

## PACIFIC BASKETBALL

### GUARD NOT SHORT ON SKILLS

By **Bob Highfill**

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STOCKTON - A strong frame.

The ability to lock down an opponent defensively, jump and rebound, and drive to the basket.

Aaron Short has a dynamic, exciting set of skills on the basketball court. He has looked good in practice and open gym this summer, but Pacific coach Ron Verlin doesn't really know what he has in the 6-foot-3, 221-pound junior guard out of Reno, who transferred from Cabrillo College but missed the entire 2012-13 season with a broken bone in his right foot.

"I see him as both, a shooting guard and small forward," said Verlin, the Tigers' first-year head coach after 19 seasons as an assistant under Bob Thomason, who retired after 25 years. "He brings athleticism, quickness, toughness, strength. He's kind of an unknown quantity because he sat out last year."

In general, the Tigers' backcourt is an unknown quantity and by far the position group Verlin and associate head coach Adam Jacobsen will ponder the most before the start of the regular season in November.

Not yet a great shooter, a skill Verlin wants Short to work on while he's home in Reno for vacation the next five weeks, Short can play the off-guard spot and use his strength to attack the basket off the dribble or as an offensive rebounder - he averaged nearly nine rebounds per game his sophomore year at Cabrillo for former Pacific assistant Tony Marcopulos.

"He's so strong and so quick off his feet and he's got great timing and great hands and all the physical attributes you'd want," said Marcopulos, who has coached at Cabrillo since 2000 after spending 11 seasons at Pacific. "But more than anything, he wants the ball. That's half the battle right there."

"When you combine want-to and athletic ability and teach some technique, you get nine rebounds a game."

Short might not yet possess the ball-handling skills to run the point, but he has the defensive skills to lock down an opposing point guard. And if the Tigers go with a small lineup, Short, because of his strength and rebounding acumen, could play the small forward spot.

Choices are fine if you're ordering dinner at a restaurant, but having too many options can be disconcerting for a coach, though Verlin seems exhilarated with the offerings Short presents.

"One of the things I love about this team is flexibility," Verlin said. "We can move Short to the two (guard). Can we move and play smaller. Can we move and play bigger. We have different lineups and I like that. I think (Short will) fit in fine."

Short was part of Thomason's plans last season before he suffered a Jones fracture to the base of the small toe in his right foot during the Tigers' second exhibition game. Pacific went on to win the Big West Conference Tournament championship and appeared in the NCAA Tournament without Short, though he likely would have helped that team and lent some playing experience to an inexperienced backcourt this season.

Instead, Short used his time off the court to get on solid academic footing and develop a feel for the concepts of Pacific's system, which Verlin will tweak somewhat as the new head coach.

Short participated in open gym sessions and summer practices, which ended Wednesday, without discomfort in the foot. He said he will work out in Reno with his former high school coach, Gary Hill Thomas, before he and his teammates return to Pacific on Aug. 26.

"It's wide open right now," Verlin said. "But I like what Short's doing and what (Andrew) Bock's doing and what Sama (Taku)'s doing, and the freshmen are nice additions."

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