

Italy inspires Weeden. "I want to play"

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Tony Weeden's first contact with the Cimberio team and Italian basketball was during a tough, intense training session. On that occasion, the new American in Varese basketball held back to watch his companions (who were pushed hard by Carlo Recalcati's second in command, Guido Saibene), warming his hands with just a few long shots at the end of the session at the stadium in Masnago. The long journey (which had begun before dawn, and continued with the flight to Malpensa) and the fatigue of the previous days, spent driving between his house in Poland and the Italian embassy in Warsaw, forced Weeden to take an afternoon of rest, at least from the physical point of view.

Thus, the numerous fans (including Edo Bulgheroni) who had come to the Whirlpool Stadium to see him, were disappointed. What a pity, because a few minutes on the court could have been allowed by Recalcati and by his staff, who only showed Tony how they work, and a few sequences tried out in training. So Weeden came and spoke to us.

We haven't seen you on the court this evening. What kind of player are you?

"Very aggressive, in attack and in defence. In attack, I've got a good long shot. Technical aspects aside, I like to be one of the leaders in the team I'm playing in. Of course, this isn't my priority at the moment; I want to get to know my team mates and their characteristics, and to understand what the trainer wants from me. But in the long term, I've got no problems accepting my responsibilities in the changing room."

How did the negotiations that have brought you to Varese come about?

"I was playing in the Polish All Star Game, when my agent contacted me to tell me about an Italian offer. It was yours; I immediately accepted it, because Italy is one of the places I had always hoped to play in. I'm happy to be here, and I hope to do great things with the team."

What level of play do you think you'll find in our Premier League?

"I already know that there's a great difference between the Italian and Polish championships, and I know it'll be a considerable leap. Here, play is tougher from the physical point of view, and on the court, the players are more experienced and ready. It's a great challenge, I realise that."

Are there any Americans playing in Europe, in your position, who inspire you?

"None, in particular. In the past, I got to know David Logan, who did very well in Poland (he's now with Panathinaikos, ed.). I'd like to play seasons like the ones he did. Since I came to Europe, I've played against a lot of Americans, even some top players. Among those here in Italy, Dee Brown and David Moss, for example, are excellent players."

Before coming to Varese, had you had an opportunity to come to Italy?

"In previous years, there had been negotiations with teams in League Two, but nothing came of them."

Recalcati called you before you signed. What did he say to you?

"He told me he'd watched the films of my matches, and had appreciated my way of playing. We didn't speak about what I'll be asked to do on the court, but we will very soon, I'm sure."

You've arrived a few days before an important match against Milano. Have you been told?

"To be honest, I can't wait to start playing. I'm glad it's against Milano, but the first thing I need to do is get to know the team, the trainers, my team mates, and to get onto the court. All the same, I know it'll

be a very tough match.”

This is your first time in Italy. Is there anything in particular that encouraged you to come here, apart from the basketball?

“As I’ve said, I don’t know Italy. I’ve always heard things about it, and when this opportunity came along, I decided to accept it, together with my partner, Christine, and little Anthony III, who’s only nine months old. We’re very happy, and we think that every new experience should be considered positively. I’m here to discover everything ... so far, the only thing I know about Italy is the fashion.”

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