3-1-2018

Athletics

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Recommended Citation
(2018) "Athletics," DePaul Magazine: Vol. 1 : Iss. 412021 , Article 1. Available at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/depaul-magazine/vol1/iss412021/1

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Athletics

Sweet Home Chicago
DePaul Basketball Returns to the City

When fans gathered on Nov. 11 at the brand-new Wintrust Arena at McCormick Square to watch DePaul square off against longtime rival Notre Dame in the opening game of the 2017-18 season, it was the dawn of a new era in Blue Demon basketball. One NBA scout called it the best college basketball game of the day, but for those closely involved in making this festive occasion happen, it was the fulfillment of a dream.

“It’s electrifying and kind of hard to describe,” said Wintrust Arena Fundraising Committee Chair Dan Ustian (BUS ’73). “What a great arena and the start of something special. The feeling today is even better than we all thought it would be.”

It didn’t much matter that DePaul was bested 72-58 by one of the nation’s top teams. DePaul Athletics Director Jean Lenti Ponsetto (EDU ’78), men’s basketball coach Dave Leitao, women’s basketball coach Doug Bruno (LAS ’73, MA ’88) and the more than 10,000 fans who filled Wintrust Arena came away with hope for the future. “This was the culmination of many years anticipating when that moment would come when we would once again have our own facility in the city,” Ponsetto said.

Public address announcer John Silioti (LAS ’98) added, “It’s a dream come true.”

And it’s not just for DePaul. “I think it’s going to be a great home for DePaul,” said Chicago Bulls center Joakim Noah (LAS ’11). "It’s a great building and a great fit for DePaul." Noah was at the game with his family and made his first public appearance since his season-ending injury.

The Blue Demons’ state-of-the-art locker room rivals any in the NBA.

DePaul Notches First Win at Home

On Nov. 13, DePaul scored its first win at Wintrust Arena with a 81-57 victory over the Delaware State Hornets. Tre’Darius McCallum led the way with 17 points, while Max Strus hit six of eight shots on his way to a 15-point performance. Eli Cain finished with 11 points and eight rebounds, and Devin Gage contributed 10 points and eight assists.

Eli Cain soars for a dunk in DePaul’s season opener against Notre Dame.

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Photos by Steve Woltmann/DePaul Athletics

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