

BC3's best shot depends on great shots

3-pointers key to men's basketball team's five-guard offense

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Members of the 2017-18 Butler County Community College men's basketball team are, top row, from left, Kaden Rock, Justice Lewandowski, Brendon Record, Jace Stutz, Joel Stutz and Alijah Robinson. Bottom row, from left, Jordan Sager, Noah Pollock, Ian McElroy, Josh Knochel, Josh Campbell and coach Dick Hartung.

(Butler, PA) The 3-point shot will give the Butler County Community College men's basketball team its best shot at its first winning season in three years, Jace Stutz said, and if its unique five-guard offense plays at the height of its game, the small Pioneers can compensate for their lack of size and post "triple digits" on the scoreboard.

"With all five guards who can shoot, it is going to be nice," Stutz said.

"I know we can score," Kaden Rock said.

"If we are shooting well," Brendon Record said, "we can be in any game with anybody."

"Every man has the potential to make a 3 with great percentage," Justice Lewandowski said.

"It's going to be something special," Joel Stutz said, "if you see all of us on."

Joel Stutz was on in sinking 70 3-pointers for a Butler High squad in 2016-17. His twin, Jace, hit 21.

Rock led a BC3 that finished 9-20 in 2016-17 with 50 3-pointers. Record had a second-best 41 and Lewandowski's 21 tied for third on a Pioneers squad that made 28.5 percent of its shots beyond 19 feet, 9 inches.

Coach: 5-guard offense has its ups and downs

BC3, coach Dick Hartung said, has traditionally played a four-guard offense "with one big guy. Because of our situation, we are a five-guard offense. There will be some advantages to it. There will be some disadvantages to it."

At 6-foot-4, Lewandowski is BC3's tallest player, followed by 6-3 freshman Josh Knochel, a graduate of Knoch. No one else on the roster is taller than 6-1.

"There is an old saying in warfare, 'Whoever controls the high ground wins,'" Hartung said. "And we are going to have trouble controlling the high ground."

Led by 6-5 Garret McHenry, and 6-4 Jake Anderson and Chris Pipkin, BC3 in 2016-17 outrebounded its opponents by 172 and in blocked shots by 45.

But "last year our guys couldn't bring the ball up the floor and shoot 3s," Hartung said. Anderson had 14 3-pointers, McHenry eight and Pipkin none. McHenry averaged 21.5 points, Pipkin 11.7 and Anderson 5.3.

"We had three good big men," Rock said, "and a lot of our offense was focused on feeding the post a lot."

Which may have hindered BC3's passing game, which Lewandowski said will be critical to the success of this year's squad.

"At times we got a little stale with ball movement," he said, "and it showed on the scoreboard. If we can keep the ball flowing this year, it is going to be a big difference."

"We have to hit the long bomb"

The Pioneers in 2016-17 scored in triple digits once, in a 102-77 January victory over the Community College of Allegheny County-Boyce. BC3, which averaged 75 points, scored 80 or more points in eight of its 29 games.

"If we are going to be successful," Rock said, "we have to hit the long bomb. We have to hit the 3."

Rock, of Butler, made 36.2 percent of his 3-point shots in 2016-17, Lewandowski 30 percent and Record – BC3's main ballhandler – 29.9 percent.

“Our game has just changed so much,” said Record, of Grove City. “Basically we have five guys who can handle the ball now. We thrived on the inside last year and we will have to thrive on the outside this year.”

Record said his experience in playing 802 minutes, more than any other member of BC3’s 2016-17 team, could benefit a Pioneers squad seeking its first winning season since a 15-14 finish in 2014-15.

That team also finished second in the Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference Division III championship to the Community College of Allegheny County-Boyce.

“The 2014-15 team is very similar to this team,” Hartung said. “Very small, but they could really shoot.”

“We will be able to handle the pressure”

This year’s team is seeking the program’s first WPCC crown since 1993-94, when the Pioneers beat Penn State-New Kensington in the finals.

“You have to learn how to handle the pressure these teams throw at you,” Record said. “We will be able to handle the pressure. There are going to be mismatches that we are going to have. Some of their bigs won’t be able to step out onto the 3-point line with Lewandowski or the Stutzes.”

Lewandowski won’t likely face an inordinate amount of defensive attention in that he is BC3’s tallest player, Hartung said.

“He just has to play,” Hartung said. “Knochel will come off the bench. That gives us a little bit of size. I can play them both at the same time.”

Lewandowski, of Butler, said he believes defenses will try to box him out first, “but we have a lot of guards who know how to crash the boards.”

“We are going to have to box out every guy,” Rock said.

“We are going to play some guys who are just big monsters inside,” Jace Stutz said.

“We have to hit the glass,” Joel Stutz said.

And the 3-point shot.

“We are going to live and die by the 3,” Rock said.

“The first good open 3 is probably going to be the one that is shot,” Jace Stutz said. “If we are all on, hopefully you will see triple digits.”

BC3's 2017-18 roster also features freshmen Jordan Sager, 5-9, Mohawk; Noah Pollock, 5-7, Karns City; Alijah Robinson, 6-0, Butler; Ian McElroy, 6-0, Karns City; and Josh Campbell, 6-1, Knoch.