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Stutz stands out in Shockers' CBE Classic win

By RANDY COVITZ
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A night earlier, Wichita State center Garrett Stutz stood in the rear of an interview room and overheard coach Gregg Marshall expressing disappointment with his play.

Stutz wasn't scoring. He wasn't rebounding. He wasn't contributing.

That all changed Tuesday night at the Sprint Center.

Stutz, a 7-foot sophomore from North Kansas City High School, dominated an overmatched Iowa front line with a brilliant performance that sparked Wichita State to a 74-57 victory in the consolation game of the CBE Classic.

Stutz scored 10 consecutive points — on a slam dunk, a three-pointer, a turnaround jumper and another three-pointer — in a span of 3 minutes, 15 seconds that keyed a 13-2 run by the Shockers.

He hit his first five shots and seven of eight shots, to go with five rebounds and a hustle steal for 16 points in the first half. That matched the total points Stutz scored in the first three games of the season for the Shockers, 3-1.

"That's as good a half as Garrett has ever played for us," Marshall gushed. "He's been struggling. I was asked about him (Monday night) and said he needed to do more. But Garrett Stutz is a tremendous young man. He's a role model for a lot of people, including my son.

"To see him, in his hometown, have that kind of half ... It's hard to play better."

Stutz finished with 18 points and shared top scoring honors with guard Toure Murry. Murry benefited from the return to the lineup of point guard Clevin Hannah, who missed the first three games of the season because of an NCAA ruling.

Stutz's 18 points were the second-best output of his career, ranking behind a 22-point performance in the third game of last season against Centenary.

"He challenged me," Stutz said of Marshall's comments after the Shockers' first-round loss to Pitt, when Stutz made one shot in five attempts. "I knew I had a pretty poor performance, so I knew I had to step it up. I'm not a freshman anymore, I have to start playing, and I was glad I could perform well in front of a home crowd."

Stutz entered the game with the Shockers trailing 12-10. After his 10-point flurry, the Shockers led 22-14.

"Coach lets me shoot the threes," said Stutz, who has just 248 pounds on his 7-foot frame. "I have the green light. I was a little worried about the second one, it was a little bit forced, and a little too long, but I'm glad it went in or I probably would have been on the bench pretty quick. The ball bounced my way a couple of times."

Stutz's best play of the game was not a shot but a diving steal and save of the ball in front of the Wichita State bench that ended with Demetric Williams knocking down a deep three for a 40-29 lead.

"He hasn't made plays like that in his career," Marshall said.

The Hawkeyes, 1-4, could never recover from the energy provided by Stutz, playmaking by Hannah (six assists, one turnover) and shooting by Murry and guard Graham Hatch, who scored 14.

"We knew he could shoot," Iowa coach Todd Lickliter said of Stutz. "He has good size, we tried to fight around him ... but he kept getting wide open."

When Stutz came off the floor with 1:14 to play, he was greeted by a loud ovation from about 2,500 black-and-gold clad Wichita State fans who made the trip to Kansas City.

"It's nice having the support the Shockers have," Stutz said, "and being in Kansas City, I had a lot of friends and family who here, so I was glad to have a good game."

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