

Final Season: James Davis

by Jerry Thompson

In last Saturday's game versus Stanford, James Davis' shooting was so "hot" that during a timeout fellow senior Luke Jackson took a towel and fanned him to cool him off! This season "Junior", the 5-10 guard from Vancouver, has made 50 of 103 three-point attempts (48.5%) and is even more accurate in Pac-10 play making 53% of his shots beyond the arc. Sometimes they are not only beyond the college line (19'9"), they are a few feet beyond the NBA distance (23 feet). So, up to what distance (or zip code) is Davis comfortable? He said he feels good at 23 or 24 feet, the NBA distance, but James told me to write 30 feet "for the record"! With his 3rd three-pointer in the Stanford game, Davis surpassed Luke Ridnour's 3-point career total of 203. Going into the Oregon State game James has made 206 and needs 18 more in the next 9 games to pass Terik Brown (223) on Oregon's all-time list. Orlando Williams, known for his high arcing rainbows, has a firm hold on first place with 282 in 112 games.

Since he picked up a basketball in elementary school James Davis, Jr. has enjoyed shooting the long ball and he attributes his skill to his family. "My dad (James Sr.) was a pretty good shooter and he's a pretty good shooter now. He was a track star in high school (Madison in Portland)." James said shooting is "definitely something that runs in the Davis family chain-line" because his nephew, his cousins, and his brothers can shoot the ball. It's just a God-given gift." James' family is full of athletes: "My older brother (18) is playing basketball at the College of the



Photo by: Walt Grondona of Walt's Photography

James has developed into a complete player, as he has taken on the point guard duties.

Redwoods. My youngest brother (16) runs track at Camas and my sister is a talented volleyball player."

Davis grew up in northeast Portland through the 5th grade and then moved to Vancouver, Washington for middle school and high school. He said he had a good childhood and he said it was a "nice transition" to go across the river and live in a nicer neighborhood and go to nicer schools. Davis credited his dad as the one who has influenced him the most: "by his hard work and dedication and being the best father he can be. He works hard every day and everything he puts forth is for the family. He never puts himself first. He's behind the scenes. He does whatever he can do to make life better for his family. He does 'the hustle'. He does gym floors, he drives Greyhound buses. He does anything he can do to get money for the family. He comes to all the home games and some away games." Davis remains close to both parents. His mother is currently stationed in Iraq: "Mom is in Iraq specializing in communications and drives a Hummer around and sets up communications with walkie-talkies." He said she moves to a new area about every two weeks. James said "it's tough" because he writes her every week but she only receives about half of the letters because she is moving so much and the mail gets lost. With such serious matters on his mind James keeps the game of basketball in perspective and doesn't put too much pressure on himself: "It's just being confident and just going out there and playing and having fun and not letting it become too big a thing."

During his career at Oregon, James

has become much more than just a designated 3-point shooter. Last year his defense noticeably improved and this year he has played the point guard position after Aaron Brooks was injured. He has shown the ability to penetrate and either pass or go to the hoop. However, there's no getting around the fact that Davis is an extraordinary long-range shooter and that's how he will be most remembered as a player. He attributes his improvement over his career to three factors: becoming stronger, practice, and the coaches' confidence in him. James said he hasn't altered his shot since high school. "Lifting weights and getting stronger has made it a lot easier and I can go further now." During the season he

doesn't do any extra shooting as he believes the 3 hour practices are enough. During the off-season he typically shoots about 500 3-pointers per day. "I have always been comfortable shooting the long 3's but now the coaches have more confidence in me knowing I have played in a lot of games, been in some battles, and won some games for the program. Their confidence in me gives me all the confidence in the world."

Davis has a shooter's mentality and stays positive: "I go in with an open mind. I've been playing this game for so long I know that I'm going to have off nights. Just being a shooter you know that they're not always going to fall, but you go in with a positive frame of mind knowing that the next shot you shoot is going to go in. You come in there and if your teammates find you and you get in rhythm, the hoop looks huge. It seems like no matter what you throw up it's going to go in. My perfect play is coming off screens and knocking down shots. I'd love to get a dunk though." James wants to get one before the season ends, but he's not too optimistic. He said if he got a steal and breakaway he'd probably lay it up. "If we're up big and I'm on a fast break I'll definitely give it a try."

Time has gone fast for Davis who was one of four players in the outstanding 2000 recruiting class of Luke Jackson, Luke Ridnour, and Jay Anderson. "Once you're in the grind it's like 'dang, this is a long season', but right now looking back, it has gone by so fast. When I came in as a freshman the older guys are telling you 'don't take any day for granted because it's going to be gone fast.' In your freshman year you feel like, 'man I've got four years here. Now it seems just like yesterday when Anthony (Lever) and David Jackson were telling me how it flies by.'" James plans on playing basketball overseas and he's not sure what he wants to do after basketball. He doesn't see himself coaching though because of all the time it takes away from one's family. "I'd like to get a good job at Nike." Nike undoubtedly receives a large volume of applicants, so obtaining employment there is typically considered a "longshot". Hmmm, maybe James' odds are pretty good after all! **O**

MORE ABOUT JAMES

Favorite Music:

Rap, Memphis Bleak

Favorite Pro Athlete:

Michael Jordan

Favorite Movie:

Lake Placid, Horror Flicks

Favorite Food: **Pizza**

Favorite Actor:

Denzel Washington

Fun Activity:

Bowling (high: 240)

Favorite TV Show:

The Dave Chappell Show

On my wall I have a poster of:

Michael Jordan

Favorite Class: **Ethnic Studies**

Funniest Teammate:

Brandon Lincoln

Most Influential Person:

Dad, James Davis, Sr.

If I was stranded on an island,

I'd like to be with... : **J-Lo**

Favorite Duck Moment:

Freddie Jones' last second shot at USC in 2002 to seal the Pac-10 crown.

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