

Davis no-brainer as player of the year - 2-time - Herald-Times (Bloomington, IN) - April 19, 2011

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Worth the price of admission.

And then some.

Bloomington basketball fans have had a rare privilege the past four years watching Darwin "Dee" Davis Jr., play basketball.

Not too many guys get named state finals MVP twice. And it's hard to recall anybody in Monroe County annals who has played the point with more pizzazz.

All five players named to the 2011 Herald-Times First-Team All-Region boys' basketball squad — South's Davis and Spencer Turner, North's Damon Brown, Edgewood's Levi Garner and Eastern Green's J.T. Yoho — were unanimous selections in the balloting by the H-T sports staff, but Davis was the unanimous choice for Player of the Year.

Davis was pretty much No. 1 in a category of one.

"Even if you've watched him for a while, you still see things Dee does on the court and sit back and say to yourself, 'How did he do that?'" South coach J.R. Holmes said recently. "A lot of times I'd look at Criss (Beyers, South assistant coach) or somebody on the bench and say, 'Well, that's two points for us, but I don't know how he did it.'

"He'd get through a bunch of defenders, or finish over a tall guy, or find somebody with a pass nobody else could see coming. I think sometimes people start taking it for granted, after seeing him play for four years of high school, three years here (at South after a freshman year at North). You start almost expecting those things. But it's really special."

In addition to descriptions of dazzling derring-do, the numbers don't lie.

Davis finishes as Monroe County's No. 3 all-time scorer with 1,569 points, trailing only Garrett Butcher and Sean May, and in just three seasons at South is the school's career leader in assists with 417.

Davis said those numbers "reflect a lot of hard work, but also the fact I played with really good teammates. At least half of those things, like assists, come from my teammates. They have to hit shots for me to get assists, and that's true of a lot of those statistics. It's really more of a team thing."

Holmes noted Davis also ranks No. 2 all-time at South in 2-point field goal percentage, a category

usually reserved for big men taking inside shots, at 61 percent in that category (behind only Jordan Forney's 64 percent career mark). He said hard work helped Davis progress as a shooter.

"Maybe what I enjoyed the most about Dee was that he took things in his game he wasn't quite as good at and worked on them," Holmes said. "When he got here as a sophomore, he was a poor 3-point shooter. He ended up leading the team this season in 3-point percentage (.411)."

That sort of thing doesn't surprise Dee's dad, **Darwin Davis Sr.**, who knows something about athletic success himself as a former player for the New York Mets.

"Dee understands success is a journey," Darwin Sr., said. "You never arrive. You just keep working at it. That's true whether it's in a sport, in the classroom, in being a good person. If you always keep striving, things tend to work out."

"I'm proud to say I think he's a great person, outside of being a great player blessed with skills, and I can say he's still working on it all. He's been a joy to raise, a privilege to raise, both Dee and his sister Dominique (a Batchelor Middle School student and a volleyball prospect). Dee has been an inspiration for her, too."

Davis drew inspiration from guards such as Jon Holmes, the coach's son he just surpassed on the all-time county scoring list, and more recently Desmond Stephens. And he relished the chance to share the South backcourt, as a sophomore on South's unbeaten Class 4A champs, with 2009 Mr. Basketball Jordan Hulls.

"Dee's freshman year, I thought he was primarily a 'points' guard instead of a true point guard, with a lot of one-on-one stuff," Holmes said. "He then became more of a point guard who could score. Playing with Jordy his sophomore year really helped him, I think, because he didn't have to come in and score like that."

Davis hopes to make a similar transition next year at Xavier, where he could spend a season sharing some backcourt duties with standout senior point guard Terrell "Tu" Holloway.

"It'd be just like that, when I came in here, and Jordy was here as a senior," Davis said. "Everybody looked to Jordy, and that helped me just focus on learning that whole year. (Holloway) knows the offense, knows the scene. He could just teach me, over the course of a season, how to better handle and manage the game at the college level. The speed of the game will be different. The overall level of athleticism will be different."

But Davis' level of athleticism is a little different, too.

"Dee is one of those kids coming through who, with some of the things he's able to do, it's not taught," Holmes said. "It's instinctive, a natural gift."

A gift shared with anybody lucky enough to watch him play.

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