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Student's internship culminates with NBA title

By **Dawn Pauli**, contributing writer

When the 2003-2004 school year began, recent graduate Ryan Hoover, CAS '04, was an OU senior anticipating his final year of college. Ten months later after serving as the Detroit Pistons' video coordinator assistant, he found himself in the Pistons' NBA championship parade, riding with the assistant coaches and waving to nearly one million basketball fans.

"I just had to pinch myself," Hoover said about being introduced on stage at Hart Plaza alongside the Pistons players and coaches. "I had a grin from ear-to-ear. I was just so thankful and grateful to be there. It was awesome."

As the celebration continued back at The Palace of Auburn Hills, Hoover again found himself on stage in front of 25,000 fans. "It was pretty darn neat," he said.

Hoover traveled to Los Angeles with the team during the NBA finals, celebrating the first game victory against the Lakers and experiencing the agony of defeat when the Pistons lost in the final seconds of the second game.

"The plane ride home from California was the longest ride ever. Chauncey, Rip, Ben and Tayshaun usually talk and play cards," said Hoover, who always sat next to the foursome on the plane. "They didn't say a word the entire way home. It was so disappointing."

Just a few days later, Hoover was celebrating at The Palace with the team when the Pistons swept the next three games to win the NBA championship, beating the heavily favored, star-studded Lakers in the finals. He attended the after-game party with the players and their family and friends.

He wasn't surprised the Pistons won. "As soon as we acquired Rasheed, I knew we had a great chance."

Hoover, whose had the chance to play one-on-one and two-on-two basketball with the players, doesn't have a favorite, saying "they're all great guys."

Hoover played basketball at OU until an injury left him on the sidelines. He joined the Pistons as an intern in October when the season began. His hard work and dedication to the team earned him a position as the video coordinator assistant, analyzing game tapes with Pistons assistant coach Pat Sullivan and providing game tapes to individual players analyzing their tendencies.

Hoover, a communications major, completed his last semester at OU the week after the Pistons won the NBA championship. He is now searching for a job and hopes it will involve basketball.

"My future is uncertain, but my fingers are crossed. I would love to be a part of the Pistons," Hoover said. "They treat each other so well. I want to be a part of basketball, and the Pistons are a first-class organization."

SUMMARY

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