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**HEADLINE:** Air Force heads to Utah State Tournament

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**BODY:**

This isn't the first time he's heard it.

And Lamoni Yazzie doesn't expect it to be the last time, either.

"Oh yeah, I hear it all the time - the last player picked, the one they think doesn't look like he can play," said Yazzie, a native of Tuba City, Ariz. "Other teams think that too, when they play us. But eventually, they all have to face me."

That's where the truth comes out. And so does Yazzie, a junior guard for the Air Force Academy men's basketball team. He leads the team in 3-point field goal percentage (.526, 20-for-38) and free-throw percentage (.857, 24-of-28). While he's averaging a fraction under 10 points a game, his points have been big.

In fact, as Yazzie goes, so go the Falcons. In Air Force's current two-game winning streak, Yazzie made 5-of-7 3-pointers in scoring 20 points against Central Connecticut, then had 13 points while shooting 4-of-8 from 3-point land in the win over the University of Denver.

Yazzie doesn't look flashy. He doesn't seem lightning fast or extraordinarily quick. But those looks, according to coach Joe Scott, are deceiving.

In fact, even Scott wasn't sure where Yazzie would fit in when Scott was hired after the end of last season.

But Yazzie quickly made his place.

"He has a nose for the ball," Scott said Tuesday evening before practice as Air Force gets ready to head to the Utah State Tournament, where the Falcons will face Cornell on Friday night. "He goes hard up the floor and back 100 percent of the time."

That's important, since Scott is 100-percent intensity himself all of the time.

But Yazzie had to adjust his game to fit Scott's style. Gone are the shots from anywhere on the floor. Instead, Yazzie has several alleys he prefers from beyond the arc. And in Scott's offense, the more open the shot, the better.

"When I got here, one of the things I noticed about Lamoni is there wasn't a shot he didn't like," Scott said with a smile.

Teammate Tom Bellairs agrees.

"Yaz wants the ball - he's a shooter," Bellairs said. "A shooter has to shoot."

Knowing this shooter would be restricted if he didn't adhere to Scott's chosen targets, Yazzie adjusted his game. Yazzie gets as many

back-door layups as the big men on the Falcons' roster, testimony to his hard work on the floor.

"That's part of who I am," Yazzie said. "My grandparents were the first in my family to finish high school. And then my parents went to college - they were the first to do that. It's nice that I'm a cadet here.

"But if I didn't work hard all the time in school and on the court, I'd really be disrespecting what my family accomplished before me."

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