

Aurora's Nembhard ready for freshman year of college hoops



By Jake Courtepatte

With great talent, comes great responsibility.

Projected as a first round draft pick in the 2019 NBA Draft, Andrew Nembhard is being thrust into a starting role on the varsity basketball squad at one of the NCAA's most prestigious schools, all at the age of 18.

The Aurora native, who attended Vaughan Secondary School through his first two years of high school, was chosen by coaching staff last week to run in the starting point guard position when the Florida Gators open their season against Florida State in a few weeks' time.

"I think I'm ready for the opportunity," said Nembhard in a call from campus. "When I was younger I used to play with all the older guys and they were the scorers, so I just tried to give them the ball, win the games really."

Known for his slick passing, Nembhard's gift for assists should reward a shot-heavy Gators team that went 21-13 overall last year, making the second round of the NCAA March Madness tournament.

"My dad was a passer as well, so it's something he passed down to me," said Nembhard. "I think I just got his vision."

"He'll have a chance to be in the conversation to be one of the better passers in college basketball," said Gators head coach Mike White during the team's media day last week. "Who knows how many assists that means, how many highlights he produces, how many minutes he'll play. I'm not sure."

Putting aside the fact that he has spent the last three seasons with Florida's Montverde Academy, when asked why he chose the Gators over other schools he was highly recruited for, Nembhard said it was the coaching staff that stood out.

"It's just all great guys here," said Nembhard. "They push me, on and off the court. I just feel like it's a great environment—the staff, players, team is really good, we've got a great playing style, and it's a great school. A lot of things came together."

At six-foot-five, Nembhard stands tall for a point guard, something he said should work to his advantage to be able to "see over the defense." As for being thrust into the spotlight as a freshman, he is taking it all in stride.

"I'm cool with the expectations I don't really feel any pressure," Nembhard said, having been on campus since June. "I'm just trying to come in and do whatever I can to help the team. I think we have a great group of guys and can go far this year."