

Forward gets to work day after signing with team

Associated Press Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

INDIANAPOLIS -- It's on to the next chapter in Chris Copeland's basketball career. This time it's with the Indiana Pacers.

Copeland signed a two-year deal with the Pacers on Sunday and he is getting right to work. Copeland met with reporters on Monday and he didn't hide how he felt to be with an NBA team.

"Being in the NBA is just a blessing in the first place," he said. "Let alone the Knicks or here, two storied franchises, I think it's a great opportunity to come here."

It's been a long road for Copeland, who played in Spain, Germany and Belgium and the NBA Developmental League. He signed with the Pacers after spending his rookie season last year with the New York Knicks as a 28-year-old. But even that contract wasn't guaranteed.

With the Knicks, Copeland averaged 8.7 points on 47.9 percent shooting, including 42.1 percent from 3-point range, and 2.1 rebounds per game.

"He gives us great versatility off our bench," said Pacers coach Frank Vogel. "His story is a great story of perseverance and he reached a level where he was a key player on a 54-win team last year."

The Pacers are rebuilding their bench this offseason. The team signed guard C.J. Watson last week and is counting on Copeland to create a spark off the bench and bring some of the energy the Pacers saw from Tyler Hansbrough, who has reportedly landed with the Toronto Raptors as a free agent.

Copeland arrived in Indianapolis on Saturday. He's listed at 6-foot-8, but is not bulky. That's where the work begins. He has plans to work with former Detroit Pistons forward Ben Wallace.

And what's the goal?

"To get stronger," Copeland said. "We all know what type of guy Ben was. I think I can learn a lot from him on the defensive end. Just getting stronger and following a lot of his routines in the weight room, that's something I'm going to mimic throughout the summer and hopefully it will pay off next year."

Copeland saw firsthand what the Pacers are all about when Indiana knocked the Knicks out of the playoffs in a seven-game series. Copeland put his best foot forward in that series, including a game with 13 points that forced a Game 7.

"It will be different, for sure," Copeland said. "The Pacers put together a good team last year, I'm just hoping to add to it."