

Cager continues career in France

By KEN VOYLES

It really is a timeless story—a young man out on his own in a strange country. The language is different, the customs are different, everything, in fact, is different.

But there he is in a strange land—a land they call France. Kevin Kaseta is a young man out on his own in a new environment in the land of Napoleon. Paris, great wines and everything else that is mythical or real about France and the French.

However, it really isn't as romantic as it all seems. Kaseta is living and playing professional basketball overseas.

The Livonian built his reputation at Livonia Franklin and the University of Detroit. While at Franklin, Kaseta played varsity basketball for three seasons.

Kaseta was plagued with various injuries at U-D that kept him from becoming a fulltime starter until late in his career.

Even though riddled with injuries, Kaseta persisted and in his senior year became a regular starter for the Titans.

After he graduated from U-D with a degree in accounting, Kaseta tried out for the Detroit Pistons, coached by his college mentor, Dick Vitale.

Kaseta did not make the squad, but he was advised that if he wanted to continue in the sport he should contact a talent agency in California.

"What happened was that I tried out for the Pistons over the summer, but they didn't need me. One day, one of the assistant coaches told me about a guy named Jim McGregory, a talent scout for European basketball teams," Kaseta said. "I contacted him and set things up."

McGregory runs an agency which recruits players from the U.S. to play basketball all over the world—mostly in Europe. The agency does all of the work providing, of course, that a basketball player is of the right caliber.

Kaseta talked to McGregory, who in turn called a team from LeMans, France and arranged for a tryout. As it turned out, Kaseta did quite a bit of running around Europe before he found a team that wanted him.

All of Kaseta's travel expenses, including room and board, meals, and transportation, were paid by McGregory's agency.

French professional basketball is divided into a southern pool and a northern pool of 12 teams each. Some of the better teams from each pool make up the first division. The rest of the teams are in the second division.

If a team in the first division has a bad year, it usually winds up in the second division the following season and if a team in the second division has an excellent year it earns the right to move to the first division.

LeMans is a first division team. In fact, that squad was the top team in France last year, according to Kaseta.

Kaseta was looking for a center and tried Kaseta in that position, but he wasn't quite right.

The next stop for the 6-10 player was a team in the heartland of Austria. Kaseta took a 28-hour train ride to reach the city from LeMans.

But his stay in Austria was brief and he went back to France and joined the team that would eventually become his club—Asnières Sport.

Asnières Sport plays just outside of Paris in the second division in the southern pool. Most of the time Kaseta plays center, but he also sees action as a forward.

There are a lot of Americans on the professional French teams, according to Kaseta. In France, the rule is that only one American can play on each team.

"The Americans are usually the biggest and most important guys on the team. We act as both players and instructors for the French," said Kaseta.

"I wasn't sure if I'd like playing basketball in France. I was a little apprehensive about leaving home. I talked to some players who had played in France before and they told me to give it a try. I might like it, and I did."

"There are a lot of differences between playing basketball in this country and France. Basketball is just coming into its own in France and a lot of players are not as talented as what you would find in this country. That's why Americans players are used so much."

Kaseta left for France last September and has been playing on a two game a week schedule ever since. The season ends in late March.

Kaseta has been averaging 26 points a game for Asnières Sport along with 12 rebounds. His point average is good enough for ninth in the league (second division).

As a member of the team, Kaseta receives several benefits. Besides a small salary, Kaseta is provided with a car and an apartment just outside of Paris.

An average day for the young American would start at a small university near Paris where Kaseta is learning the French language in an attempt to overcome a big obstacle.

After morning classes, Kaseta goes to practice. Other than the school and practice, Kaseta said there is not much for him to do.

"There's not much to do during the day especially on a game day when we don't practice," said Kaseta. "I spend a lot of time in my apartment. Paris is an expensive city so that rules that out (going to the city) most of the time."

"I'm trying to get a job to add to my income and give me something to do," he continued. "I live by myself and most of my friends are from the team. We like going into Paris together and hitting the discos or the restaurants. Can't do that much, though, at the prices they charge."

Kaseta said that right now he is putting most of his emphasis on two things while in France. First and foremost is basketball. The other is learning to speak the language.

"There are a lot of problems for us Americans. Communication is the biggest. I think the thing that gets me the most, however, is that things you take for granted in America, like certain foods and running hot water, are hard to get in France," Kaseta explained.

Social life for Kaseta is very limited due to the tight basketball schedule—one game during the week and one on the weekends. The team travels through southern France a great deal and Kaseta sees a lot of country.

The Livonian also teaches young children the art of basketball in various schools around Paris.

"I like doing that a lot. The kids are great. They are much easier to communicate with than the adults," Kaseta said.

Basketball in France is played under international rules and varies from American basketball in style.

Kevin Kaseta, a graduate of Livonia Franklin and the University of Detroit, is now trying to earn a living playing in France. (Photo by Steve Fecht)



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Youngster leads Stingray tankers

Cindy Cramer, swimming in the eight-and-under competition, took a first, three seconds and a fourth place last weekend to lead the Michigan Stingrays' efforts in the Warren Woods-Jaguar Class B Amateur Athletic Union meet.

Cindy logged a first place in the 25-yard breaststroke (23.0) to go with seconds in the 25 freestyle (16.68), 25 butterfly (18.85) and the 50 freestyle (37.11) and a fourth in the 25 backstroke (18.89).

Jason Wolf and Chris Leslie, both swimming in the boys' nine-and-10 group, took firsts for the Stingrays. Jason won the 200 individual medley (3:02.9), and Chris took the 100 breaststroke (1:23.08).

The Stingrays' eight-and-under mixed 100 freestyle relay (Cramer, Sarah Boe, Erin Reinsmith and Matt Harmon) finished second with a time of 1:06.9. Other Stingray seconds: Katy Harden (1:11.82 in the open age girls' 100 backstroke), Marge Cramer (1:32.0 in the nine-and-10 girls' 100 breaststroke), and Jill Andries (1:09.4 in the open age girls' 100 butterfly).