

BC3 men's basketball team aims to shoot out lights when lights come on

Nov. 6, 2019



Members of the 2019-20 Butler County Community College men's basketball team are, top row, from left, Cole McCarthy, Noah McLean, Julian Sanks and Dom Schmidt. Bottom row, from left, Jake Slomers, Andrew Yonker, Kaiden Young and coach Dick Hartung. Missing from photo, Jamir Carter.

(Butler, PA) Dick Hartung leans forward from his seat on the first row of bleachers, his attention shifting from the gray-faced stopwatch in his right hand, to the 2019-20 prospects of his Butler County Community College men's basketball team, to its players, whose fast breaks, stops and pivots on the hardwood surface produce squeaks and echoes inside BC3's Field House.

"You got four or five shooters on the floor," he says of the Pioneers' projected starting lineup. "Then you have role players who just play their hearts out."

A quick glance at his stopwatch, then a shout to his players on the floor.

"Ready up!"

“It’s a good group of eight guys. And we have a chance again. We’ve got a chance.”

“Come on, put that ball by his chest!”

“The potential to put this together is here. It really is.”

“Take a dribble! You walked!”

“We’ll find out when the lights come on.”

Those lights will come on in BC3’s Field House at 7 p.m. Nov. 13, when the Pioneers open their 12-game home schedule against Mercyhurst North East, North East, Pa., with Andrew Yonker and Jake Slomers returning from a 2018-19 squad that won its first Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference title since 1994 and sixth overall.

Those lights will also shine on the others who will make up those “five shooters on the floor” – Jamir Carter, a 6-foot-tall Seneca Valley High School graduate, at point guard; Julian Sanks, 6-1, Knoch, at small forward; and Dom Schmidt, 5-11, Butler, at forward.

Yonker will start at shooting guard and Slomers, 5-10, Butler, at power forward.

“Yonker is a better player than he was last year,” Hartung said of the 6-foot Butler High graduate whose 12.5 points per game average in 2018-19 trailed only those of twin brothers Joel Stutz, at 30, and Jace Stutz, at 16.8. Josh Knochel added 12.4 points per game, Jordan Sager 7 and Slomers, 3.5.

Joel Stutz finished as the program’s all-time leading scorer with 1,366 points in two seasons.

“A good group of players who came together, put it together and really represented themselves and the school well,” Hartung said of a 2018-19 team that finished 12-14. “This group has some potential too. We can shoot again.”

Yonker made more than 40 percent of his 3-point attempts in 11 of his 26 games in 2018-19, and finished at 35.5 percent. His 82 successful 3-pointers ranked 18th among players on all 106 National Junior College Athletic Association Division III squads.

BC3’s 365 successful 3-pointers also led the NJCAA’s Division III.

“We can all shoot this year,” Yonker said. “That is the main strength. And we can get up and down the floor.”

Everyone, Sanks said, “can handle the ball.”

“This year,” Slomers added, “we’ll have a lot more diversified scoring with everybody. This year’s bench will be a little deeper too.”

BC3's roster also includes Noah McLean, 6-2, Moniteau; Cole McCarthy, 6-foot, Seneca Valley; and Kaiden Young, 6-3, Grove City.

"All eight can contribute," Hartung said. "We may have reloaded. But I won't know until after the first game, the second game, the third game."

BC3's first three games are on the road, against Penn State-Greater Allegheny, McKeesport; Allegany College of Maryland, Cumberland; and Potomac State, Keyser, W.Va.