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Panther Sports News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Troy Richardson (Dolton-Thornridge), Eastern Illinois University's senior guard, didn't get much notice in the preseason publicity generated for the Panther basketball team. That was understandable.

After all, he doesn't pour in points like Jon Collins and at 6-1 he gets overshadowed by 7-0 Kevin Duckworth, a former prep teammate at Thornridge HS.

But midway through Richardson's final season his statistics have pushed him to the forefront among EIU and Mid-Continent players. He is leading the conference in assists (6.2 per game) and steals (2.9), and likely will set school records in both. He needs just 62 to crack the season assist record of 148 (Derrick Scott, 1977-78), and has to average just a little over four per game the rest of the way to break that mark.

Richardson, admittedly, had his eye on both school records and the conference leadership in each when the season started. "I was second in the league in steals last year so thought I could move up. I really had a goal of getting the single game assist record (15) but now I think I can get the season record, too."

Although quickness is Richardson's major attribute in picking off errant passes, he points out that you must also "cheat . . . cheat by overplaying your man. With our defense sagging in the middle I don't have to worry about someone driving the middle without being picked up."

Assists come easier, he says. "I just get the ball to the guys who can get it in the hole."

Although Richardson is just under double figure scoring (8.9), the remainder of the starters are all over ten points a game. The team is also shooting at a record pace 52% from the field "so we certainly have got the people who can score," Richardson commented, "if I can just get the ball to them."

He has not spent much time on the bench, either, averaging well over 30 minutes a game and lately he has played the entire 40 a time or two. "We haven't been playing

pressure defense like last year so it's a little easier to play more. Right now I'm concentrating mostly on handling the tempo of the game . . . especially on the road where we want to be in control.

"I also want to work on taking good shots . . . especially down the stretch. The defense has been overplaying our guys who can score so when that happens it should allow me to get a better shot.

"As a team we still need to get our act together. We have a good team and we're playing well . . . we're just not getting the W's."

Off the court Richardson doesn't hesitate to say a close relationship with his mother has been the major influence on his life. But his basketball success can be traced to Chicago's westside where growing up he competed against his cousins, Vic and Lawrence Moore, who later played at Wis-Green Bay and Lewis University, respectively.

Under the tutelage of an uncle, Charles Richardson, who teamed with former Chicago Bull Mickey Johnson at Aurora College in the early 1970s, the three developed their basketball skills together.

"I was about 11 years when I started, and always was losing when I played my cousins. My uncle was 'getting down' on me . . . telling me I could do better," Richardson said. "But it paid off . . . now when I go home we still get together and play . . . except I beat them."