

**JONI  
DAVIS:  
THE TIGERS'  
ALL  
AROUND  
ALL  
AMERICAN**





**SWISH.** Score another two for Joni Davis. Days before being named to the 10-member All-America academic squad, she became the first Mizzou player to top 2,000 career points.

Big-Eight player-of-the-year, Davis also is Mizzou's first bonafide All-America candidate for the Kodak women's team to be named in late March, according to Dru Ann Hancock, assistant sports information director.

"My academic honors are just as important to me as basketball," says Davis, who describes breaking the all-time Mizzou scoring record held by Steve Stipanovich of the Indiana Pacers as a highlight of her basketball career.

A secondary education major, Davis will graduate in May with a 3.7 grade-point average. Her coursework included anatomy and physiology and kinesiology.

"As a freshman, I got a 4.0 second semester, and people noticed: 'She's an athlete and she has some intelligence, too.' I liked that feeling. I took off and started working hard. Academics became a priority."

The Tigers' co-captain from Highland, Kan., employed intelligence on the court as well. "My first year I heard people say Stipanovich and [Jon] Sundvold had good court sense. I wanted to work on that, to become so aware of what's going on on the court."

Four years later, Davis herself is an example of court smart. Though she doesn't consider herself to be exceptionally fast, big or strong, the six-foot forward this season led the Tigers to the Big Eight Conference championship and national post-season play. Named player of the week several times, she's at the top of women Tiger career charts in steals and rebounding.

**DAVIS PEGS** her success on consistency, experience and perfectionism. "When I'm shooting and something doesn't feel quite right, I know I need to go to the gym and practice to regain the touch."

She's worked on "the touch" since childhood. Her father, a basketball coach, combined babysitting duties with practices at Missouri Southern State College in Joplin. Not content to sit still, Davis twice broke her arm climbing bleachers.

Eventually, Frank Davis took his

daughter out of the stands and onto the court. "He has the most unbelievable shot," she says of her father. "After three months of not playing, he can shoot for 30 minutes and not miss. He taught me how to get the touch."

Davis' touch helped her earn an invitation to the 1984 Olympic trials last spring. Even though she didn't make the U.S. basketball team, "The excitement was unbelievable. Who knows? I may try out again in 1988."

**BUT DAVIS ADMITS** her body is telling her to slow down. She had surgery on both knees last year to ease inflamed tendons, and for the past three years has taken anti-inflammatory drugs. "If I wasn't on [medication] I couldn't play. My knees get so sore, the tendons feel like cardboard."

The condition forced her to give up basketball in the summers. "I had to work about 10 times as much as anyone else to get back into shape in the fall. It's nerve-racking to go from where I am in the summer to being a top athlete."

Spectators help provide motivation. "When we played after the guys, it was really hard to go out and see people leaving. But I think there are people who were staying just to see what we could do, so I wanted to give them a show." Attendance at women's games this season averaged nearly 2,000.

With her college career ended, Davis is pondering the future. Even with her knee problems, she's hesitant to rule out a professional career. "It would be a blast to make money playing basketball. But I have to listen to my body. It's going to be a hard decision."

If not a pro career, Davis plans to earn a master's degree in exercise physiology and be a graduate assistant to a major women's college team. Eventually, she'd like to coach.

For now, "I'm happier than ever before. I'm going to try to keep it that way."

—Carol Again