

Judge riding inside-out game

By Martin Renzhofer
Salt Lake Tribune (published 02/03/2010)

As **Will Whitt** and **Zach Myaer** go in 2010, so will go Judge Memorial. The school's postseason rests on an inexperienced but improving spindly colt at center and a pugnacious bulldog at the point.

There is a marked difference in Judge's play with the 6-foot-10 Whitt and 5-foot-8 Myaer off the court. The Bulldogs don't play with the same confidence, especially on the offensive end where opposing teams must contend with Whitt's length and Myaer's shooting range.

"We fall off without those two guys on the floor," venerable Bulldog coach **Jim Yerkovich** said. "But we've also got to learn to compensate for that."

Still, it would be completely unfair to say that Judge is strictly a two-player team. While Whitt and Myaer languished on the Bulldogs bench with foul trouble, teammates such as **Daniel Shiramizu**, **Ben Cook** and **Basil Vetas** played vital minutes in a recent defeat of Region 11 opponent Ben Lomond.

The differences, though, are obvious. During a sloppy second quarter played completely without Whitt, Judge's lead against Ben Lomond shriveled from 25-13 to 27-22 at the half.

"You have to credit our defense," said Yerkovich, clasping his ever-present red and gold towel "security blanket."

Lessons were learned in a victory that kept JMHS in the thick of the chase for the region title. Most important of all, certain Bulldogs need to use their heads a little better.

"I get excited," Whitt said. "The best players know how to control it. I need to do better."

Whitt's final basket of the first quarter against Ben Lomond was a dunk followed by a glower and a slow walk to the bench with two fouls. Despite being a senior, Whitt remains an unpolished gem.

"He's still a neophyte," said Yerkovich, who believes his center is still growing and could threaten 7 feet. "Sometimes in the heat of battle, you forget that. He's got a great attitude and he wants to do well."

A quick growth spurt kept the uncoordinated Whitt on the bench throughout his junior high career and much of his high school days.

"I grew an inch a month for five or six months," Whitt said. "How many games have we played so far? That's my varsity experience."

"All I care about is rebounding. If I score, that's a plus."

So far, Whitt averages about 15 points, while Myaer scores nearly 14 points a game. The two have an understanding of what it takes to play inside-outside on offense.

Myaer, who comes from a strong basketball background, sees what Judge needs to be a state title contender.

"I need to be in more control, especially early in games," Myaer said. "If I can play the second half with no fouls, then I can attack the [opposing] point guard a little more."

"We need more improvement; mainly with turnovers and rebounding."

Myaer learned about mental toughness last year while watching his brother Jaxon struggle at Utah State. The older Myaer began the year as a starter, didn't play at all and eventually earned back a good portion of court time.

"I have to try to be mentally tough," Zach Myaer said.

Yerkovich has three state championships in his 44 years of coaching. Could there be a fourth this season?

"We're a threat," he said. "This team is the most inexperienced, but we keep improving. We'll be there."

The Bulldogs will go as far as Whitt and Myaer can take them.