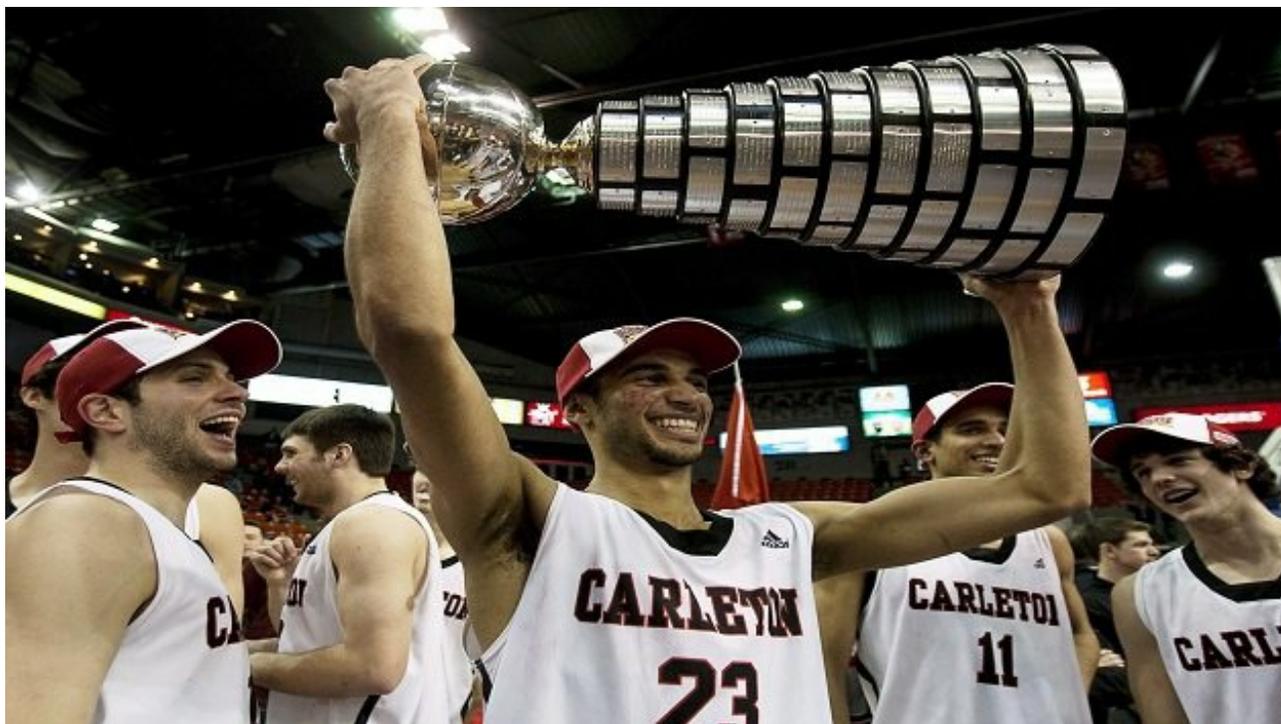


Carleton's Phil Scrubb a worthy representative of CIS at Canada Basketball camp

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By Israel Fehr

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TORONTO – Phil Scrubb is one of a kind at Canada's senior men's basketball team training camp in Toronto this week. It's not where he's from or how he plays that makes him unique, but rather where he plays.

Scrubb is the lone active CIS player participating in camp, and he's absolutely deserving of his spot. He possesses distinct on-ball poise, sharp off-ball instincts, and a general smooth demeanor and style of play that he developed while starring in high school at Vancouver College in B.C. and took to the next level during three years of near-unparalleled success at Carleton in Ottawa.

His inclusion in the 17-player training camp is a more-than-satisfying reward for the [two-time CIS player of the year](#).

"I didn't expect to come here and then coach [Jay] Triano called [to invite me to camp]. I'm really excited for the opportunity. Getting to play with NBA guys and other pros, it's a good way for me to improve," said Scrubb.

In an age of 24/7 sports coverage where every winning or losing streak, coaching decision, missed call, and fabricated controversy du jour is analyzed to the umpteenth degree, Carleton's dominance goes largely unnoticed and uncovered.

Head coach Dave Smart has led the Ravens to nine national titles since taking the job in 1999. In Scrubb's three years playing for Smart, the team has won 99 games and lost two, yes two, against CIS opponents. Smart is also an assistant coach with Canada.

Much was made of the sheer number of Canadians that played in this past year's NCAA tournament, with Anthony Bennett becoming the first Canadian [to go first overall in the NBA draft](#), and Andrew Wiggins being one of the best pro prospects of the last ten years, but Scrubb can provide insight on the country's development from a CIS

perspective.

"It's definitely grown a lot. I see different schools playing NCAA teams and all the games are close – some teams are even winning," said Scrubb. "Our games have gotten a lot closer over the years. We almost lost three or four games this year, we only lost one but there was a lot of close games. The basketball is getting better."

Competition breeds culture. Canada's basketball maturation is being lauded by everyone from Duke and Team USA head coach [Mike Krzyzewski](#) to multi-time NBA All-Star [Amar'e Stoudemire](#).

"The development of any country is based on the talent playing in that country. Canada is bursting with talent right now." - Mike Krzyzewski

"I think the game of basketball is definitely growing here for sure. I think with Steve Nash being the general manager of Canada Basketball, that's going to be a great, great fit for the country." - Amar'e Stoudemire

Having an overall stronger product, from more players going to the NCAA to the internal growth of the CIS, is an overwhelming positive for the youth ranks in Canada and any other situation where Canadian basketball players come together to play. The culture that it creates is one that emphasizes fundamentals.

"I think our advantage is our skill level. I think our skill level is pretty much on par with the other leagues, it's just the size and athleticism of the NCAA where we have some trouble," said Scrubb. "I think where we need to improve is athleticism and quickness, but I think our skill level is where it needs to be."

Earlier this summer, along with his brother and Carleton teammate Thomas, Scrubb represented Canada at the University Games in Kazan, Russia. The team went 6-2 and finished fourth. It was another stage for Canadian basketball to continue establishing the base the country hopes will result in great gains over the next decade.

"That was a great experience, it was pretty much like the Olympics with the athlete's village and competing for your country. The team we had was really close so that made it even better," said Scrubb.

Scrubb's on-court exploits and the powerhouse status of Carleton may not be common knowledge among Canadians, but those inside the basketball community are awed by their accomplishments. Cleveland Cavaliers forward Tristan Thompson is certainly aware of Canada's premier program and its best player.

"He goes to Carleton – they never lose. He's coming from a great program and a great coach and he's made shots in practice and in our workouts. He has a chance to make this team," said Thompson.

That said, it won't be easy for Scrubb to be one of the 12 players chosen for Canada's roster for the 2013 FIBA Americas, given that he's the youngest player in camp and competing for a spot alongside a strong core of international veterans. The tournament starts Aug. 30 in Caracas, Venezuela, and a spot in the 2014 FIBA World Championship is at stake.

"I think just the experience here is going to help me out a lot," said Scrubb. "It's pretty exciting, pretty fun. Even if I don't make the team, just playing with these guys I see on TV, that's pretty cool."

Regardless of what happens with the national team, Scrubb will be back at Carleton in the fall ready to compete for a third straight player of the year award and more importantly, a fourth national championship. He is proof that basketball in Canada owes a nod to the CIS; the sport is improving at every level in this country and that's great news for the future.

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