Southeastern Illinois College – like most community colleges in the Midwest – doesn’t have a football program. But they do now have an alumnus playing in the NFL.

Demar Dotson, who starred on the basketball court from 2004-2006 for head coach Todd Franklin, survived the final cut at Tampa Bay Buccaneers’ training camp, and will be on the active 53-man roster for this Sunday’s game in Tampa against the Dallas Cowboys.

Dotson, listed at 6-9 and 315 pounds, will wear #69 for the Buccaneers. He is listed second on the depth chart at right offensive tackle, behind incumbent starter Jeremy Trueblood.

“We’ve had a little bit of everything now,” said Franklin upon hearing the news. “Our men’s basketball program has produced an NBA player, a Harlem Globetrotter, some overseas and NBDL (National Basketball Developmental League) players, and now, an NFL player.”

Such a move isn’t without any precedent, as former college basketball players have suited up on the gridiron after the court days are over on several occasions. Two-time All-Pro tight end Antonio Gates of the San Diego Chargers chose basketball over football in college, led his team to the NCAA tournament’s Elite 8, and then became an NFL star. And just this fall, former Duke point guard Greg Paulus – an All-American in football and basketball as a senior in high school five years ago – won the starting quarterback job at Syracuse.

Dotson’s path was somewhat similar, as he finished his basketball career first before making the switch. A native of Alexandria, Louisiana, he graduated from SIC in 2006 and transferred to Southern Miss, where he appeared in 58 games, with 12 starts, in two seasons. But when he was coaxed into coming back for another year to play football, he had much less backing than either Gates or Paulus: he had never played organized football at all – not college, not high school, and not even on a Pee Wee level.

Still, he suited up as a defensive lineman, and though he contributed just three tackles in seven games, his stature and athletic ability impressed scouts, many of whom envisioned him making a switch from defensive to offensive line. After attending a rookie mini-camp tryout, Dotson signed a free agent contract with the Buccaneers in May, and survived each successive roster cut in training camp to make his recently initiated NFL dream come true.