooter,” Stansbury said. “That’s OK as long as he knows that.

“Think about this, what’s his strength? Getting to that rim. If we can reverse that role a little bit, get him off that wing, put him at point guard, what is he doing every trip? Playing to his strength.”

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