

Basketball a Family Affair for Danell Family

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NEW ULM – Many athletes know the feeling of hearing the familiar voice of a parent yelling during one of their games, but few know what it's like to be coached by one of them every day on a level as competitive as college basketball. Justin and Josh Danell know that feeling.

Jim Danell, in his tenth season as an assistant coach for the Martin Luther College (MLC) men's basketball team, has spent the last four years coaching his son Justin, while Josh has joined them for the last three years.

Justin, who had been around the MLC program for years as a kid, was the first to go through the adjustment of having his father, who had never coached any of his teams in the past, as his coach.



Justin (left) and Josh (right) Danell have made basketball at MLC a family thing

"I think it is fair to say that it took a little getting used to," said Justin. "At first, it seemed he was always yelling at me just to yell at me, but really he was doing it to help me improve. That is his job as a coach, but it was also the dad in him to yell and encourage me."

Jim also found it difficult at first, trying to strike a balance of being able to point out mistakes while also encouraging. At one point, he called both his sons into his office to make sure the message he was sending was the right one for them, with neither having any issue with his style.

"The fact of the matter is, you do yell at them more, louder and with more direct and specific criticism than you do the other players," Jim said. "They have handled it well, though."

Jim is also thankful for the opportunity to watch his sons' games, something he missed at times during high school due to his coaching obligations for MLC.

"It has been nice to have a front row seat for all their college games," Jim said. "I probably missed half their high school games, but now I get to see them all."

Adding Josh to the mix after Justin's freshman season not only brought a second son for the father to coach, but also gave the two brothers another chance to play together. The two previously played three seasons together in high school at Minnesota Valley Lutheran (MVL).

"Playing with Justin has been a fun experience," Josh said. "We've always been competing against one another, whether it be one-on-one, H-O-R-S-E, or even growing (Josh is 6'6, while Justin is 6'4")."

"It's been a lot of fun playing with him for three years in high school and three years in college," said Justin. "It's an opportunity most people don't get. We are always there to support each other, and that has been a great blessing."

This season, the brothers have tried their best to hold down the paint for the Knights, with Justin breaking out of some early shooting struggles to average 10.0 points, 6.3 rebounds, and 1.3 blocks per game in conference play. Josh has

joined his brother as a force around the basket defensively, leading the team with 23 blocks on the season.

In a game against Minnesota-Morris on February 3, the two brothers combined to block 12 shots, with Justin setting a school record with eight in the game.

This season, the Danell boys were joined by a third sibling when Heather Danell joined the women's basketball team. The first-year post player has played a role off the bench for the first-place Knights, and her addition to the mix has made the family experience even more fun for the siblings.

"Growing up, my brothers and I would play basketball in our driveway, so now that we're older, it's nice to be able to watch and support each other," Heather said. "I think that, when I'm older, I will look back to some of these days and thank God for the opportunity he has given me to be able to go to school with my brothers and share these kinds of experiences with them."

"We all get the chance to travel together to every game and watch each other compete at the collegiate level," Josh added. "That's pretty cool. This one-year window has been a lot of fun with both of my siblings doing the same thing at the same college, with my dad also in the mix."