

Times-Dispatch 2010-11 All-Metro girls basketball team

Above the rest: Ka'lia Johnson finally player of year

For the past four years, the point guard from Thomas Dale has been an icon in Central Region basketball who set mammoth scoring records and put fear in the eyes of opponents. This is the first time that Ka'lia Johnson, a 5-10 senior who can drive to the basket, knock down a 3-pointer or dominate a game, has been named the girls basketball All-Metro player of the year. Next year, her career will continue at Duke. "She was the epitome of good basketball," Thomas Dale coach Kevin Coffey said. "She was my needle in the haystack for the past four years. I don't think I'll find another one quite like her." The Times-Dispatch has named Johnson to the All-Metro first team four consecutive years. She's only the second player to be a four-time honoree, following Natasha Starkes of Henrico, who made the list from 1997 to 2000. Though Johnson had player-of-the-year-caliber seasons the past two years, she was edged by Jazmin Pitts her sophomore year and Becca Wann her junior year. Both opponents came from Cosby. This year, the honor was hers to lose, and she came nowhere close to abdicating the throne. She averaged 24.3 points, 11.4 rebounds and 8.7 assists. Johnson had 13 double-doubles and seven triple-doubles. She was named first team all-state and the Central Region player of the year. Her 2,075 career points make her the all-time leading scorer at Thomas Dale. "They're not going to know me as 'Ka'lia, the four-time All-Metro player,' at Duke," Johnson said. "Just Ka'lia." At Duke, she'll team with Elizabeth Williams, a 6-3 Princess Anne (Virginia Beach) superstar who garnered national attention during her recruitment. Johnson and Williams played AAU together for two years and have played with or against each other since the seventh grade. "People better watch out," Johnson said. "That's all I've got to say. It's going to be fun." But Johnson hasn't always been the player she is now. Her quick drive to the basket used to be her sole weapon. In her first practice as a freshman, she told Coffey, "I don't shoot 3s." The coach was straight with her — in Thomas Dale's offense, the guards have to shoot 3s. So early in her freshman season, Johnson found herself with a clear shot from behind the arc, and she took it. The result was an air ball. Coffey told her, "How do you expect to make 3s if you don't shoot them in practice?" From that point forward, Coffey said, she committed herself to expanding her repertoire and mastering the 3-point shot. "Teams know I can drive (to the basket) anytime I want to," Johnson said. "I have to show a different aspect of my game." In the region playoffs against Cosby her freshman year, Johnson hit six 3s, leading the Knights to victory. Coffey asked her, "I thought you don't shoot 3s?" And Johnson just laughed.

Kelsey Conyers

School: Cosby **Height/Year:** 5-9, senior **Position:** Guard

The skinny: Conyers' leadership, unselfishness and willingness to be the coach on the floor carried a young, talented team to the Central Region title for the third time in her four years as a starter. She averaged 8 points, 6 rebounds, 5 assists and 2 steals and was first-team all-Dominion District and second-team all-region

What you didn't know: "My favorite word is grace."

Jazzmin Dabney

School: Highland Springs **Height/Year:** 5-8, junior **Position:** Guard

The skinny: Dabney was a consistent standout for the young, balanced Springers, who, despite graduation losses, won the Capital District tournament. She averaged 16 points, 11 rebounds, 5 steals and 2 blocks and was named first-team all-Capital District and second-team all-region.

What you didn't know: "I had an imaginary friend until I was 12. I called him Allen Iverson."

Bria Harris

School: Henrico **Height/Year:** 5-11, senior **Position:** Forward/center

The skinny: Harris was the most consistent of the Warriors' trio of stars and was named the Capital District player of the year and was first-team all-Central Region. This season, she averaged 14.6 points, 10.4 rebounds, 2.6 blocks and 1.6 steals. Among her four-year career numbers are 1,143 points, 795 rebounds and 163 blocks.

What you didn't know: "I cannot live without my phone."

Taylor Huber

School: Patrick Henry **Height/Year:** 5-7, senior **Position:** Guard

The skinny: Huber is the second girls player from Patrick Henry to make the first team. Christy Little (1994-95) was first. Huber holds the school career scoring mark (male and female) with 1,680 points after averaging 21.6 points this season. She was the Colonial District player of the year and first-team all-region. Huber averaged 3.5 rebounds and 2 steals.

What you didn't know: "I took piano lessons from the time I was 6 until I was 10."