

Purdue's Isaac Haas out to maximize talents after NBA Draft feedback

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When Isaac Haas' NBA workouts split into shooting drills, the teams commonly told him to shoot from where he was comfortable.

Many big men trying to impress NBA scouts head for the 3-point line. Many end up hurting their evaluation in the process.

Haas, who has attempted a total of zero 3-pointers in his three-year Purdue career, knew his lane. He said he squared up about 15 feet from the basket — an honest assessment of his own range.

"I was like, 'Nope, this is about it. This is as far as I'm going,'" Haas said.

Haas worked out for Boston, Minnesota and Oklahoma City before deciding to withdraw from the NBA Draft and return to Purdue for his senior season. There isn't much question of Haas' impact on the college game. He's one of the most efficient post scorers in the country — a 7-2, 290-pound magnet for the desperation fouls of overwhelmed defenders.

However, with an offensive game limited to the paint and a defensive profile short on shot-blocking acumen and lateral quickness, Haas' NBA future wasn't certain. He said this week he came out of the process confident he can play at that level — if, and only if, he maximizes talents he already possesses.

"They told me the same thing — be good at what you're good at," Haas said. "That's the only reason we brought you in. What you're good at it is good enough to get you there. When you try to get outside of yourself and make yourself look stupid is when you lower your stock."

Haas goes into his senior season ranked sixth in Purdue history in field goal percentage (.576). A year ago at this time everyone anticipated him taking on a larger role as the starting center with Caleb "Biggie" Swanigan at power forward. The team's best on-floor dynamics, however, eventually dictated that Swanigan play a lot of center.

Swanigan stayed in the draft, and Haas again said he's ready for his minutes to expand. He's taken a page from Swanigan's book to reach the conditioning level he'll need to maintain his efficiency in longer stretches.

Prior to Wednesday's practice, Haas spent 20 minutes on the StairMaster — one of Swanigan's favorite base conditioning workouts.

"That was pretty awesome, seeing the kind of effect it had on him," Haas said. "Once I get used to it my legs will be fine, but now they're kind of dead."

NBA teams told Haas he needs to be quicker vertically. While he's not a rim protector, he can be a defensive presence when he's contesting straight up with his wingspan, rather than coming down with his arms and causing fouls. Offensively, he was told even the increasingly small-ball NBA has room for huge bodies who set hard ball screens, rebound and score on the block.

Those are also the things Haas wants to do in his final season at Purdue. This summer he must find the focus to follow through for an entire season.

"I've always see the success and stopped doing the things I was really good at and started reaching away from it and tried to prove things to people," Haas said.

"After going to the NBA and seeing these guys, they told me I don't have to prove anything, You have to keep doing what you're doing. That was kind of like a light flicker right there."