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RANDLEMAN - It was four years ago and the Randleman High School basketball teams were playing in a summer jamboree. The varsity team had played a number of games in a short period of time and some of the players were getting fatigued. Rising freshman Nate Cassidy, who was expected to play on the jayvee team, was dressed with the varsity team for that game and was put into the game in order for some of the other players to get some rest. It didn't take long to see that Cassidy wouldn't be returning to the jayvee program.



*Randleman senior Nate Cassidy (right). Photo by PJ Ward-Brown Photography.*

"As a freshman, he grabbed a rebound, drove down the court and made a real nice pass that led to a basket," RHS coach Daniel Mitchell remembered. "I just looked at the jayvee coach and told him I didn't think he was going to get Nate back."

He didn't and Nate has become a star with the varsity program. The 6-foot-1 senior point guard/forward/post player has been a mainstay with the Tigers over the past four seasons, earning all-conference honors twice, including being named the Piedmont Athletic Conference player of the year last season.

He has begun this season right where he left off last year as he leads the 4-0 Tigers by averaging around 20 points per contest. The Tigers have been in a number of close games already this season and Cassidy's leadership has played a key role.

"I was pretty surprised," Cassidy said about playing on the varsity team as a

freshman. "I was used to playing with jayvee guys from middle school, but when they put me

in on varsity, I really enjoyed it. I really like (Coach Mitchell's) offense and he has helped me with my game and how to see the court better."

Nate is the third Cassidy in the Tigers' basketball program. Older brothers Shawn and Cyle were "late bloomers," according to Mitchell, having outstanding seasons as upperclassmen. Nate didn't wait that long and contributed immediately.

"I saw Nate in middle school and knew he was going to be a pretty good player," Mitchell said. "I coached both of his brothers and both were good players for us. Here was Nate hitting his stride in seventh or eighth grade. He was bound to get better, too."

Cassidy did have an impact immediately, averaging 7.4 points and nearly two rebounds a game as a freshman, 12.4 points and nearly four rebounds per game as a sophomore and 14.1 points and 6.3 rebounds per game last year in winning top individual league honors.

"It started off where he was a shooter, our zone buster," Mitchell said. "He still shoots it well, but he may have got mischaracterized as just a shooter and that's not really his game. He still shoots it well, but he knows how to play the game. I could put him at any position one through four, and even at five, and he's fine. He does a little bit of everything and does it well."

Cassidy has been moved to the point guard slot this year. It's meant some adjustments, but adjustments Cassidy said he was more than happy to make.

"I was fine with it, I love getting my teammates involved," Cassidy said.

After capturing a number of awards as a junior, including being named The Courier-Tribune player of the year, Cassidy says there's still plenty of motivation.

"This league is as balanced as it's ever been since I have been at Randleman," Cassidy said of the six other teams in the league. We have to get ready to play every night and bring it every night we play."

So far in 2021, Cassidy and the Tigers have done just that.