## Mathias inks LOT to play for Painter at Purdue

Wednesday, it was 6-5 senior guard Dakota Mathias.

Purdue head coach Matt Painter in West Lafayette, Ind.

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Staff Writer
jmetcalfe@delphosherald.com
ELIDA — Veteran Elida boys basketball mentor Denny Thompson wishes this would become a trend: once of his players signing at a Division I program.
Reggie McAdams did it two years ago, signing a letter-of-intent to play at Akron.

He went one step bigger in the pecking order of major-college basketball: the Big Ten and

Mathias inks LOT to play for Painter at Purdue Written by Jim Metcalfe Wednesday, November 13, 2013 9:22 PM - Last Updated Thursday, November 14, 2013 7:21 PM "I picked Purdue because I really felt comfortable from the start. When I paid my official visit, I just knew this would be it; I verballed in May but I knew where I was going to play college basketball then," Mathias explained. "I just had to wait until the early-signing period. The coaches, the players, everything just seemed like the right fit for what I want. I've been around coaches and basketball my whole life. "I'm glad I could get this decision out of the way early. I can just focus on my senior year. I have asked Purdue's coaches for things like different weight programs and such but they basically have told me to focus on my senior year here and worry about them after the season." He also had visits to Boston College, Butler, Dayton and West Virginia, learning a surprising truth about famed Mountaineer head man Bob Huggins — "He is completely different and a lot funnier than his reputation" — but settled on the Boilermakers because of that simple comfort level.

The decision is the continuation of a lifelong dream.

"Ever since I can remember playing, probably from 3 or 4 years old, I wanted to play basketball. I had two older brothers — Bo and Dustin — that played and we had the gymnasium put in sometime along the way," he continued. "They were pretty good players in their own right. I just loved to play. I am always working on something. I got a lot stronger this off-season — I spent a lot of time in the weight room — and grew a couple of inches. I improved my ball-handling, quickness, everything. The chance to play college ball is just more motivation to keep working and getting better.

"I think playing AAU summer ball for Northwest Ohio — Rob Welch's club — really was

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beneficial for me. You find out your strengths and especially weaknesses really early. I have worked out with Aaron Craft of Ohio State; he has given me tips on what to expect, how to prepare and take care of my body. Also, having Reggie a couple of years ago — going against him every day in practice — really helped as well. Plus, I had his example of what the process was all about two years ago, what to look for and expect."

Let no one forget that he still has a senior year to play before the Bulldog faithful in the Fieldhouse.

He would like to take it a step further this year that the team did in 2011-12 when they were Division II State runners-up.

"As far as this year at Elida, a state championship has been a goal of mine as well. We have four starters back and have higher expectations because of that experience," Mathias added.

As far as Thompson, he can look back to the early years of his senior's years as an omen of things to come.

"He also played a year up, so he was on the same team as my son, Aric. I knew in the fourth grade I had a special player; how special would have to wait," Thompson explained. "I have watched him develop since then and he is everything I thought he could be.

"For me, he had a breakout game against Dayton Dunbar in that title game two years ago. When you look at the talent he went up against that night and played an outstanding game, I knew then he was going to have a great career."

So good, in fact, that Thompson figures Mathias could help the Boilermakers this year with his offensive skill set.

"When I went with him on his official visit, I watched them practice and saw maybe one guy that

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had a pure stroke. I think he could help their offense right now with his scoring ability and ability to shoot," Thompson added. "He had such a great year last year and faced all kinds of defenses; he still had a great year. However, I could see him not having the same stats because of the other guys around him being better. We have three other starters back and they are all improved."