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## A Big Baby Last Year, but Not Anymore

By RAY GLIER

This time, Glen Davis has a gas pedal to step on. When a loose ball is skidding on the floor of Stegeman Coliseum at the [University of Georgia](#), Davis, the 6-foot-9 center for Louisiana State, is there first to snatch it.

He is not the same 349-pound lovable load he was in the Final Four last season, when U.C.L.A.'s lickety-split pace reduced him to pile of exhaustion. Davis has trimmed the fat — he is down to 294 pounds — and he can press the pedal for 40 minutes.

In the Tigers' game Sunday at Georgia, Davis was on the gas when he needed to be. He was not hunched over and grabbing the bottom of his shorts, the way he was against U.C.L.A. in a 59-45 loss in April. Davis made only 5 of 17 shots from the field in that Final Four game against the [Bruins](#), and his credibility as an N.B.A. prospect took an immediate tumble.

Now look at him, nine months later.

With nine minutes to play against Georgia, Davis makes a steal near midcourt and beats the defense to the other end for a transition basket.

A Georgia fan in the seats behind the basket yells, "Davis, you're still too fat."

That is old news. Davis is too fast, not too fat.

He had 18 points, 14 rebounds and 6 assists against the Bulldogs. His timely points and playmaking out of the post kept L.S.U. competitive before it lost, 57-54, on a last-second shot.

This Not-So-Big Baby is not lean by any means, but noticeably trimmer. Davis has always had remarkable agility for a player his size, but now his feet seem even quicker.

"Somebody that size, you think you can get in front of them easy to defend," Georgia guard Sundiata Gaines said. "Not him. He was quick on his feet the whole game."

Davis still has that illuminating charisma and charm that made him a crowd favorite in the 2006 [N.C.A.A.](#) tournament, but he has a seriousness to him now.

"You'd be a little more grumpy, too," Davis said after the Georgia game. "It's tougher out there this year; it's a war in some games. People are running at me with double teams making it tough."

This season is tougher on Davis because he does not have guard Darrel Mitchell firing 3-pointers to spread the defense, and he does not have his boyhood friend Tyrus Thomas helping inside. Mitchell was a senior on last year's team and L.S.U. (13-8) has not found a consistent perimeter scoring threat.

Thomas was a first-round pick acquired in a draft-day trade by the [Chicago Bulls](#). So far, his replacement at L.S.U., the 6-10 sophomore Magnum Rolle, has not played well as the new power forward.

Of course, it might have been an even tougher season for Davis if he had not slimmed down.

The transformation started two days after the loss to U.C.L.A. He walked into the office of the associate head coach, Butch Pierre, and said he wanted to go to the N.B.A.

Pierre took him to the trainer's office and told Davis to get on the scale.

"He was 349 pounds," Pierre said. "Tears started rolling down his face. He knew he couldn't go to the N.B.A. in that kind of shape."

Within a few weeks, Davis had a fitness plan drawn up by his cousin Alfred McAllister, a fitness coach who is also a math teacher in suburban Atlanta.

Davis worked out in Baton Rouge early in the summer and also spent several weeks in Houston with the former N.B.A. point guard John Lucas playing pickup games against N.B.A. and college players.

The weight started to melt away. He lost the first 35 pounds in three-a-day workouts with McAllister.

"There was one basketball drill where he had to make 250 shots, not take 250 shots, make 250 shots," McAllister said. "We did that five days a week. We shopped at Whole Foods. We adjusted his diet. We ran."

Davis became so obsessed with the program that he was waking up McAllister at 6:30 a.m. so they could be ready to start their workouts promptly at 7:15.

Davis still has to convince the N.B.A. of his skills. He will not be pushed around under the boards and he has a feathery jump shot, but he is still playing the game below the rim.

"It's not a change to make the N.B.A. guys feel good about me; it's a personal change for my future and who I am," Davis said. "This is about what I want to accomplish. It's not about the N.B.A. people wanting me to stop eating. It's about my long-term health, and basketball."

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