

Baker making major impact in rookie campaign with Basket-Bears

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FIRST-CLASS FRESHMAN The Bears' Jordan Baker (right), has been one of the nation's best rookies with a 13.4 point per game average.

Jordan Baker may be a freshman on paper, but he sure hasn't played like one.

Rather, the Harry Ainlay High School product has played an instrumental role all season on a very young Bears basketball squad, and has become the go-to guy

whenever he's on the floor. Despite Alberta's inconsistency this season, Baker — who has transitioned from a power forward in high school to a point guard in university — has already turned out to be a terrific recruit for rookie head coach Greg Francis.

And the results are speaking for themselves: in his first year of eligibility, the youngster has started every game, leading the Bears in scoring and rebounding with 13.4 points and 9.0 rebounds per game.

“Jordan is probably the best first-year basketball player in the country and his play this season has been unbelievable. He's so young and crazy, but he comes to practice and games focused everyday,” Francis asserts.

Currently an Arts student, Baker has applied for admission into the School of Business and is interested in pursuing marketing as his specialization. In the future, he hopes that the chance to forge a business career with Basketball Canada may present itself.

“Basketball is a huge part of my life, so hopefully I can get into something in the business world that involves basketball because I want to give back to the game,” Baker states.

When asked why he decided to stay at home and attend the University of Alberta instead of attending a school abroad, Baker says, “Greg Francis coming here was a huge factor into my decision. I also felt that along with the other core group of incoming players, we could build a successful program over the coming years.”

Baker is no stranger to the U of A, growing up around the Main Gym thanks to his mother Trix, who coached the Pandas basketball squad for years and now works as the Athletics department's head of sponsorship and development.

Although he's just a first-year player, Jordan has played with patience and poise well beyond his years, and he recalls an individual goal session he had with

Francis before the season began. During that sit down, he remembers writing "maturity" on the back of the goal sheet.

“Maturity is a huge thing and that’s what coach has been trying to instill in me this year and not play like a first-year who commits lots of stupid turnovers. Showing maturity on the basketball court will carry over into maturity in life,” Baker explains.

When asked what his favourite moment to this point in the season has been, Baker states that it was after a 39-point defeat at the hands of the Saskatchewan Huskies on November 27 at home.

“When I came into the locker room after that game, the guys were really disappointed, but I still saw the fire in everyone’s eyes. We came out the next night and won, and thus showed how much character our team has,” Baker notes.

Despite his rookie status, Baker has shown great promise this season and as his game continues to blossom, he’s poised to become a dominant player in Canada West over the coming years.