
https://www.hoosiertimes.com/reporter_times/pacers-show-promise-in-preseason-debut/article_10c7bfcf-56cc-53ca-97b6-c0623c1c2473.html

Pacers show promise in preseason debut

By Andrew Crowley acrowley@reporter-times.com Oct 6, 2018

The offseason can be a blessing or a curse, it's all a matter of what the team you cheer for is like. There are some seasons where the season ending is an act of mercy. The locker room is in flames and the overall experience of watching the team is one of torture. When it's really bad, you can see it in the faces of the players — that dead-eyed, glazed look, expressions that suggest the players have the taste of ashes in their mouth. When there's nothing to play for, no playoff appearance and no hope of improving in the draft, it makes for some pretty noxious basketball.

On the flip side are seasons you never want to end. There's something about the team that's just clicking — they might not be a title threat, but they're fun to watch, they play hard and it doesn't feel like a chore or obligation to watch. There's joy and camaraderie. It's not a joyless slog to game 82 or a first-round exit.

Last year the Pacers were the latter, and in previous years, they've been the former. Going in to the season, expectations were low based on the return on the Paul George trade. Instead, the Pacers ended up surpassing expectations, becoming one of the best stories in the league, beating their projected win total and pushing LeBron James to seven games in the first round of the playoffs. Sometimes it's impossible to recapture the chemistry and mood of a really great season.

There's always a fear that success and chemistry can't be recreated or that the season was a fluke and the roster is not as competitive as it seems to be. It happened with the Phoenix Suns in the 2013-14 season. They outplayed expectations and nearly made the playoffs. They couldn't repeat that feat the next season and in the time since then have been aimless and undergoing a slow and ugly rebuild.

And while it's certainly possible that the 2018-19 Pacers could follow a similar route, there's plenty to suggest that last year was the real deal and there's something worth building on. This offseason has been a busy one for both the players and the front office. Thaddeus Young and Cory Joseph both decided to give the Pacers another year by exercising their player option. From the draft, the Pacers got Aaron Holiday, a player with NBA pedigree and an intriguing second-rounder in Alize Johnson.

In free agency, the Pacers made a number of savvy moves, including getting Doug McDermott and Kyle O'Quinn. The biggest pickup was Tyreke Evans, who was named the most underrated off-season acquisition in the annual survey of NBA GMs. Evans will give the Pacers another playmaker, one who can be used in crunch time to give Victor Oladipo more help and breathing room. Oladipo also got

some acknowledgment from GMs, he was an honorable mention for best shooting guard in the league, one of the top perimeter defenders, one of the most athletic players, and one of the fastest players with the ball.

The coaching staff and front also got some acknowledgment. McMillan was an honorable mention for best defensive schemes and Dan Burke came in third for best assistant coach. Indiana was one of the honorable mentions for best offseason moves.

As for the players, they spent the offseason honing their craft and putting work into their bodies. Victor Oladipo, as he did last summer, committed himself to an intense workout program. That desire to better himself seems to have rubbed off on his teammates as Myles Turner also used the summer to make drastic changes to his body, including a change in diet and exercise. Turner spent his offseason practicing yoga, increasing his flexibility and working on the physical side of the game. and like Oladipo the summer before, he underwent a drastic physical change. Domantas Sabonis also got in on the act, joining Turner in Texas to do some yoga.

Oladipo hosted a mini-camp in Miami and every member of the roster, with the exception of Bojan Bogdanovic who was busy with the Croatian national team, came down to work out and bond.

And while it's way too early to tell, there were signs in Thursday's 110-100 victory over the Houston Rockets in a preseason game that the summer workouts had made a difference on the roster. Victor Oladipo scored 24 points in roughly as many minutes. He did so while shooting 50 percent from the field and 40 percent from behind the three-point line. Though some wondered whether Oladipo's 2017-18 season was an outlier, his output on Thursday suggests that he might be able build on and improve on a campaign that resulted in him being named to the All-Defensive first team and becoming the fifth Pacer to win Most Improved Player.

T.J. Leaf, the Pacers' first round draft pick in 2017 was a team high +25 and he had a nice stat line going with 13 points on 50 percent shooting to go along with 12 rebounds, 4 assists, 2 steals and 1 block. Myles Turner had a respectable game, including a ferocious posterizing dunk on Marquese Chriss in the first quarter. Though he only played 21 minutes, Turner still scored 11 points, grabbed 5 boards and two blocks. Sabonis had a double-double of 15 and 12 to go along with 2 assists, 2 steals and a block.

Going in to the season, Pacers coach Nate McMillan wanted to emphasize getting rebounds. On the Thursday night, the Pacers out rebounded the Rockets 48 to 41. There were also signs that the culture that was established last year will continue, players hustled for loose balls, diving to the floor, turnovers were forced. While the Pacers weren't always the most talented team on the floor, they tended to out hustle and outwork their opponents.

One preseason game is far too small a sample to tell the tale of a season, but early returns look promising and there's plenty to be excited about for the Pacers this season. There's an air of excitement and optimism about the team. Last year was no mirage, it was the real deal.

acrowley

You May Like

Sponsored Links by Taboola

Little Known Trick To Avoid Gutter Cleaning For Life And Increase Home Value

LeafFilter Partner

Ranked: The 25 Greatest Rock Vocalists of All-Time

New Arena

What Russians Wear In Winter Is Not What You Think

Travelfuntu

Indiana Launches New Policy For Cars Used Less Than 50 Miles/Day

Smarter Finances

Her Show Was Loved, But No One Knew She Couldn't Stand Her Co-Star

BrainSharper

The Cheapest Car Insurance In Indiana History

Auto Insurance For Less Quotes