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## Duke tall task for Marquette

Young Golden Eagles unbeaten, but facing nation's No. 1 team daunting

November 21, 2010 | By Shannon Ryan, Tribune reporter



Jeffrey Phelps, Associated Press

There's plenty Marquette coach Buzz Williams likes about his team: the way the young players have handled responsibility, the intensity at which they play and the way the team has started the season without a loss.

But facing No. 1 Duke? Those aforementioned qualities might not be enough.

"We've thrown a lot at our guys," Williams said. "The intention of their heart is in the right place. ... I'm not sure if we're ready to play the No. 1 team in the country."

The Golden Eagles (4-0) face the Blue Devils (3-0) on Monday at the CBE Classic in Kansas City, Mo.. The Classic features a night game between No. 3 Kansas State (3-0) and No. 11 Gonzaga (2-1), with the winners and losers of each game facing off on Tuesday night.

The talent in this tournament is so robust that 43 NBA scouts are expected at the Sprint Center to see some of the nation's best players such as Duke's Kyle Singler and guard Nolan Smith, and Kansas State's Jacob Pullen, a Maywood native from Proviso East.

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Gonzaga forward Elias Harris suffered a foot injury in the Bulldogs' loss to No. 25 San Diego State and may be unavailable for Monday's game.

For Duke, and really for much of college basketball, Singler is the headliner. The forward, who averages 14 points per game, passed up jumping to the NBA for a chance to defend Duke's NCAA title.

Point guard Smith averages a team-high 16 points and 7.3 assists per game, while standout freshman Kyrie Irving averages 14.3 points and 6.7 assists.

"They can kill you a lot of different ways," Williams said. "I just think they're talented at every position. Their style of play is different than in the past but it fits their personnel perfectly. You can't just key in on one or two guys."

The Golden Eagles' record against No. 1 teams isn't exemplary; they're just 1-6 all-time against top-ranked opponents. Marquette did defeat No. 1 Kentucky in the NCAA tournament to earn a trip to the 2003 Final Four.

Marquette's trademark defense hasn't changed over the years, according to Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski.

"We know they're going to play as hard as anybody," he said.

Marquette started the season boasting the most height it has had in years.

Before beating South Dakota on Saturday, Williams revealed that senior forward Joe Fulce will miss at least a few weeks with a left knee injury. During the game, freshman forward Davante Gardner, who's averaging 13 points per game, left with a left shoulder injury.

Neither are starters, but it erases some of the needed depth.

Senior forward Jimmy Butler, who averages 15.5 points per game, may have to take on even more leadership to head a group of young players.

Freshman Vander Blue starts and averages nine points per game, while transfer Jae Crowder comes off the bench to lead the

team in rebounding with 8.3 per game.

Sophomore center Chris Otule, who missed most of last season with a foot injury, had a career day against South Dakota with 15 points and eight rebounds.

"We've got a lot of new guys but we have a lot of guys who have a distinct role who haven't had that in the past," Williams said.

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