

Haase has been dribbling toward success since he was a kid in S. Tahoe

By Steve Irvine, Birmingham News

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – Jerod Haase, the youngest of Carol and Gary Haase's five children, played the bass guitar and stand-up string bass while growing up in South Lake Tahoe. He played it well enough, in fact, that a high school music teacher suggested he could get a music scholarship.

Carol Haase's laughter while telling the story must have been similar to the laugh she enjoyed upon first hearing that suggestion.

She knew her son had talent, playing alongside him in a Christian folk music group that consisted of Carol Haase and her children. But she still followed the laughter with a polite smile and a thought.



Jerod Haase

"I'm thinking 'Right, that's not going to happen.'" By that time – actually long before – Jerod had chosen the passion that would lead him not only to college but also throughout life. In fact, it was love at first bounce for the freshly minted UAB men's basketball coach.

The introduction to basketball came when Jerod was in third

grade and he followed his brother to a basketball camp.

“I dribbled the ball one time and I just fell in love with it,” Haase said.

Since that day, his life has been filled with basketball. His parents put up a basketball goal behind the house and the youngest two Haase children and their friends wore it out. Jerod was part of a state championship team as a senior at South Tahoe High, played on a University of California team that advanced to the NCAA Tournament Sweet 16, started on three Roy Williams-coached Kansas teams that were a combined 89-13, and was an assistant coach at premiere programs Kansas and North Carolina.

It’s a path, though, that could have taken a different direction. The oldest three Haase children – Mara, Karin, and David – were accomplished at cross country skiing and cross country running. All three competed on cross country ski teams in college.

Carol Haase figured the youngest two would follow the older three. But Steven veered first and Jerod was close behind.

In South Lake Tahoe, a tight-knit community with a population of about 21,000, both brothers stood out on the court.

“I had a camp that went third through 12th grade, which, at the time, was one of the largest high school camps out there in California,” said Tom Orlich, one of the most successful prep coaches in California, who was then the head coach at South Tahoe High. “It was kind of a feeder camp to our school. The kids came up through the system and that’s how we knew Jerod. He was always ahead of his time as a basketball player and had to play against older kids.”

Steven came through first and made his mark. He was his team’s MVP his final two years at South Lake Tahoe and his steal and off-balance 3-point prayer at the buzzer to beat archrival

Reed High in a zone championship game is one of the biggest moments in the school's basketball history.

"He has a way of bringing that shot up when we're together," Jerod said of his brother, who went on to play basketball for the Air Force Academy.

At the time, Jerod was a 5-foot-6, 140-pound freshman who began that season on the junior varsity and was sitting on the bench when his brother hit the shot to win "the best game I've ever seen – bar none."

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