

Former Worcester Tech stars Victor Florentino, Brendon Hamilton reunite to lead Westfield State

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Vic Florentino was in the stands at WPI's Harrington Auditorium that marvelous March night in 2019 when his former Worcester Tech teammates beat Abington in dramatic fashion to capture the Division 4 state championship, the first state boys' basketball title for a Worcester public high school.

The season before, when Florentino was a senior, he helped the Eagles to a 22-4 record and appearance in the Central Mass. Division 4 final.

"Vic laid the foundation and showed us how to win," said Brendon Hamilton, the senior star of Tech's 2019 team.

Florentino and Hamilton, both former T&G Super Team honorees, are together again at Westfield State, and it is Hamilton's hope and objective this year to share a championship with his best friend.

"His senior year (at Worcester Tech) and my junior year, we felt like we could have won (a state title) that year," Hamilton said. "That's kind of motivation for this year. Now that he's here, maybe we can run it back and get him a ring."

The Owls, 10-2 and winners of five straight, open MASCAC play Wednesday against MCLA.

Florentino, who averaged 14.6 points, 6 rebounds and 4 assists his senior season at Worcester Tech, played for two years at Quinsigamond Community College before transferring to Fitchburg State. He never played

for the Falcons as COVID canceled the 2020-21 season for all MASCAC teams.

While working out together in Worcester over the spring and summer, Hamilton talked to Florentino about possibly joining him at Westfield for his senior season.

“He had all the influence on me coming here,” Florentino said. “He said, ‘Come over here. We can work. The team is going to be pretty good.’ We talked about winning a championship together. We talked to the coaches, and then I was here. We’re being back to being high school buddies and just having fun out there.”

During the first half of Westfield’s season, the 6-foot-2 Florentino played limited minutes off the bench in seven games, but Hamilton expects he will make bigger contributions in conference games.

“He’s going to do big things for this team,” Hamilton said.

The 6-foot-6 Hamilton, who was the 2019-20 MASCAC Rookie of the Year, is so far putting up player-of-the-year numbers as a junior.

Hamilton is averaging 15.4 points and 15.7 rebounds, which ranks second in NCAA Division 3.

“I’ve always been a good rebounder,” said Hamilton, who averaged 14 rpg his senior year of high school and 7.2 as a Westfield freshman. “This year, the ball is kind of falling into my hands. It’s just a blessing.”

During Westfield’s five-game winning streak, Hamilton is averaging 20.6 points on almost 60 percent shooting and 18 rebounds. He has posted a double-double in eight games this season.

“He’s very energetic (on the glass),” Florentino said. “Our practices are harder than games and our big guys compete and get after each other, so when game time comes, it’s easier for him. Then, it’s his hard work in the weight room and his God-given athleticism. He lets the game come to him; he doesn’t force it. That’s why he’s having great success.”

As a freshman at Westfield, Hamilton averaged 6.8 points, and led the MASCAC in field goal percentage (61%) while helping the Owls to a share of the conference regular-season crown.

Hard work in the offseason with Florentino and their other friends in Worcester-area gyms contributed to Hamilton's continued development, he said.

Westfield State and Salem State were the MASCAC preseason co-favorites.

The Owls opened the year with five straight wins.

"It's all practice," Hamilton said. "Coach (Rich Sutter) puts us in the right position to win. We have a special team this year. We're blessed."