

Chillicothe Gazette

Hoops success part of Roll family tree

CHILLICOTHE -- Clay Roll is carrying on a family tradition through his sharpshooting basketball career at Ohio University-Chillicothe.

Clay, a 6-foot-3 guard/forward, is following in the footsteps of his father, Kevin Roll, and his brother, Nick Milliken, who both played for OU-C. The elder Roll was a member of four straight state championship teams in the 1980s and is now the junior varsity coach at Unioto.

Clay's grandfather, Ken Roll, was a high-school referee for more than 40 years and is enshrined in the Ohio High School Athletic Association Officials Hall of Fame.

"Playing basketball, especially at OU-C, sort of runs in the family," Clay said.

Apparently, that bloodline includes a knack for finding the basket. Clay recently scored the 1,000th point of his career during the Hilltoppers' game against Ohio Christian University on Jan. 6.

Upon graduating from Adena High School, where he also scored 1,000 points, Roll had opportunities to play basketball at several NCAA Division III schools but chose OU-C instead.

"I wanted to stay close to home and found I could have the same type of experience in terms of having teammates, coaches and the competition," he said.

For the season, Clay leads the Ohio Regional Campus Conference in scoring, averaging 20.3 points per game. He has scored 20 or more points 11 times this season, including a top effort of 34 points against OU-Eastern.

OU-C coach Rich Uhrig said Clay's success can, in part, be traced back to the player's family tree.

"It's heredity. The whole family is sports-oriented, and Clay was brought up playing sports," Uhrig said. "Clay works on his game and he has made himself into a nice scorer, but he owes much of his success to his family lineage."

Clay, a Law Enforcement Technology major, has his priorities in order.

"Clay puts a lot of time and effort into basketball, but he understands the academic side of things. In fact, he's on track to graduate this spring. As I emphasize with all of our players, they are here, first and foremost, to get a college

degree," Uhrig said.

Clay has developed a well-rounded game, especially on the offensive end.

"I can score on the drive or with the jump shot. If the jumper and 3-point shot aren't falling, I am able to put the ball on the floor and take it to the hole," he said.

Uhrig said scoring on the court is important for the game, but that Clay and his teammates are learning far more important lessons for life beyond OU-C.

"They learn about the highs and lows of life as well as the importance of chemistry, teamwork and dealing with people," Uhrig said. "These are lessons that will last them throughout their lives."

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