

Charlotte takes down Denver, 105-98

Jefferson, Walker lead Bobcats past Nuggets

Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The Charlotte Bobcats are getting used to big nights from Al Jefferson and Kemba Walker.

Now, they have Gary Neal to throw into the offensive mix.

The newly acquired Neal came off the bench and scored 19 points as the surging Bobcats won their seventh home game in a row, defeating the Denver Nuggets 105-98 on Monday night.

Jefferson led all scorers with 26 points and Walker scored 24, but it was Neal's work off the bench that may have made the biggest difference with Gerald Henderson out with a strained right calf muscle.

"It was a huge to get a win at home and protect our homecourt, especially with the standings the way they are," said Neal, who was playing in his only his seventh game with the team.

"I felt good in the (Monday) morning shootaround and had a good individual workout before the game," Neal added. "Then, the first couple shots fell and I got in a good rhythm."

Neal actually made his first six field-goal tries as the Bobcats, currently in position to grab the No. 7 seed in the Eastern Conference for the playoffs, improved to 30-34. Three of those baskets by Neal were 3-pointers.

The Nuggets, who fell to 27-36, were led by Ty Lawson's 24 points — 15 of which came in the fourth quarter as he tried to rally his team.

"They were without Gerald Henderson and Gary Neal stepped in and did what he needed to do," Nuggets coach Brian Shaw said. "We have to learn to respect everyone, whether he's a starter or coming off the bench."

Jefferson made 10 of his first

14 field-goal attempts, and also contributed a game-high 13 rebounds. Walker added seven assists for the Bobcats.

Jefferson scored 12 points and grabbed seven rebounds in the first quarter, after which the Bobcats led 25-22. But they actually extended their lead to 12 in the second quarter, as Neal scored nine points.

"That boy can score. He made plays, that's all," Jefferson said of Neal. "If he can play like that, it's going to give a big lift to the second unit. With him hitting 3s like that, that's just going to open up the paint for guys like me who like to attack it."

Josh McRoberts added 15 points for Charlotte, including a key 3-pointer with 6:15 left at the shot-clock buzzer to extend Charlotte's lead to 90-82 after Denver had cut it to five.

FARIED LEADS BRIEF COMEBACK

Denver also got 15 points from Kenneth Faried, 16 from Aaron Brooks, and 11 points and a team-high 10 rebounds from J.J. Hickson.

After Faried led a brief Denver comeback to cut Charlotte's lead to 51-45 at the half, Walker and Jefferson hit the first two baskets of the third quarter to push the Charlotte advantage back to 10 and the home team never trailed in the second half.

Denver did pull to within 101-96 in the final minute, but Walker, who made all 12 of his free-throw attempts on the night, hit a pair with 55.6 seconds left and then Jefferson hit a jumper after a defensive stop to seal the Bobcats' victory.

"We hung in there and fought hard," Bobcats coach Steve Clifford said. "It wasn't our best game. We made a lot of mistakes in the fourth quarter. But it's a good win and an important win for our team."

Clifford said Neal, who has now



AP PHOTO

Charlotte Bobcats center Al Jefferson, right, shoots over Denver Nuggets forward Jan Vesely, of the Czech Republic, during the game in Charlotte, N.C., on Monday.

scored in double figures in six of the seven games he's played for the Bobcats, is providing the kind of instant offense that he had

hoped for when Neal was acquired from the Bucks along with backup point guard Luke Ridnour.

"He played great," Clifford said.

"Forget the 7-for-9 (field-goal shooting). He made two big plays out of the pick-and-roll when we were struggling."

Scholarships, partnerships create opportunities

Ski & Snowboard Club Vail provides life-changing opportunities to young athletes through scholarship initiatives. Our children represent a broad socio-economic spectrum, with over 20 percent of them currently receiving scholarship funding. Ski & Snowboard Club Vail has given out over \$1.1 million in scholarship funds over the past eight years, more than doubling the annual amount given out from 2006 to 2013.

Scholarships are made possible through fundraising initiatives

and the support of the Les Street-er Group, Vail Snowsports Foundation and numerous donors. For nearly 10 years, every one of Ski & Snowboard Club Vail's coaches and administrators have given from their own paychecks to support the dreams of our kids. Scholarships support program fees, summer and fall camps, special projects and

travel costs. They are awarded to athletes of all ages and abilities representing all five Ski & Snowboard Club Vail snowsports. We

are enormously grateful for this scholarship support. Even more importantly, an unprecedented partnership with the Eagle County Public School District, resulting in the first public ski and snowboard academy in the country for fifth through 12th graders — Vail Ski & Snowboard Academy — provides the rigorous and supportive academic environment as an alternative to expensive independent boarding schools.

Finally, the development of early season and other critical training venues, together with Vail's central location in the world of snow sport (World Cup and World Championships, Burton

US Open, international training, alpine and freestyle NorAms, Nordic and alpine NCAA Regionals, etc.) and proximity to other national and international competition venues provides access to the highest levels of snow sports as close to home as possible.

Nothing demonstrates the far-reaching impact of Ski & Snowboard Club Vail's scholarships and the existence of Vail Ski & Snowboard Academy more than the inspirational journeys of our scholarship recipients.

ALFREDO J. VELASCO

Alfredo is an Ski & Snowboard Club Vail snowboard alumni and

Vail Ski & Snowboard Academy graduate. He and his family moved to the Vail Valley from Mexico when he was in eighth grade. Alfredo instantly fell in love with snowboarding, but candidly admitted that he was so poor at the sport that friends would not return his phone calls on weekends, knowing he was calling to ride with him.

Alfredo saved enough money during his freshman year to purchase a ski pass, riding every chance he had. During his sophomore year, Alfredo met up with a few Ski & Snowboard Club Vail



Aldo Radamus Perspectives

PERSPECTIVES

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riders, which led to him calling Ben Boyd, Ski & Snowboard Club Vail snowboard program director, asking for the opportunity to train at Ski & Snowboard Club Vail. Ski & Snowboard Club Vail scholarship funding coupled with Alfredo's salary from working 30 hours per week at Avon Bakery his sophomore, junior and senior years, made Ski & Snowboard Club Vail training and a summer training camp in New Zealand a reality.

In Alfredo's junior year, he was invited to enroll in Vail Ski & Snowboard Academy with the possibility of online classes in business and Chinese coupled with the opportunity to further pursue his snowboard passion. Scholarship funding provided the opportunity for a summer training camp in Chile. The additional support by an individual Ski & Snowboard Club Vail member and donor enabled Alfredo to go on several college tours in New England, including Dartmouth College.

Fast forward to the club's most recent conversation with Alfredo this past weekend where he shared that he graduated this past year from Dartmouth College with 3.4 GPA and a B.A. in Engineering Sciences and that he will graduate from the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College this spring with a Bachelor of Engineering in computer engineering. Alfredo also shared that he was accepted to a Ph.D. program at Northwestern University in computer engineering and is awaiting news about a five year GEM Fellowship.

Alfredo's experiences at Ski & Snowboard Club Vail and Vail Ski & Snowboard Academy enabled him to see the world and learn an enormous number of life lessons. He credits these experiences in helping him to organize all that was needed to get into his first choice college without the help of a college counselor or his parents, as the first generation in his family to attend college.

FLORIAN SZWEBEL

Florian Szwebel is an Ski & Snowboard Club Vail alpine racer and a junior at Vail Ski & Snowboard Academy. Florian's most recent accomplishment, an aspiration of every U.S. alpine racer in his age class, was clinching the men's overall title at the U18 National Junior Championships, including a second-place finish in the super-G.

Florian's mother, originally from Germany, and his father, originally from Poland, met when ski instructors at Beaver Creek and moved to Winter Park, where Florian was born. Florian began skiing with his mom at 18 months old and has not looked back. It became evident as he was about to enter high school that the family needed a solution to support his ski racing alongside his academics. Thus, the move to Vail and Florian's enrollment at Ski & Snowboard Club Vail and Vail Ski & Snowboard Academy became inevitable, enabling Florian to pursue his passion alongside his education.

As Florian continued to excel on snow, additional scholarship funds became available to support summer

camp and his participation at U.S. Nationals. What is even more remarkable in Florian's accomplishments this year is his comeback from two fractured legs, which were diagnosed several weeks after a major early season fall to become the U18 Men's Overall National Champion, take second place in the U18 Nationals super G, rank 14th in the world in super-G for his birth year and qualify for the U.S. Nationals.

Florian is quick to share that he learned his hard work ethic and determination from his parents and from the coaches and staff at Ski & Snowboard Club Vail, realizing that if he always puts out 100 percent it will increase his chances of success dramatically. Florian remains thankful for the Ski & Snowboard Club Vail scholarships, the coaching staff and the school for enabling him to explore opportunities he might not have otherwise had. His humility, work ethic and courage inspire both the coaches and all those around him.

Next week's column will include additional inspirational stories of the results of Ski & Snowboard Club Vail's scholarship opportunities. Our goal is to ensure that any child with the character, courage and commitment to pursue their dreams in snow sports is able to fulfill their potential regardless of their means.

Aldo Radamus is the executive director of Ski & Snowboard Club Vail. For more information, go to www.skiclubvail.org, email sschmidt@skiclubvail.org or call 970-790-5161.



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