NBA D-League Tryouts - Fort Wayne Mad Ants

Los Angeles, CA

10/11/14

Top Prospects:

**Troy Payne** (#68) – 6’7”, Santa Clara, age 26

Troy is a physical wing specimen who may even be able to play some ‘space 4’ in the D-League (jumper is solid). He showed great passing from the high post as well as outlet passes downcourt. He also showed impressive ball-handling (crossovers, spin moves), though turned it over a few times on baseline. I wonder if he is playing at a slightly higher weight than he is used to, causing the unforced turnovers (not necessarily body fat, as he looked in great shape). A long D-League season may see him slim down to a more natural playing weight. Definitely worth a training camp invite to complete a roster already filled with scorers. Defensively, he more than held his own.

(comparison: a less athletic, right-handed Xavier Henry)

**Dallas Hunter** (#70) - 6’5”, TCU, age 27

By far the most explosive player at this tryout, Dallas can elevate quickly/easily and uses both hands around the rim. Jumper is decent. However, I was surprised to see he is already 27. He appeared raw to me in many of the drills, as if he was a young prospect in need of more coaching/seasoning. Unfortunately for Hunter, the NBA and D-League is full of 6’5” raw athletes with great explosion. Perhaps he simply lowered his play to the level of competition at this tryout and may be worth a training camp invite to compete against D-League regulars. He also appeared to be good a ‘chemistry guy’, positively directing traffic with some of his teammates who were clearly in over their heads today.

(comparison: Gerald Green/Shannon Brown).

The Bigs:

(While Faines showed better in drills (both in ability and in motor) Ekanem clearly outplayed him in scrimmage.)

**Ephraim Ekanem** (#90) – 6’7” (plays bigger than height), Northern Arizona, age 23

‘E’ possesses good strength down low and a good knack for grabbing rebounds. However, he did shuffle his feet numerous times on the block. His outside shot is a painfully looking side-spinning one, though he did make his free throws today. Size is E’s biggest problem – he dominated inside at this tryout but may struggle against length at the next level. While he has a good wingspan, he lacks in explosion. Ekanem may be worth bringing to camp as a ‘garbage big’ who crashes the boards (though his motor may be a question).

(comparison: Malik Rose, minus jumper)

**Wendell Faines** (#97) – 6’8” (plays smaller than height), Idaho, age 25

Conditioning appears to be Wendell’s biggest problem, as his level of play clearly dipped as the day went on. He was great in the drills, showing good touch both on the block and from the perimeter (nice perimeter shot). In the scrimmage, however, his quickness and effectiveness faded. Before it began, he stood at halfcourt and created a puddle of sweat that took 5 minutes to clean up (a sign of his conditioning). He did, though, appear to be a good teammate and continued to show his high motor from earlier. Wendell is a great communicator on the court, especially on defense.

(comparison: VERY poor man’s Carlos Boozer)

*\* While both bigs played well against each other, had Alfred Aboya participated today as scheduled I think both would have struggled against his athleticism.*

Lower Level Prospects: (fresh out of school)

**James Tillman** (#88) – 6’6” Cal State Los Angeles

By far the most frustrating player of the day. An early ‘eyeball’ test told me to expect big things from James, but they never came. He floated through both the drills and the scrimmage as if he was saving energy for a game later that day. Possessing great size and length for a pro wing, Tillman was playing the four-spot in scrimmage which may have affected his aggression. I briefly put him in the game at C to maybe attack the opposite ‘big’ in transition. He ended up settling for a jumper. He also lacked explosion, getting the ball inside a few times and shooting a half-hearted lay-up that would’ve likely been blocked by higher quality bigs.

(comparison: N/A)

**Joshua Gouch** – (#75) – 6’5”, Cal State San Bernardino

He really got into guys on the perimeter in scrimmage. I see serious defensive potential in Josh, both on the ball and anticipating off the weakside. I don’t know if that’ll be enough to warrant a D-League career, however. As a youngster, I expect to be coaching him (or against him) soon in the ABA. Josh possesses a great attitude and defensive motor.

(comparison: I see some Avery Bradley in him)

**Van Girard** (#31) – 6’4”, Cal State Dominguez Hills, age 25

Van has good size and strength for the SG spot. I don’t know if he has the handle or the consistent perimeter shot to play at the D-League level. Quickness also may be lacking. His best option may be in the ABA or playing overseas in a lower league.

(comparison: Anthony Johnson)

Future PG Prospects:

**AJ Harris** (#2) 6’2” – While this height measurement is very generous, AJ did show well today in scrimmage. He was able to get to the basket rather easily. However, on two occasions, he settled for a 25 ftr behind PnR rather than use the screen. He may have wanted to show his range to scouts, however he missed both times. Harris may be worth a look down the road, but it appears his quickness/speed isn’t good enough to counter what he gives up in size.

**Josh Gordon** (#45) 6’1” – another guard who looked impressive going to the basket in drills, Josh was a non-factor during scrimmage. I’m curious to see how/if he develops.

Worth Mentioning:

**Howard Douglas** (#20) 6’3” – another generous height listing here, Douglas is an undersized 2/3. However, has a great body to play PG. If he can hone some of his ball-handling and playmaking skills there may be hope for him at a higher level. Currently plays in the ABA.

**Deshaun Gomez** (#74) 5’10” – this height listing is dead on. DeShaun is crafty, savvy, and a great leader. However, his small stature and inconsistent jumpshot make it hard to invite to a D-League training camp. He also currently plays in the ABA.