

# Five from the line with Damian Lillard

*The Trail Blazers' new guard talks about staying grounded while he's flying high*

**BY ISRAEL BAYER**  
STAFF WRITER

**D**amian Lillard is the real deal. Having grown up in Oakland, Calif. and going to college at Weber State in Utah, Lillard has flown under the radar for many basketball fans.

Lillard was a first-round draft pick by the Portland Trail Blazers. On Nov. 3, Lillard joined Oscar Robertson as one of the only players to record 20 or more points and more than seven assists in their first three rookie season games.

Lillard recently talked with Street Roots the Trail Blazers' annual Harvest Dinner about his experience as a young basketball player and being humbled by the experience of playing in the NBA.

**Israel Bayer:** *You recently tweeted, "I'm humble because I'm blessed. I could have been someone else and someone struggling could have been me." Can you talk more on what you meant by this?*

**Damian Lillard:** To me, it means I am humbled because I am blessed to be in this position. For a lot of people, sometimes poverty and hard times are out of people's control. It's hard to know where we all may end up. A lot of unfortunate things come up for some people. Not only was I able to go to college, experience that, and be successful. I am now making millions of dollars playing basketball. It's a blessing to be here.

It could easily have been me or my family that fell on hard times and ended up homeless. Some of these folks could have been living the life that I live.

**I.B.:** *You grew up in Oakland, so you know about poverty.*

**D.L.:** It was tough. I come from a neighborhood where a lot was going on — violence, drugs, and a lot of homeless people. It's stuff like this that I take to heart because I wish someone did something like the Harvest Dinner for people in my neighborhood. There were a lot of homeless people who don't have this opportunity.

I am happy that I can come here and experience it all and talk to people. It's funny, because I was just telling somebody that I would like to do something like this in my hometown. Just so that people know you want to help. You never know what peoples' stories are. Anytime you can give back and help people, it's a good thing.

**I.B.:** *You have talked about your father being a role model. How important was having a male role model growing up?*

**D.L.:** It means a lot when you have somebody that is solid and somebody that has really been a father figure for you. They can steer you in the right direction. They can be that

See **LILLARD**, page 4



**"You never know what peoples' stories are. Anytime time you can give back and help people, it's a good thing."**

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TRAIL BLAZERS

## Inside



**Sex, lies and homelessness**

*A plan to sexual assault on the streets*

Page 3



**Defending Rachel Corrie**

*Activist's parents continue their fight for justice in Israel*

Page 5



**The Judah Explosion**

*JSBX member Judah Bauer delivers a punch*

Page 8