

Nembhard scores 23 for Team Canada in 110-84 rout of Puerto Rico in The Hammer

There was another Team Canada in action this weekend.

It featured two Aurorans who have distinguished themselves in the NCAA and NBA and now they're sharing the backcourt with the national men's basketball team.

Andrew Nembhard of the Indiana Pacers and Ryan Nembhard of the Dallas Mavericks took to the hardwood in Hamilton on Friday night in Team Canada's 110-84 win over Puerto Rico.

The Nembhard brothers were joined on the TD Coliseum's shimmering new planks by fellow NBAers Dillon Brooks (Phoenix Suns), Nickeil Alexander (Atlanta Hawks), Kyshawn George (Washington Wizards), Leonard Miller (Chicago Bulls), and reigning league MVP Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (Oklahoma City Thunder), as well as a supporting cast of Canadian ballers playing professionally in Europe who suited up in white and red versus the red-jerseyed Puerto Ricans.

The atmosphere in the newly-refurbished TD Coliseum in downtown Hamilton would have been terrific to experience and I would have enjoyed my vantage point from Section 112, Row 15, Seats 13-14 especially after securing the seats in an irresistible Ticketmaster 2-for-1 deal that reduced the prices of our lower bowl corner chairs to \$37.50 each plus service charges.

However, a falling 80-foot maple tree, toppled by tornado-like winds, dragged down two 50-foot maples on to my house, pool, and deck during a freakish afternoon storm that did millions of dollars of damage to northwest Aurora.

So, I tended to the domestic crisis of property destruction, secured an emergency arborist to start hauling away giant trees cracked in half by the wind burst, and cut through the wet brush piled against the patio doors armed with a pruning saw.

Alas, I was forced to miss the swirling courtside performance by Team Canada on Friday night.

The offensively-explosive squad jumped out to an 18-point half-time lead and never trailed.

I also missed driving down the QEW to see superstar Gilgeous-Alexander thriving in his hometown.

The appreciative crowd chanted "MVP" every time Hamilton's favorite son touched the basketball. The 2025 NBA Champ and Finals MVP poured in 26 points to lead all scorers as Canada improved its pristine qualifying record to 5-0.

Even more depressing was not seeing the Nembhard brothers, the pride of Aurora, deliver their hard-nosed, up-tempo playmaking, three-point scoring brand of basketball on the big stage at TD.

Due to tons of falling maple wood, I missed Andrew's big night in The Hammer.

The Indiana Pacers' combo guard scored 13 of his 23 points in the first half, shot 5 for 7 from 3-point range, and added 4 assists and 4 rebounds for the white-jerseyed Canadians.

Ryan Nembhard, who just completed his rookie NBA season with the Dallas Mavericks, added four points in his national team debut with Team Canada.

As compelling as it's been to watch Aurora's Alistair Johnston star for Team Canada on soccer's biggest stage over the last three weeks at Watch Parties all over town, seeing two Aurorans play alongside the best basketball players in the world was doubly delightful for local basketball fans who trekked down to Hamilton or viewed it on TSN.

Game Notes:

Not playing in Hamilton versus Puerto Rico and Jamaica this weekend due to injury and/or contract situations were Kelly ?Captain Canada? Olynyk (San Antonio Spurs), RJ Barrett (Toronto Raptors), Bennedict Mathurin (LA Clippers), Dwight Powell (Dallas Mavericks), Zach Edey (Memphis Grizzlies), and Lu Dort (Oklahoma City Thunder). Although they weren't on the court on Friday night, Edey, Olynyk, and Barrett signed autographs for fans and took pictures with them. All six are fully committed to the Canadian national team for the next three years. The thirteen NBAers form the core of the team that is seeking to qualify for the 2027 World Cup and the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

By Jim Stewart