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Mavs' guard impresses father with composure

DALLAS (AP) — Steve Alford will not make anyone's all-rookie team. He will finish this NBA season with a field goal percentage that belies his celebrated touch.

But none of that matters much to Sam Alford. He drove from New Castle, Ind., to watch a recent Dallas Mavericks' homestand and saw his son replace the injured Brad Davis as the team's backup point guard.

In two games, in which Steve averaged eight points and 26 minutes, the elder Alford said he was struck by how far his son had come since filling in for Davis the first six games of the season.

"That was the big thing," Sam Alford said in a telephone interview after his return to Indiana. "The first of the year, he looked very apprehensive — a scared kid. He reminded me of his freshman year in high school, when I brought him up to varsity. But when he played this weekend, he looked like he belonged on the floor."

It is not certain how much longer the former Indiana University star will see extended action, now that Davis' bruised thigh has improved.

The NBA expansion draft is coming in June, and the Mavericks can protect only eight of their 12 players. Dallas can lose only one player, to either Miami or Charlotte. Although there has been speculation that Dallas will keep him and leave former Indiana teammate Uwe Blab unprotected, Alford said he expects to be available to the new teams.

While Miami is likely to be more interested in 7-footer Bill Wennington or Davis, Alford is coveted by the Charlotte front office.

Owner George Shinn said recently he "would love to have Steve Alford," adding that "we need to build our franchise with quality people."

Alford said, "I would imagine I'm not going to be protected. Where I'd be is hard to say. My wife (Tanya) and I love Dallas. I obviously don't have any control over things. If I go to an expansion team, I'd play a lot of minutes."

"But you're going to lose a lot, and I'm not used to that. I'm used to being on a winning team. If I stayed here, I know that when I'm given a chance, I can accomplish things."

In one of the recent games where he played while Davis was hurt, Alford played a season-high 30 minutes against Utah. He was 1-for-4 from the field, but had four steals, three assists and made all four of his free throws. After the game, in which Blab started for James Donaldson, Alford cracked, "It was just like old times — Uwe and I playing 30 minutes and winning big."

In the next night's rout of Denver, Alford scored a season-high 10 points in 22 minutes. He made four of six shots from the field, improving his field goal percentage to 37.3 percent.

Alford was in the lineup during the Mavericks' 51-16 second-half run. He had a couple of major

league passes, including one that would pass the length of the court to help Harper for a 3-point play.

It is worth noting that Alford is working against the likes of John Stockton and Denver's Reggie Miller, two of the NBA's classiest guards this season.

This year has been an education for Alford. Not only has he watched the team's backcourt start, but he had to work against them regularly in practice.

"Those two guys (Harper and Stockton) have really done a lot for me. They worked me, and I've gained a lot of confidence now. I really don't know what to expect at the start of the year."

"I was going into the game to make mistakes, just trying to learn. Now, after a year, I know I can't make mistakes. I know I can't make a big deal. I know I can't make the job."

Alford is signed to a two-year, guaranteed contract worth a total of around \$250,000. His father, who is also his agent, said the two-year deal was a sign that the team wanted to prove that Steve could play in the NBA.

"We were always of the opinion that Steve could play basketball at any level," Sam Alford said. "I believe you have an individual who works as hard as he does, who has the understanding of the game that he does, and who shoots the ball the way he can, there's a place you can

Hassey's three-run homer in 8th leads Oakland to win over Angels

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Ron Hassey's three-run homer in the eighth inning gave the Oakland Athletics a 9-8 victory over the California Angels Wednesday.

Hassey's homer came off reliever Donnie Moore, who came out of the bullpen with two men on after the A's scored an unearned run off Stu Cliburn.

Moore struck out Dave Parker and Mark McGwire before facing Hassey, who hit his first homer of the season.

Johnny Ray's bases-loaded single highlighted a five-run, sixth-inning rally that gave the Angels an 8-5 lead.

MARINERS 5, WHITE SOX 4
SEATTLE — Henry Cotto's two-run homer keyed a four-run sixth inning as the Seattle Mariners rallied for a 5-4 victory over the Chicago White Sox Wednesday.

Rey Quinones singled off short-

stop Ozzie Guillen's glove and scored on Cotto's first homer of the season, off Chicago starter Rick Horton, 2-2.

Glenn Wilson then singled and scored on a triple by Mickey Brantley, who came home on Brick Smith's single to give the Mariners a 5-4 lead.

EXPOS 5, CUBS 1
CHICAGO — Light-hitting Tom Foley singled in the tie-breaking run in the eighth inning and Hubie Brooks hit a three-run homer in the ninth as the Montreal Expos scored a 5-1 victory over the Chicago Cubs.

Andres Galarraga increased his hitting streak to 10 games with three singles and a sixth-inning homer that tied the game 1-1.

The Cubs' fourth loss in a row came in a game delayed for 93 minutes at the start because of rain.

With one out in the eighth, Galar-

raga singled and Jeff Reed walked.

Foley, batting .167, singled Cubs starter Rick Sutcliffe, who scored Galarraga.

Luis Rivera singled and Raines walked in the ninth as Brooks homered off Cubs reliever Les Lancaster.

Jeff Parrett, 1-0, went seven innings before giving way to Tom Burke, who pitched two innings his second save.

PIRATES 8, CARDS 1
PITTSBURGH — Darnell Coles hit a tie-breaking two-run double in the fifth inning and Jose Lind added a two-run single in the sixth as Pittsburgh Pirates defeated St. Louis Cardinals 8-1 Wednesday night.

The Pirates, whose 10-3 record is their best since they opened the 1962, won for the eighth time their last nine games.

