

Polite Leads Seminoles into AdvoCare Invitational

Blake VonCannon

Communications Assistant

Midway through the second half in its season-opening showdown against rival Florida, Florida State began to put the final exclamation point on its 21-point victory over the Gators.

Leading by three points, the Seminoles had just recovered an offensive rebound and were running a play in their offensive zone. Graduate transfer guard David Nichols drove into the free throw line and kicked the ball out to redshirt freshman guard Anthony Polite, who was two feet behind the 3-point line.

Ready and waiting for the pass, Polite sank the triple with a hand in his face. For Polite, the shot marked the beginning of a promising career -- one that gives Seminole fans déjà vu of the past, and a breath of excitement for the future.

Born and raised in Lugano, Switzerland, Polite grew up with basketball in his blood. When reading his name, it's hard to ignore the legacy that his family has in Tallahassee.

Polite's father, Michael Polite, played for the Seminoles from 1988-1991, and averaged 10.8 points and 6.8 rebounds a game during his career. Michael went on to play professionally in Switzerland, where Anthony would idolize his father and dream of playing basketball.

"I was very young when he was still playing, but it was awesome because all my friends were asking to take pictures with my dad, and that made me want to be like him when I was older," Polite said. "That's where I'm at right now, wearing a Florida State jersey and I'm extremely excited."

While the two share the same last name and love for basketball, their games could not be more different. Michael Polite made a living in the paint, averaging 8.5 rebounds his last two seasons in Tallahassee. Anthony on the other hand, is a big guard known for impacting all aspects of the court.

"He was more of a rebounder and an inside player than I am," said Polite. "I'm more of an outside guy. He always tried to teach me on the defense to see ball and man, and on the offense side to be aware where every player is and to be aggressive."

While Anthony Polite would follow in his father's footsteps to Tallahassee as a Seminole basketball player, his path of growing up in Switzerland was much different.

Switzerland offers a much different lifestyle than the United States. Being in an area where cultures, lifestyles and attitudes are much different allowed Anthony to grow up with a different mindset.

"It's different over there," said Polite. "We have seasons and in the winter, there's snow and it gets really cold. I learned to speak three languages (Italian, French and English) ."

Living in a different culture, Anthony would adapt and grow a love for soccer, Switzerland's most popular sport. Playing soccer with friends at school, the love of the sport continued to grow and ultimately led to a hiatus from basketball that spanned from ages eight to 12.

Polite's love of basketball, however, never went away. When he picked up the sport again, Polite used hard work and determination to grow into one of the  country's top prospects.

European basketball offers a different dimension than basketball in the United States. In an area that highlights fundamentals over raw athleticism, Polite credits Swiss basketball into making him into the player he is today.

“It’s not as physical and not as fast of a paced as it is over here,” Polite said. “It’s a great style and helped me develop my skills when I was young. When I started at first, I was more of an inside player and my coach always insisted on working on ball handling and shooting, so I developed into a guard.”

With Polite growing his game to an elite level in Switzerland, he knew that in order to follow his dream of playing collegiate basketball like his father, he would have to play overseas in the United States.

The Polites moved to Boca Raton, Fla., and Anthony enrolled in St. Andrews High School. At age 14, he found himself in a situation where he was far from family, knew very few people and only a fraction of the language. It was his experiences of playing basketball across Switzerland that eased the transition.

“I actually had the chance to leave home for one year and play in the French part of Switzerland,” Polite said. “I was five hours away from home and that helped me be able to be away from my mom a little bit. It’s not easy to be away from your family at such a young age, but I think my experiences made it a little easier to leave from Switzerland. It wasn’t easy, especially with the language in school, but I got used to it and I loved it.”

He would settle into to his new home and take matters into his own hands. Polite starred at St. Andrews School, finishing his high school career with 1,545 points and being named the 2017 All-Palm Beach 6A-1A Player of the Year. As a team captain in his junior and senior years, Polite led the school to a 51-3 record and a district title.

While starring in the Boca Raton area, Polite earned several Division I offers, including from Duke, Miami, Pittsburgh and Virginia Tech.

One can call it a family affair, destiny or fate, but Polite ultimately followed in his father’s footsteps and decided to play basketball at Florida State. While family ties were certainly a factor, it was the brotherhood the team offered that stood out to Polite.

“When I came to visit Florida State, the coaches and players made me feel like I was already a part of the program,” said Polite. “They stayed in touch with me, and that was a big part.”

Entering Florida State’s training camp in the fall of 2017, Polite joined the team with one objective, to help contribute to the team in any way possible.

Anthony averaged 6.0 points, 4.0 assists and 2.5 rebounds in the Seminoles’ two exhibition games, and made his regular-season debut against George Washington.

After appearing in one game, Polite suffered injuries to both of his knees, forcing him to miss the remainder of the 2017-18 season.

With the Seminoles making a run to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament, Polite was forced to the sideline.

He took the redshirt season as an opportunity to grow.

“On a positive note, it helped me and made me mature,” said Polite. “I was able to see and learn the game from the sideline. I was able to come in this year with an advantage and start as if I played as a freshman.”

Now fully healthy, Polite has worked his way into coach Leonard Hamilton's deep rotation. Through three games, he is averaging 6.3 points, which is boosted by a career-high nine against Canisius earlier this week.

"Anthony is an important part of our team" Hamilton said. "He was like a sponge last season. His desire to learn more about the game while he wasn't playing has allowed him to be a better player this season. Anthony was able to study our team for an entire year and that has definitely helped him. We look for him to make major contributions not only this season, but throughout his career."