

AVC's Dedmon commits to USC

By GREG WAGNER
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Dewayne Dedmon hasn't even played one collegiate basketball game.

But he already knows he'll be playing at USC in two years.

The Antelope Valley College freshman orally committed to the Trojans on Monday, ending what has been a whirlwind recruiting experience since the summer.

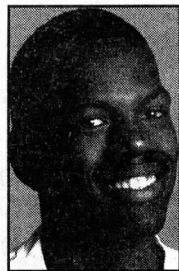
The 7-foot-0 Dedmon did not start playing basketball until his senior year of high school, but his stature and supreme work ethic caught the attention of hordes of Division I coaches this summer.

AVC coach Dieter Horton said Dedmon had about 25 scholarship offers — Washington and Texas among them — but the center had been impressed with how hard he had been recruited by USC coach Kevin O'Neill.

"He told me (I was his No. 1 recruit) all the time, but even though

he was saying it, he was showing it too," said Dedmon, who was visited during AVC workouts at least once-a-week by O'Neill.

Horton said the center took a huge leap this summer, which brought on the unprecedented interest.



DEDMON

"He's picked it up like I've never seen," Horton said.

All this for a player who has only seen five games of official action. Dedmon

averaged 1.4 points and 3.0 rebounds in that time at Lancaster High School and was not expecting to have such a frenzied summer.

"That's kind of crazy right there," he said.

Dedmon won't even sign his letter of intent until next November

and could have gauged the interest of other BCS-conference schools, but was impressed with USC from the start. He said it also helped that he'll be playing close to home.

"I did want to wait but ... my family can come and watch me play," he said. "It's just easy, when I need to go home and see my family I could."

He made up his mind over the weekend, after being on hand at the Coliseum to watch the USC football team play Oregon State.

"That was my first D-I football game," he said. "If this is like this for the football games, then basketball is going to be the same thing. I just enjoyed the surrounding."

Dedmon had the chance to attend an O'Neill practice last week, encouraged at how closely the Trojans' first-year coach mirrored Horton.

"It's an easy switch," he said. "Both of them are demanding and will push you to get better."

Dedmon said he was not concerned with potential NCAA sanc-

tions stemming from O.J. Mayo's time with the school, expressing that coaches told him his two seasons there shouldn't be affected.

Still a work-in-progress, Dedmon doesn't appear to be easing off now that he knows where he'll land once he receives his Associate of Arts degree after two seasons with AVC.

"I have no plans on me committing early changing the way that I play," he said. "Every day I'm going to go out there to get better. I feel I have a long way to go."

The center is one of five Marauders who had D-I offers, but Horton said he doesn't expect any of them to make an decision during the early signing period next month.

"The kids have decided they are good offers, but they have a lot of faith in themselves that they'll have a good year and improve on the offers standing in front of them right now," Horton said.

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