

FRESH FACE

Heads up, basketball fans! Talented and enthusiastic Phoenix Suns forward Jared Dudley wants fans to know he's here to make things happen.

Playing on an NBA team with legends like Amar'e Stoudemire, Steve Nash and Grant Hill could be a double-edged sword for a young up-and-comer. It's a dream come true to play side-by-side with the greats, but how hard do you have to work to prove you can hold your own and make an impact on the court? Forward Jared Dudley took on that challenge when he was traded to the Suns from Charlotte in December of 2008 during his second year in the league.

After joining the Suns last season, the 6'7" Dudley made the most of his off-season training in Los Angeles over the summer. His routine included four weekday workouts and at least one weekend day, usually racking up five or more

hours of focused training. "I really wanted to improve my three-point range, so I went to the gym and got a lot of shots up with a shooting coach and doing drill work about two hours a day," he says. Dudley followed up his on-court workouts with weightlifting and pickup ball at UCLA with other pro players. As the season approached, workouts increased to two-a-days Monday through Friday.

As the Suns power their way into the 2009-10 season with an explosive new style under head coach Alvin Gentry, Dudley is confident about his role in the team's success.

"I just think I came in with a mentality this year to play a lot. I think last year I had to earn it, and I did it towards the end of the season, and I've just hit the ground running this season, trying not to look back."

Dudley sees himself as a versatile player who works hard to fill whatever role is needed to fuel the team's scoring and defensive efforts. "I might be young, but the way I play the game is with a high basketball IQ. I'm someone who's not going to hurt the team, but someone who's going to have a great stat lineup. I have a lot of points, a lot of rebounds; I've done well defensively on my opponents. I'm moving the ball to get the people in the right position to score."

As one of the younger players on the team, Dudley recognizes the value of soaking up as much as he can from his legendary teammates, both on and off the court. "From Steve I've picked up his work ethic, and off the court how he eats, his training and how hard he works. He's the hardest worker by far on the team. He keeps his body ready, and he needs to play at a high level and at a pretty high age in basketball terms. He's considered an old guy in this league and yet he's playing like he's in his 20s."

Dudley has made keen observations and adopted the habits that have proven

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successful for those superstars. He credits Nash and Hill with influencing his diet and going organic, stating, "I ate pretty healthy before I came here, but I'm taking it to the next level...it's crazy the way you have to break it down to give your body the best chance to succeed because you've got so many games and you're on the court so much."

Dudley admits that playing with the high caliber Suns squad is a bit of a dream come true, and he feels his game improves when playing with his über-talented teammates. Living the dream is enough pre-game motivation for this upbeat athlete. "That's easy for me. I'm a young guy. I've got one of the best jobs in the world, to be honest with you." Dudley doesn't rely on music or other outside influences to get "hyped up" for games. Instead, he says, "I'm someone who gets to the gym early; I work on my body, do a lot of stretching, a lot of massaging just to break down muscles. I get on the court early, get a lot of shots up and then after that I put my uniform on, get some hot packs and get mentally ready for the game, because you have to know a lot about your opponents so you have the best chance to succeed."

There's no question that Dudley works hard to improve his skills and to bring his best to the team's performance on the court. "I think attitude and character are huge in the NBA—and huge in life," he shares. "I'm someone who plays with 100% heart. I never let anything phase me." He's got plans to stay in the league for a long time and wants to build a reputation of being someone who is "a great locker room guy, doesn't get into trouble, comes to work hard every day." He says, "That's just who I am, and I just try to instill that throughout my life."

But don't get the idea that Dudley's all work and no play. He's the first to admit, "I'm a person who's got a lot of energy and kids around as much as anyone. If practice is quiet, I'm making it loud. If the bus is quiet, I'm trying to crack jokes."

So where will Dudley's dedication to the game and gregarious nature take him first? In a season that's off to a promising start, he's hoping (along with every Suns fan out there) to be a key part of a Suns run to the playoffs and a championship game. "I haven't gotten to the playoffs. I haven't been to a championship game, and for me I want to improve to the best of my ability. I can't just be settled on being a bench player, but one day be a starter in the league. There are still so many goals to obtain, and yet the best thing is that I'm still young and I'm slowly obtaining some of my goals."

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Jared Dudley

Age: 24

Sample Day of Food: **Breakfast:** I'm a big egg guy, and fruit in the morning. **Lunch and Dinner:** I'll do turkey wraps to stay light. I used to eat chicken all the time, but now I'm trying to get into fishes. I drink lots of water and eat lots of fruit throughout the day. I try to eat healthy meals from places like True Food Kitchen (it's all organic), Tarbell's (a nice restaurant), or Pita Jungle. I try to stay in that range.

My Food Weakness: Sweets—cookies and candy. Mexican food—Filiberto's by my house calls me all the time, especially on a late night. You can treat yourself here and there, but you've just got to be careful.

Typical Workout: It varies, but most likely I'm going to be in there before practice lifting: lower body, upper body or corrective, which is you strengthening muscles to prevent injuries. Out of 30 days we have to get 12 lifts in. Then you're on the court and that could be about an hour to two hours—obviously going over plays, scrimmaging, running up and down, and doing full court drills.

If I don't play a certain amount of minutes in a game, I'll go get on the treadmill or get on the bike or something—get at least 20-30 minutes of running in.

Post-Game Recovery Secrets: Recovery tights that Steve Nash put me onto—you put them on after you ice. Sometimes I sleep in them; sometimes I wear them on the plane. These recovery tights help you basically keep the blood flowing through your lower body so you have fresh legs the next day. Also, recovery shakes with vitamins to recuperate after games.

Thoughts on a Healthy Lifestyle: When you don't have the information, you don't know that certain things are bad. I've talked to doctors, nutritionists and players who have been successful. Once you have the information, you kind of want to use it throughout life. So even after basketball...I'm still going to use it.

