

Everett High/MSU standout follows Magic's path to the NBA

By Ernie Boone

EAST LANSING - "Shoot for the moon, and if you fall short, you might still wind up among the stars.

That's been the life and basketball career of Goron Sutton.

The 6-10 245-pound forward who, with his family, fled Bosnia -Herzegovina and moved to Lansing prior to high school, has been shooting for the moon chasing the legend of Magic Johnson.

And while he has not quite reached the heights of his Everett High School predecessor, he's left some pretty sizeable footprints among local high school stars. He'll soon be headed for Orlando where he'll compete as a member of the Utah Jazz team in the NBA Summer League.

Suton was taken by the Utah Jazz in the second round of the NBA draft, the 50th player selected. He'll be trying to earn a spot as a combination power forward/center on the Jazz roster. At center primary rivals for playing time are Kyrlo Fesenko and former Ohio State center, Kosta Koufos.

It all started when he enrolled at Everett High and joined Johnny Jones' basketball team. A member of the Bosnia national team at age 14, Sutton had to adjust to the Vikings' race horse big city style, but he soon got with the program and like Magic, ultimately led the team to the class A state championship his senior year. He earned second team all-state honors averaging 15.2 points and 12.8 rebounds per game.

That performance and his reputation as a hard worker earned Sutton a scholarship to MSU. He took a red-shirt his first year, and then moved



Goron Sutton

into the Spartan playing group the next season.

Often chided by Spartan head coach, Tom Izzo as too soft, Sutton developed into a first rate rebounder and defender to complement his scoring and passing out of the post.

He completed his career with an outstanding senior season, averaging 10.4 points, 8.4 rebounds. Again he conjured up memories of Magic playing a major role in helping MSU advance to the NCAA Championship Tournament finals.

He was outstanding in the tournament run, averaging 13.0 points and 10.7 rebounds. He averaged 19.5 points and 9.5 rebounds to earn the Most Outstanding Player award in the Mid-West Regional as MSU topped Kansas and Louisville to advance to the Final Four.

He was also named to the Final Four All-Tournament team for his work against Connecticut and North Carolina.

For the season he had eight double doubles, led the Big Ten in rebounding and earned second team All-Big Ten honors.

He led the team in rebounding, 8.4 per game, and free throw accuracy .848, and finished second in scoring, 10.2.

Now it is on to the NBA and an attempt make it at the toughest level.

"We're excited to have him," longtime Jazz coach Jerry Sloan said of Sutton. "We know he shoots the basketball very well and works extremely hard. ... He has a

great work habit. I think everyone has a chance to play, and hopefully he'll be able to do that."

Always recognized as a good outside shooter and excellent passer out of the post, Sutton displayed exceptional toughness during the tournament, a performance that impressed many pro teams. He worked out for several teams during the weeks leading up to the draft. He finished his career one of

eight Spartans to accumulate more than 1,000 points and 800 rebounds.

Suton adds to the list of former MSU-Lansing players drafted in the NBA: that includes Waverly's Marcus Taylor (2002), Eastern's Sam Vincent (1985), Eastern's Jay Vincent (1981) and Everett's Earvin "Magic" Johnson (1979).

Since 2000, MSU has had 11 players drafted in the NBA, the best in the Big Ten and

tied for sixth nationally. The word on Sutton is that he lacks athleticism and is slow of foot. He'll have to continue to work hard and play with the toughness he displayed late in the season, but that was the same word on him coming out of high school and he found a way to make it in the Big Ten.

Chances are good he will also quell those critics and finish his career among the NBA stars.

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