

# Hubbard ready to start new chapter



Iowa junior Anthony Hubbard was introduced by head coach Fran McCaffery and athletics director Gary Barta at a press conference Wednesday at Kinnick Stadium in Iowa City, Iowa.

By Brendan Stiles

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IOWA CITY, Iowa – Not every student-athlete ends up having a press conference upon their arrival on campus. Anthony Hubbard isn't like any other student-athlete though.

One wouldn't know this from hearing him speak for the first time. When Hubbard talks, he comes off mature and very well-educated. He carries a sense of humor, but what college kid doesn't? While being recruited, he never felt pressure, saying he tries to be himself at all times.

But then there's the story of his past, one that is well-documented. Hubbard spent nearly four years in prison for involvement in a robbery that took place when he was 18. Prison forced Hubbard to follow a set routine he said would

eventually become second nature. In 2007, he was released back into the outside world and had a chance to turn his life around.

After playing basketball at the junior college level for two different schools, Hubbard seized an opportunity to play at the Division-I level, signing his letter of intent at Iowa on April 23.

Now 26, Hubbard spent Wednesday afternoon talking with reporters not only about his past, but about the chance he is getting at Iowa to help Fran McCaffery revitalize the men's basketball program, and more importantly, redeem himself in the eyes of the public that doesn't know him yet.

The 6-5 wing player described this press conference as surreal. Iowa athletics director Gary Barta couldn't recall any student-athlete in his time as an administrator coming in with the baggage and scrutiny that follows Hubbard as a result of his past.

McCaffery calls himself a realist. He understands what's at stake for a program still recovering from the Pierre Pierce saga nearly one decade earlier. Hubbard knows he'll be reminded by opposing fans whenever the Hawkeyes travel next season about a period in his life he said he has never shied away from.

Yet perhaps that is the biggest takeaway from what transpired Wednesday. Hubbard accepts what comes his way, preferring to meet it head on. While his hope is that people get to know him before passing judgment, he also understands not everyone will be openly receptive of him at first, if ever.

"There are going to be people that do not like me. That's just the way of the world," Hubbard said. "I can live with that."

But McCaffery also made clear that while Hubbard's story has a stark contrast to that of his other players, the due diligence

that took place during Hubbard's recruitment revealed enough for him to have faith in someone that at least on the surface, appears to be a changed man.

In fact, the one time McCaffery saw Hubbard play in person during the process ended up being a game that Hubbard admitted was far from his best performance.

"When he spoke, he said, 'You didn't have the best game,' which I knew. But he told me that he was looking at a lot of different things within the game that he really, really liked," Hubbard said. "For me to have a game that wasn't my best game, and for him to still see the good with what I did on the basketball court, kind of intrigued me."

Hubbard's first visit to Iowa City proved memorable. On March 5, The Hawkeyes upset No. 6 Purdue 67-65 in what turned out to be the biggest victory of last season for Iowa. He said he enjoyed the atmosphere in the arena, as well as the hospitality he was treated to by those already in the program.

One component McCaffery called "critical" during Hubbard's recruitment was his interaction with the other players and how receptive they were to having him around.

"I tell the guys before every visit, 'You know what I'm looking for. You know what we want in our program. We know what we want in your teammates, so let's make sure we have the right guy,'" McCaffery said. "To a man, they loved him. They loved being with him, they loved what he was saying, they respected him, and they were sold on him."

Time will only tell how this chapter in Hubbard's life will conclude. He will have two years of eligibility for the Hawkeyes and will get his opportunity on June 19 to showcase his basketball skills when the Prime Time League starts in North Liberty.

Hubbard wants to be viewed as a leader, as someone his

teammates, coaches, fans, and family can all count on. He described it as his motivation.

He also wants to be just like any other student-athlete walking around Iowa's campus. He wants to be himself.