

# One Dynamic Devil

**Jeff Pendergraph** is one of the best basketball players in the Pac-10. But hoops is not the only thing that defines this overachieving Sun Devil.

BY LAWSON MCKENZIE

PHOTO BY TRACY RASINSKI

**A**SU Basketball star Jeff Pendergraph has an entourage. No, don't get Jeff confused with some spoiled college sports stars that have an inflated and distorted view of themselves. Jeff is about as respectful as a young man in the public eye can be. He addresses adults by "sir" and "ma'am," but as I mentioned, he does have an entourage. Their names are Slick Rick, Home Slice, Mrs. Tibbets and Jimmy Tongue. They are not his driver, chef and gofer. No, these are Jeff's three snakes and dog, who live with the Southern California native in his Tempe house. "When I take my snakes, out they are very cool. I haven't been bitten by them yet. They are really low-maintenance. I only have to feed them once a month," Jeff told POST. As for Jimmy Tongue, well, he gets daily meals.

"He looks like a dingo, or a wild dog. I really don't even know what it is. We got him at the pound and he looks like four different types of dog."

Jeff's love of his pets is just another aspect of his incredibly dynamic and unique persona. He's a driven young man with dreams of playing in the NBA someday, but he's taking academics as seriously as his basketball, which means his days are long and intense.

"My days are filled up for like 14 hours. I wake up, go to class, get something to eat, then head to practice for about three hours. After that, it's dinner, then study hall for a couple hours, and then things usually wrap up about 9:30 or 10:00."

But you know what, if anyone can appreciate what it means to actually be able to practice, it's Jeff. When he first arrived on the ASU campus as a freshman, Jeff had to deal with a lot more than most 19-year-old athletes. He had a benign tumor removed from his leg almost as soon as he arrived on campus, which meant he wasn't able to participate in any pre-season conditioning drills, and literally could not practice with the team until late November. Who could have blamed Jeff if he had decided to redshirt, and come back healthy the following fall? But instead, he immediately became an important contributor to the Devils and earned Pac-10 All Freshman honors.

"It was kind of a blessing in disguise, when I look back at everything I had to deal with right out of the gate," Jeff said. "It really taught me to not take things for granted. Now, whenever I am out at practice or playing in a game, I give it my all because I really know what it's like to *not* be able to play and have things completely out of your hands."

Obviously, you would never hope for something like this to happen, but thankfully Jeff was able to not only overcome what could have been something much worse, but actually become a better person for it. "It's something that changed me forever."

It certainly has helped keep him focused on his studies as much as he is on improving his game on the floor. He is not coasting in the classroom, loading up on easy courses to stay eligible. No, Jeff is a role model in every aspect of his life, and that includes





## POST ACCESS

Hangin' With ↓

JEFF PENDERGRAPH

setting a great example to his siblings who can watch their big brother do things right.


"I am here in college for business. I'm not here to hang out and do what typical college kids do. Every day it's like I clock in and go to work. Every day I say 'I have to get something done.' Every day I have something to prove in all aspects of my life, and that means in sports and in school."

If you're wondering where the drive, seriousness and intensity come from, the answer is simple. Jeff has a plan. "I would definitely like to get to the NBA someday, and it is a goal. I am not letting it consume me, though, because I know I have to improve."

He knows he's been blessed with some natural talent, but it takes more than that to actually get a gig in the NBA. Make no mistake about it, Jeff has some dreams and goals that have him wearing a suit instead of shorts and high-tops. It's because he's majoring in finance, not phys ed. And it's because he is 100% committed to whatever he's doing, which includes riding the bus to class at 7:40 in the morning, which is what he did last year. "I am trying to get my degree in economics because I want to learn about business

and how it works, because someday I'd like to own my own business." And in case you're wondering what type of business it would be, well, it would involve one of Jeff's other true passions — cars. "I'd like to have my own car-customizing business, but only classic, nice, sexy, luxury cars. No Honda Civics. I'm talking about BMWs and Bentleys."

Jeff loves cars. He owns three and spends a lot of his free time tinkering on them. The other thing that's important to Jeff is family. His mother raised him by herself, and one of the reasons he decided to attend ASU is because his mom can see him play. "I wanted to get away from home but still be close enough where my mom could come to games and not have to pay three or four hundred dollars for a plane ticket. She can drive here, and she makes almost all our home games, and a lot of road games too."

And once a month during basketball season when mom comes to visit, if Jeff is busy polishing his game, his cars, or studying for a test, mom can make sure Slick Rick, Home Slice and Mrs. Tibbets get something to eat so they don't start looking at Jimmy Tongue as a possible meal. 

GINA ALEXANDER  
www.GINAALEXANDER.COM

### *"Memories"*

Make this year's Valentine's Day a special one!  
Give her the gift of cherished memories!  
Choose her favorite photo of the two of you  
and we will design, and sew a beautiful  
one-of-a-kind designer photo handbag  
for you to give as the perfect gift.

**SPECIAL VALENTINE'S DAY OFFER:**  
Save 15% OFF all minimum purchases of \$135.00 or more.  
INDICATE OFFER CODE: 2008 OFFER EXPIRES: January 24, 2008

