

## Brown and Ortiz: Raiders' one-two punch

By Tom Archdeacon | Wednesday, February 14, 2007, 11:29 PM

FAIRBORN — Todd Brown led Wright State to its first 20-win season in 14 years Wednesday night thanks to a pair of set-up men, both of whom are magicians in their own right:

One was DaShaun Wood, the wily senior point guard who had six assists.

The other was Tony Ortiz, the chunky, middle aged guy at the end of the bench, the one with the tight sweater and the easy smile, the one who should have gotten the MVP honors for Wright State's 68-55 victory over Cleveland State at the Nutter Center.

Brown scored a career-high 22 points and afterward he credited Wood, who often drove to the hoop, drew the defensive pressure and then dished the ball to him for the open shot.

But afterward, his real praise went to Ortiz, the team trainer, whom he said "is the reason I could play like I did tonight."

The 6-foot-6 freshman forward severely sprained his ankle during the first half of the Raiders' game at Illinois-Chicago on Feb. 7. He was unable to play the second half, ended up on crutches and that sent Raiders' brass into a panic.

After struggling a bit to make the switch from high school to college ball the first part of the season — he scored in double figures just once in WSU's initial 11 games — Brown had become a force after that, hitting double figures in 11 of the next 14 games.

After Brown's misstep at UIC, Ortiz went to work.

"We iced his ankle down on the flight home," Ortiz said. "And once when we got in — it was around 1 a.m. — we came straight over to the training room and put his foot in a bucket of slush for another 30 minutes or so."

The next day — after Dr. Matt Lawless, the team doctor, checked the X-rays and gave the go ahead — Ortiz and his staff made Brown's ankle a top priority and spent 10 hours treating it.

They even had a special Game Ready compression boot shipped in overnight from California so Brown could start using it Friday, less than 48 hours after he'd been hurt.

And then there were their trips to the Wright State swimming pool.

"I stayed on the deck," Ortiz joked. "If I'd have jumped in, 10 people would have had to get out."

As Brown laughed, Ortiz pleaded: "Hey, you don't have to put that in there."

Too late.

Besides, it shows you Ortiz' light touch and that — along with his expertise — is what makes him a favorite of Raiders' athletes who already are stressed when they are brought to him ailing and hobbled.

"Tony told me to get in the pool and it worked," said Brown, who said he put on his basketball practice shorts and waded into the shallow end as the WSU swim team trained at the far end.

"I just stayed out of the swimmers' way, listened to T.O. and did my movements, my exercises and it paid off," Brown said.

During Saturday night's Butler game, Brown still was stepping gingerly on his braced foot and finished with just one point in 19 minutes.

Brown said his ankle ached again Wednesday morning when he got out of bed and he wasn't sure how much he'd be able to play against Cleveland State. He joined Ortiz in the Nutter Center training room a couple of hours before the game and by the time he went onto the floor for warm-ups — this time wearing just a wrap instead of a brace — he admitted:

"I didn't feel too bad....I figured maybe I would be able to do something for the team tonight."

Call that an understatement.

He made eight of 14 shots — four of seven from three-point range — added five rebounds and played 36 minutes as the Raiders upped their record to 20-8.

After the game — as his teammates showered and went off with family and friends — Brown headed back to the training room where Ortiz was waiting with another treatment.

The high scorer and the set-up man. On this night they were the best one-two punch the Raiders had.