

Eric Gaines vs UNC Asheville 12/29/2023 - In Person

Gaines is a lanky athlete, who has a shorter, skinnier frame, but his speed and leaping ability make up for his size. He has a nonchalant body language, but he showed a good attitude and was positive with his teammates and coaches.

Gaines exhibited a unique skillset for a lead guard offensively: athleticism with his speed and vertical ability, as well as his distribution and scoring with the ball. He put pressure on the rim and made solid decisions playmaking for himself and others in transition and the half-court offense. His pace and poise offensively while putting pressure on the rim and controlling the UAB offense stood out as well. He moved well without the ball in his hands, backdooring his man while being overplayed and available in a two-man game with his big. For example, he threw a post-entry pass to his big, cut immediately off the ball to the basket, and finished with his left. Another play that stood out to me with Gaines, specifically his unselfish distributing, was at the 17:45 mark of the second half, he made a nice read in transition from the right side making a skip pass to his open teammate in the left corner who connected on the three. He showed he has the ability to create for himself as well off the dribble.

Defensively, he navigated screens on and off the ball in a couple of ways either fighting through over the top or taking the quickest route, especially when he covered non-shooters. When helping on the post from the wing, Gaines did a solid job digging and staying active guarding multiple bodies. In the match, he forced two turnovers just off digs. At times he can lose position going for steals and giving up easy buckets. For example, at the 8:48 mark of the first half, he was switched onto a big who quickly identified the mismatch and posted up Gaines. He initially played behind the post, but once the ball was in the air on the post-entry pass, he went for the steal and gave up the layup. Another play that stood out to me was late in the second half on a BLOB play. Gaines first did a solid job communicating and pointing out his initial switch with his teammate and then he switched with another teammate but was a step late identifying his new matchup. Once he recognized his man, instead of chasing over the top, he took the quickest route and displayed tremendous leaping ability coming up with the block on the three-point attempt.

Gaines shot the ball well from three and distributed the ball to his teammates effectively both in transition and in the half-court offense. He showed high IQ while navigating screens and he communicated well through actions. One area of improvement for Gaines is to not risk getting out of position on steals and putting a whole game together maintaining his aggression to score the ball.

Gaines doing a better job identifying when to chase his man through screens if they are shooters and when to take the quickest route.