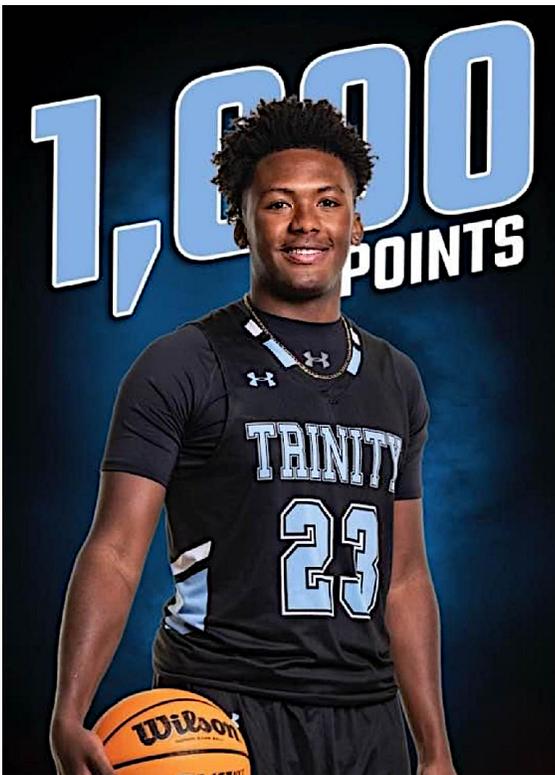


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By Dennis Garcia
SportsTone.net

TRINITY - Size, strength, quickness, agility, jumping ability, defensive prowess, strong shooting, dribbling skills and basketball knowledge are all qualities that can make a high school basketball player successful. If a player has three or four of these attributes, he can be a very special player. If he possesses all of these characteristics, you may be looking at a once-in-a-generation performer.



Dominic Payne scored his 1000th career point during this season's Davidson/Randolph Christmas Classic. Photo provided.

In Trinity's Dominic Payne, we may be watching that truly once-in-a-generation player.

The junior has guided the Bulldogs to a 20-7 record and a first-round state 2-A West Regional playoff battle with Newton-Conover. The game will be held Tuesday at Tim Kelly Gym in Trinity.

Payne is averaging 27.4 points per game, but his contributions go far further than just points scored each and every time the Bulldogs take the court. In fact, veteran head coach Tim Kelly, who has led the Trinity program for 34 years and owns a state title, said Payne is the best overall player he has ever coached.

"You can't coach what he has," said Kelly. "First of all, he has size at 6-3 and he weighs 215. He's fast and he's also quick. Because of his size, you don't expect him to be as quick as he is. He's got that. He has really good vision and sees the floor well and anticipates. And he's a good shooter. Now I've had better shooters, but I have never had one before who is the total package."

Incredible praise coming from a coach who has mentored some of the top talent Randolph County has ever seen. And there's more accolades.

"He's tough and gets to the basket," Kelly said. "He's able to take parts of the previous best players I have had and puts that all together. He's a strong rebounder and he's growing more into a team leader. And he's only getting better."

A starter since a freshman, the Bulldogs are 49-18 with him in the starting lineup. Payne does have one fault, Kelly said. Sometimes he plays too unselfishly.

"There are a couple of times I have had to tell him to be more selfish," Kelly said. "You need to look to score. And playing against a team like Eastern Randolph, a team that can give us so much trouble because of their pressure, I asked him to bring the ball up. He can go against two or three defenders. He's so much better with the ball in his hands. He makes other people better."

Something that certainly Kelly hopes occurs tonight in the opening round of the state playoffs.



Trinity's Dominic Payne. Photo by Blue Groove Photos.