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Basketball: OC's Brown a game-time decision

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Odessa College's Josh Brown powers his way around South Plains center Victor Holloway earlier this season. Brown, a catalyst for the Wranglers, may not play against Howard College tonight.

Josh Brown of the Odessa College men's basketball team was feeling it.

The Wranglers were trailing Monday night against New Mexico Junior College in Hobbs, N.M., but Brown was ready for a rally.

"I knew we were going to come back," he said. "We started the second half hot and were cutting into the lead."

Then Brown went for a steal against the Thunderbirds, tumbled to the floor and didn't get up for several minutes. When he did, he headed to the locker room with the Odessa College training staff, walking gingerly after injuring his back.

"When I went for the steal, I got an elbow in the back at the same time," Brown said. "My back kind of spasmed and I couldn't get back on the floor."

"It was killing me, sitting there and watching, because we should have won that game."

Instead, the Wranglers dropped a 57-48 decision to NMJC, their second Western Junior College Athletic Conference loss in three games.

Odessa College, ranked 10th in the nation, will look to right the ship at 7:45 tonight when it hosts No. 7 Howard College at the OC Sports Center.

With or without Brown, the Hawks post a formidable challenge for the Wranglers (18-3 overall, 3-2 conference).

Odessa College coach Dennis Helms would like his team to take the floor with Brown in the lineup. But the sophomore, from Ruston, La., likely will be a game-time decision for Helms and the Wranglers' training staff.

"Josh is a big part of our team," Helms said. "He's a very vital offensive cog and plays very good defense, too.

"I challenged him at halftime in New Mexico and he responded by coming out and getting us back in the game. He was in the act of making a big steal for us when he got hurt."

Brown has been making big plays, along with the rest of his teammates, all season and is one of the key reasons the Wranglers are as highly-ranked as they are heading into tonight's matchup. Averaging 17 points a game, Brown has a knack of being in the right spot at the right time for Odessa College, ready to take the big shot or get teammates involved in the offensive flow of the game.

That's what made it so hard Monday as he watched the Wranglers struggle to find a rhythm on the floor after his departure.

"I don't know what happened," Brown said of a first half in which Odessa College had 16 points and 17 turnovers. "We just couldn't put the ball in the basket and we're a much better team than that, way better than last year, and we are going to have to go out and prove it again against Howard because they are going to come in here looking to keep us down.

"I'm going to do everything I can to be on the court to help my teammates."

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