

CENTRAL DAUPHIN HIGH SCHOOL RAMS BASKETBALL

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“Excellence in Education”

Pretty much convinced all along, Devin Thomas confirms desire to attend Wake Forest University by issuing verbal commitment

MICHAEL BULLOCK, The Patriot-News, October 17, 2011 5:45 p.m.



Devin Thomas (green), shown here last season, has issued a verbal commitment to play basketball in the ACC at Wake Forest. - (JOHN C. WHITEHEAD, The Patriot-News)

From the moment Devin Thomas first visited Wake Forest's campus in late August — along with his mother, Tina — Central Dauphin's 6-9, 235-pound senior felt a strong connection to the Atlantic Coast Conference school and its rebuilding basketball program.

Even then, Thomas pretty much knew Wake was where he wanted to go.

And after making another journey to Winston-Salem, N.C., over the weekend that included a meeting with the school president and the chance to hang out with other Demon Deacons recruits — all on Wake's tab — Thomas and his family didn't need any more convincing.

So Thomas issued a verbal commitment ... on the spot. While Penn State and Temple had been in the Thomas recruiting mix at an earlier stage, ultimately Wake won out.

Thomas will make it official on Nov. 9 when he signs his letter of intent with the Demon Deacons.

"I'm appreciative of the opportunity to play in the ACC and to have a chance to play in the ACC," said Thomas, who last season landed first-team all-state honors after averaging 21.4 points, 12.2 rebounds and 2.9 blocks per game for a 20-7 CD side. "I'm excited.

"And I'm becoming good friends with the other five recruits, because they're going to be my family for the next four years."

"Just talking to all the kids, nobody mentioned themselves," said Bob Thomas, Devin's father and AAU coach with Mid-Penn Motion.

"They all had that 'we' attitude, that 'we're' gonna put Wake Forest back on the map. "So I think the coaching staff did a great job not only recruiting the kids, but great families as well."

While Wake first began recruiting Thomas following his breakout performance at the Bob Gibbons event in late May in North Carolina, the Deacs never stopped. Both Thomases said Wake was at every one of Motion's summer games, and the Deacs came to Harrisburg last month. To visit the Thomas home — and CD.

Of course, Devin and Tina already were all but convinced Wake was the proper fit. As for Bob - - who didn't accompany the others on the earlier visit in August -- he was swayed not long after they pulled into Winston-Salem.

"I think it took him like 10 minutes on Friday," Devin Thomas said of his father. "Because he likes the coaches and the campus and thinks it's a good atmosphere for me."

"I think it's a great fit," CD coach Jay Crosier said. "They're excited to have him and they've been fantastic in the entire process. They've been honest about what they have and what they need."

Since Wake was just 8-24 a year ago under first-year coach Jeff Bzdelik — and have endured defections since — the Deacs need plenty. Hence, the big class.

A constant presence in the low blocks, the mobile Thomas could see plenty of playing time as a freshman at the "4" spot if he adds 10 pounds and improves his flexibility and lateral movement, tangibles he's been focusing on with personal trainer Scott Singer since the end of last season.

"I'm excited for him," Crosier added. "I'm glad it's out of the way for him, but we'll still make sure he keeps his nose to the grindstone here. He's really matured a lot in the last year-and-a-half and I think it's a level that he can compete at.

"He's going into a situation that's a win-win as long as he keeps doing what he's been doing the last year, year-and-a-half."

And Devin Thomas -- still growing and still just 17 years old -- understands what has to be done to get that early PT.

"I appreciate the opportunity I have," said Devin Thomas, whose older sister, Maryland sophomore Alyssa, last season was tagged the ACC freshman of the year.

"Now, since I know I can play in this conference, I'm already working on what I need to work on to be a successful player in college basketball — especially at such a high level."

"Two kids in the same family in the ACC, that's pretty impressive," Crosier admitted.

That impressive fact hasn't escaped Bob Thomas.

"It was great meeting all the other players," said Bob Thomas, who played at Millersville. "It was like they've known each other for 10 years. ... Like the Maryland family, we're now part of the Wake family. We've got the best of both worlds.

"My wife and I are so happy that he's going to the school that he wants to be at. [Wake] was his first choice and not too many kids get that opportunity," Bob Thomas added.

"In my wildest dreams, when they started playing basketball, I never imagined having two kids playing D-I sports. In the ACC? We're just so happy and blessed, not only for Alyssa but Devin as well."

So, if anyone happens to run into Devin Thomas any time soon, you'll probably see him flashing something Deacs related.

"He stocked up on Wake Forest gear when we were down there," Bob Thomas admitted.

"Hey, I've got to show I'm going to Wake Forest," cracked Devin Thomas, who remains uncertain about his likely college major. "I've gotta wear it every day."