With three games left in the season, the youthful Cleveland State men's basketball team is starting to prepare for the future.

"I told them in the locker room that the future doesn't start next year, it starts right now," said Vikings head coach Gary Waters. "We can't go into next season with a losing mentality. We got to go in with a winning mentality."

Waters said the winning mentality does not have to do with wins and losses, but how they perform in games and how they execute what they are trying to do.

CSU's future was on display in the Vikings' 88-67 victory over Milwaukee on Sunday afternoon at the Wolstein Center.

The Vikings' guard tandem of freshman Bryn Forbes and sophomore Charlie Lee combined for 44 points against Milwaukee.

Forbes, a native of Lansing, Mich., tied his career-high record with 24 points on 9-of-12 shooting from the field.

"I think Forbes should be Freshman [Newcomer] of the Year," said Waters. "He has been the most consistent player."

Forbes has scored in double figures in 19 of his last 21 games. He's 13th in the Horizon League in scoring, averaging 12.2 points per game. In Horizon play, Forbes has been even better, averaging 14.9 points per game (sixth-best).

Lee, a Milwaukee native, torched his hometown team with 20 points—17 of them coming in the second half.

"Coach Waters had a talk with me about getting back to the way I was playing the first 10 games of the season," said Lee, who also added six assists, five rebounds and two steals. "[Waters told me] just slow down and let things come to me."

Lee leads the Horizon in assists (4.9) and is 19th in scoring (10.8).

The Vikings also got a lift from highly-touted freshman Junior Lomomba, who contributed 11 points, four rebounds and five assists off the bench.

Two of Lomomba's three field goals were dunks.

"My foot is getting a lot better," said Lomomba, who went 5-of-6 from the line. "That's how I used to play [in high school]."

Waters said Lomomba's foot is still not 100 percent.

"He still can't push off that foot on that first step," said Waters. "He's so much better then [what you seen today]. He can be a major key for us [down the stretch]."

The first half was a tightly contested game with four ties and six lead changes. After the first 20 minutes, it was deadlocked at 37-37 at the half.

The second half belonged to CSU. The Vikings outscored the Panthers 51-30 in the final 20 minutes.

"In the second half, I thought we came out ready to defend," said Waters. "I felt our defensive movement was better today. We didn't have many breakdowns."

After allowing the Panthers to shoot 55.6 percent in the opening half, CSU's defense held Milwaukee to just eight field goals in the second half.

The Vikings (13-15, 5-9 Horizon League) started the second half on a 31-12 run and never looked back.

Lomomba's second dunk of the game put CSU up 63-49 with 10:14 left. Then 15 seconds later, a Lee to Marlin Mason alley-oop put the exclamation point on the victory.

Lee's fourth three-pointer of the night put CSU up by 20, 71-51. They never trailed by less then 20 the rest of the game.

CSU shot 52.5 percent from the field.

"We hit some shots today," said Waters. "When you hit some shots things look better."

Junior guard Jordan Aaron led Milwaukee (6-22, 2-12 HL) with 18 points. The Panthers also got double-digit scoring from freshman forward Austin
Arians
(15) and senior guard Paris
Gulley
(12).

With the win, CSU remains in the hunt to host a first-round home game in next month's Horizon League tournament. The Vikings are a game-and-a-half behind sixth-place Illinois-Chicago (6-7 HL) for that final first-round home game seed.

"If we can get that home court advantage that gives us a step further to move to what we want to do," said Waters.

Photo courtesy of Cleveland State athletics