Loyola counting on Averkamp

By Shannon Ryan
October 13, 2012

With nine newcomers on Loyola's basketball team, they had no choice but to become acquainted quickly in a tiny elevator in Florence, Italy.

Sweaty after an intense practice during an exhibition tour, the elevator described as the size of a dumbwaiter was stuck, overfilled with five basketball players.

"We saw (6-foot-8, 210-pound freshman Matt) O'Leary coming and said, 'Don't get on,'" forward Ben Averkamp recounted. "He got on, we went up a floor and a half and were stuck for 20 minutes."

It was the first freshman mistake, and Loyola knows there will be more.

But the Ramblers feel more equipped in coach Porter Moser's second campaign to build off last season's 7-23 record, 1-17 in the Horizon League.

"I absolutely don't want to talk about last year," Moser said. "You shake yourself off and rebuild for the future."

Moser praises no one more for helping build for the future than Averkamp.

Averkamp, a senior pre-med student who averaged 15.4 points and 7.1 rebounds per game, will be responsible for leading a team that will depend on some youth to propel them.

Freshman Milton Doyle, a Marshall High graduate who came to Loyola just before the school year began at Kansas, is the first Chicago Public League player in about a decade for the Ramblers. Though Doyle must sit out this season per NCAA regulations, guard Cully Payne, from Schaumburg, should contribute after sitting out last season as a transfer from Iowa.

But this is Averkamp's team.

"When we win at Loyola — and it will happen — Ben will be the first brick," Moser said. "The new players, they don't know the old Ben."

Averkamp went from being a passive player, whom Moser described as someone who would help an opponent up off the floor, to an aggressive leader.

"I see it as being an older brother," he said. "I've been through it three times. I remember how hard it is as a freshman."
Averkamp is working to make things a little less difficult than it has been in recent years.

"I'm excited," he said. "There's so much team competition."