

# Dunking and dishing with Darryl Dawkins

By Don Steinberg  
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Darryl Dawkins, the former slam-dunking 76ers center known as Chocolate Thunder, the first NBA player ever drafted out of high school (in 1975), the man who said he was an alien from Planet Lovetron — yep, that Darryl Dawkins — was back in town this week promoting a great new DVD boxed set, *76ers: The Complete History*.

In a suite at the Four Seasons Hotel, Dawkins sat on a couch in his bare feet, wearing a hoop on each ear, as we discussed various topics.

**Question:** What's new on Planet Lovetron?

**Answer:** We're redoing the south side of Lovetron in all pink, and it's going to be smashing. One side is already in rose, the other side is in teal. So if I put this other side in pink, hey, everything looks pretty in pink.

**Q:** What's your take on Terrell Owens?

**A:** I think about T.O.: Any time a guy's making 10 or 11 million dollars and he goes in front of a crowd and says, "I'm worried about feeding my family," someone should get behind him and kick him square in the [butt].

**Q:** The NBA wants to get scouts out of high schools and have a minimum player age of 20. You came into the league from high school at age 18. What do you think?

**A:** When I came in there was a hardship draft that you had to apply for. You had five brothers and three sisters, and you wanted to help them have a better life, so you could apply for it, and they came and checked it. Lately, all the guy says is, "Hey, I'm coming out." Each case should be handled individually. If kids aren't mature and strong enough to endure the pressures of the NBA, where do those kids wind up? I think that's what the NBA's trying to stop.

**Q:** Has NBA player-fan interaction gone too far?

**A:** We didn't go up into the stands and fight with fans. The Celtics and the Sixers had a great rivalry, and when I played there was a young lady that every time I walked in, she'd holler, "You're a chump, Dawkins!" The whole time she'd be screaming this in a game. So finally I walked over to her and said, "That's it, I'm not bringing no more guys over to see your mother."

After the game she came down by the bench and said, "Can we talk, can we have a drink?" And we became friends.

**Q:** Your community and volunteer work includes a trip to Iraq next month, "Stay in School" talks to kids, and also "Say No to Drugs" talks. In your autobiography, there's a lot of drug use ...

**A:** We smoked, we did whatever we did. But it's not about where you start, it's where you finish.

**Q:** Did you see steroids in the NBA?

**A:** Steroids is a substance for another league. Basketball, your muscles have to be long and lean, so you can run and jump. Even when you saw guys get in the weight room and they bulked up, it screwed their shot up. I've never seen guys in the NBA using steroids, never heard of it.

## About the DVD

**76ers: The Complete History** is a monumental six-disc DVD set (\$49.95, Warner). Four discs each contain a classic game, including the last game of the 1983 NBA Finals.

A history disc explores the team's origins and highlights Wilt Chamberlain, Julius Erving, Allen Iverson, Darryl Dawkins, Charles Barkley, Billy Cunningham, and other greats. Disc six is all Iverson.

**Q:** How cool was it playing with Julius Erving?

**A:** He inspired everybody on the team. He would dunk on three guys, and you'd say, "I'm going to go next time and dunk on the whole team."

He was one of the first guys ever to have air breaks. He'd be floating in the air going this way, and all of a sudden started going that way. We would say, "He put his foot down, didn't he?" When I looked at Michael Jordan, I'd say he patterned his game after Dr. J. and Connie Hawkins. [Jordan] just had a better jump shot.

**Q:** What kind of vibe did you get from Philly fans?

**A:** The city embraced me. I had attitude. I was talking trash, and when I got on the floor I played the same way. If you got in my way, I was going to run over you and I wasn't going to help you up. I think Philadelphia was not long off one of their worst seasons, like 9-73 or something like that [IN 1972-73], and they wanted something to identify with. Philadelphia

is too big of a basketball town to have a bad team.

**Q:** So for the current Sixers?

**A:** Everybody's been all over the situation now about Chris Webber and Allen Iverson. These guys will realize they need each other. It's like Shaq and Kobe. Now that Shaq's gone, life ain't so good. The Sixers have got to realize they need a big guy down in the post.

**Q:** Rate the media here.

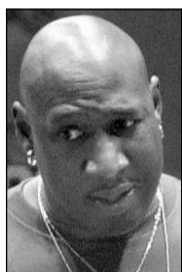
**A:** The media in Philly, I have to be honest, some guys know what they're talking about, and some guys don't but they have an opinion.

**Q:** You were voted off ESPN's *Dream Job* series, where they auditioned former players as analysts. Big fun?

**A:** I thought Dee Brown did a good job and deserved to win it. At the beginning, they said, "We're not going to embarrass you guys on TV. We're going to tell you what you need to work on." And the first week they're up there bashing you. You wanted to go up there and slap 'em. Well, if they were nice to everybody, nobody would watch it. But they didn't treat pros like pros.

It's an experience I definitely would not take back. I actually enjoyed it. The guy Stephen A. really didn't like me from the start, and that's his problem. [Dawkins referred to Inquirer columnist Stephen A. Smith, who was a judge on the show.] But I was on there three weeks and through that I'm still getting appearances now, including this, I think.

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**Darryl Dawkins** is part of a new 76ers historical DVD set.