

Redbirds' Edwards signs with Mineral Area, Trimble with Parkland

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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ALTON – Two of Alton's top basketball players from the last several years are moving on to the collegiate ranks.

Maurice Edwards and Ty'Ohn Trimble both signed collegiate letters of intent recently at Alton High. Edwards heading to Mineral Area College in Park Hills, Mo., one of the top junior-college programs in the nation, and Trimble heading to Parkland College in Champaign, also a very successful two-year collegiate program.

Edwards, despite missing time this past season with injury, averaged 12.2 points per game, while Trimble averaged nine points per game for a Redbird team that went 16-12 on the year, 7-7 in the Southwestern Conference.

“There were good, genuine people (at Mineral Area),” Edwards said about what attracted him to the Cardinal program. “They have a system that can help me out; I know some of the coaches and I was able to talk to them; I feel like the team and the situation will be a good fit for me.”

Park Hills is about a two-hour drive from Alton. “I feel like that's a good distance for me,” Edwards said. “I've been waiting for the opportunity.”

“I talked with the coach and went there,” Trimble said of why he chose the Cobra program. “I'm looking forward to the challenge.”

Trimble will be playing with Marcus Latham, who went to Parkland after his graduation from Alton. “I won't be alone,” Trimble said. “I should feel like I'm at home.”

Redbird coach Eric Smith is very excited about the opportunities that Edwards and Trimble will have. “We're pretty excited about the opportunity the two kids get,” Smith said. “It's two quality programs who played in the (NJCAA) postseason last year; it's kind of special when you get the opportunity to see kids have the ability to move on and do some good things.

“Mineral Area was a top-10 team last year; they got upset in the first round (of the NJCAA regional tournament) but had a great year (building a 20-plus game winning streak at one point of the season); they had some kids from this area that had the opportunity to move on – Shawn Roundtree (of Edwardsville) was down there (and will be heading to Central Michigan next season).

“It'll be a challenge for them because they're going to have pretty high expectations for them, but for Maurice, that's what he's had to live up to here, and Ty'Ohn, the same thing; we've got Marcus Latham, who's up at Parkland right now and he's had a wonderful experience up there. Ty'Ohn's going to get an opportunity to go in and compete and get an opportunity to play.”

Trimble's personality meant much to Smith the years he coached him. “He's a pretty special kid,” Smith said. “His personality, his demeanor, the way he approaches life and everything, you're not going to find too many kids who have that same approach and for the most part, just start genuinely good people all the time.

“I'd say in the four years he's been in high school and the year he was down at the middle school where we followed him, I can probably count on one hand the number of times I've not seen a smile on his face, and most of those involved a loss after a game. He's the type of kid where the sun is going to come up the next day; he's got a great approach to life – he's going to be successful at whatever he does.”

Edwards was injured some his senior year, but he continued to go out and work hard.

“For him, that's the nice part; he's talented enough that he's going to get an opportunity to do it again,” Smith said. “Obviously, some people don't necessarily get that, but in the grand scheme of things, just in conversations we've had since the end of the season, it's nice to see that he's had a renewed spirit in what he needs to do to be successful.

“He's talked about how much he missed it when he was out, so there's an opportunity for him to go down there and kind of get back into the groove and get back into being a basketball player and enjoying himself.”

Smith realizes it's a special thing to get the opportunity to move to the next level. “It's pretty special when you see kids get an opportunity to go on to school and get an opportunity to continue playing,” Smith said.