



Attitude:

An Asset On and Off the Court

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When you first meet Antawn Jamison, it's hard not to instantly like him.

Maybe it's that Kool-Aid smile that he flashes or the way that he says "Whassup, buddy?," even if he has never met you before. He definitely breaks the stereotype of a conceited basketball player.

That's right, Jamison is a star. The funny thing is that he is probably the only person that doesn't know it yet.

From the moment he put on that number 33 Carolina jersey and set foot on the Smith Center floor this year, Jamison has made his presence known throughout collegiate basketball.

Averaging over 15 points and 9.8 rebounds a game, he is the first UNC freshman to earn First Team All-ACC honors. He is also the first freshman to ever lead the ACC in field goals, with 62 percent. You may remember his 20 rebound performance against Virginia, tying the UNC record; or maybe his 31 points and buzzer beating shot in overtime against Maryland.

Whatever the case, it's unanimous that Jamison has made his mark on Carolina basketball. What's his secret? Determination and a strong passion for the game.

"You can't be a good player without love for the game," Jamison said. "With me, I work hard to be the best I can."

A native of Shreveport, Louisiana, Jamison moved to North Carolina almost nine years ago. It was then that he began to realize that maybe he should give this basketball thing a shot.

"As a kid I played all sports," he said. "I really thought that I was going to play football. But as I older, it seemed as though all of the other guys got shorter and wider and I got taller. Once I moved to Charlotte, I took basketball more seriously."

By the time Jamison ended his career at Providence High School, he was the school's all-time scoring and rebounding leader. At the close of his senior year, he averaged 27 points, 13 rebounds, 3 assists, and 4.5 blocks per game.

In addition to being named the North Carolina Player of the Year, he represented the state in the McDonald's All-American Game and the Capital All Star Classic, where he gathered most valuable player honors.

Now a college basketball player, Jamison is often pursued by Tar Heel fans seeking autographs and photos. So far he seems to be taking all the attention in stride.

"I understand that for some I am a role model and I just tend to pay more attention to what I do," Jamison said. "It makes you want to work harder seeing that people are recognizing and appreciating what you do."

At the same time, he admits all of the attention can be a little overwhelming at times, especially when people expect so much from him, forgetting he, like everyone else, is a regular person.

Balancing the pressures of the classroom and the basketball court takes some effort from an individual. However, Jamison maintains his strong presence on campus by his own means of getting away.

He often returns home to Charlotte, or the Queen City as he affectionately calls it, for a home-cooked meal and to spend time with family and friends. At school, Jamison devotes much of his spare time playing video games and hanging out with friends. Jamison is especially close to freshman teammates Vince Carter and Ademola Okulaja.

Realizing he has athletic talents some kids can only dream of having, Jamison counts his blessings and doesn't take life for granted. He attributes this to a strong family background, but especially to his late grandmother.

Jamison has high hopes for his future.

"A ring (NCAA championship) would be good," said Jamison, who aspires to be wealthy, happy, and remain close to his family. Going to the NBA is also something Jamison hopes to achieve, hopefully after he receives his degree.

"I came to college to use my talent to get an education," Jamison said. "I plan to stay, but to be an athlete in my position, it's hard to say if I'll stay for the full four years. It depends on my family situation and the goals that I have made for myself."

It seems there isn't much of anything that Jamison won't be able to handle in his upcoming years at UNC. His attitude is definitely determining his altitude.