

Senior center anxious to guide Palo Verde

Pickett learns to overcome disorder

By Jason P. Skoda

SPECIAL TO THE ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Lamont Pickett has struggled to remain eligible to play basketball for Palo Verde High School during his career. That is well known after he missed parts of last season because of grades before returning to help the Titans to the Class 4A state title game.

What is not well known about Pickett is how he also struggles to sit through a two-hour movie. Or how when he was a young boy, Pickett had trouble sitting in one place and playing with his siblings. Or how he even loses focus while playing basketball, the game that he loves so much.

Or that Lamont Pickett has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

With that knowledge, gone is the negative connotation of Pickett being just a lazy kid who doesn't care about his grades. In fact, it is just the opposite. He deals with the pressure of trying to compete with his sister, Marcela, who is a very good student, in the classroom.

"I love my sister and we have become better friends as we got older," Pickett said. "She has already been accepted (at Northern Arizona) and she gets nothing but A's and B's. That's hard to keep up with."

ADD makes it hard for Pickett to excel like Marcela in their senior years. The struggle is something Pickett has dealt with since he was 6.

Only he didn't know it. His parents, Lamont Sr. and Pamela, did. They didn't tell him until he turned 18 in July.

"We didn't want him growing up thinking something was wrong with him and have him taking medication all of the time," Lamont Sr. said. "We didn't want him to use it as a crutch all through the years."

ADD is a syndrome primarily affecting children and adolescents, which is characterized by learning and behavior disabilities.

People affected are usually of normal or above average intelligence. Those affected have impairment in perception, conceptualization, language, memory and decreased attention span among other symptoms.

Pickett heard of ADD before his father told him he had it, but he never expected it was the cause of his personal struggles.

"I just never thought it was the reason I had trouble," he said. "I was shocked, but I

Southern Arizona All-Stars

(Arizona Daily Star All-Southern Arizona 2000-01 boys basketball preseason teams)

First team

- ▶ Marcus Brubaker, Marana, Sr., 6-5
- ▶ Jason Johnson, Tucson High, Sr., 6-6
- ▶ Jemel McClendon, Salpointe, Sr., 6-8
- ▶ Lamont Pickett, Palo Verde, Sr., 6-4
- ▶ Mike Wells, Sahuarro, Sr., 6-6

Second team

- ▶ Anthony Brantley, Pueblo, Sr., 6-3
- ▶ Jason Byers, Flowing Wells, Sr., 6-4
- ▶ Shawn Moore, Amphl, Jr., 5-10
- ▶ Michael Smith, Coolidge, Sr., 5-10
- ▶ Diego Vargas, Salpointe, Sr., 6-5

wasn't mad at my parents for not telling me. I'm glad they didn't but I could have given me up and said, 'I can't do it because of this.'

"That's not me, and I won't use it now. I know I lose focus at times, but I can get through it and get the job done."

Lamont Sr. dealt with ADD before. His late brother Anderson III also showed signs of ADD, but "back in the 1960s they didn't have the same terminology. He was just seen as a troubled kid."

His experience with ADD afforded him the patience and understanding to help his son through the years.

The Picketts persuaded the school district to hold Lamont back and repeat the fourth grade, which is why Lamont and Marcela are in the same grade. The district didn't see the need because he did well enough to advance to the next grade. The Picketts felt it allowed their son to mature and in the long run it would help him with confidence at school.

"Once he turned 18, I told him that I loved him and that he had some issues," said Lamont Sr., who has spent his career in the Air Force. "We had a long talk then and he is still dealing with it today."

"Lamont has some choices to make. He is going to have to decide if he is going to start taking medication, go to college, go in the military or work at McDonald's flipping burgers."

For now, Lamont is focusing on the season ahead. Pickett will start the season by

missing the Titans' five games in the Salpointe Tip-Off Classic, which begins today, but the 6-foot-4 post player has been cleared to play next Monday.

"We are in a rebuilding year, but we are going to run our offense through Lamont," coach David Gin said. "He has good size and great ability."

Pickett is ready to get back on the court and leave everything else behind.

"I'm excited to get out there," he said. "It's killing me to have to miss (Salpointe). I want to be the leader this year. I want to be like the parent on the court. I want to point us in the right direction and keep the season going smooth."

The Titans, who went 22-11 last season, will rely heavily on Pickett, who averaged 12 points and six rebounds last season.

"He's the only contributor we have returning from last year's team," Gin said. "We have a few role players who we will depend on this season. The first thing we need to do is build some chemistry."

The Titans have a nice group of upperclassmen to complement Pickett. Joe Smith is the point guard with Jeff Knoche joining him in the backcourt.

Helping Pickett on the front line are forwards Will Brock and Mario Ybarra.

Gin said the Titans probably enter the season as the third best team in the 4A Sonoran Region, behind defending 4A champ Sahuarro and Marana, but PV could get on another streak like last season when it got to the state title game.

The key to the hot streak last season was the play of Pickett. After Pickett returned, Gin got exactly what he asked for out of him.

"He was more focused and worked harder than ever before," Gin said. "I told him I didn't want him back on the team unless he was ready to give 100 percent of himself to the team. Before that Lamont had trouble keeping his head in the game. He had periods where he would get a little lazy and lose his concentration. It was so frustrating. It was hard to understand why Lamont would be so good one moment and seem to lack interest the next."

It is not hard to understand anymore.



NEED TIRES OR
AUTO SERVICE?

For your total comfort,
make the "Rest" choice