

Cooper Versus Lewis

Two years ago in a summer league game in Compton it was Cooper, the NBA star, against Lewis, the legend of the playgrounds.

"Raymond had 56 that night," said Lorenzo Romar, an NBA player for four seasons with Golden State and a friend of Lewis.

"I've played one-on-one against World Free, Sidney Moncrief and Isiah Thomas. They beat me more than I beat them, but Raymond is harder to beat than any of those guys. Every player I've talked to said he'd be a great player in the NBA. It's really, really, really sad."

On the TV, Magic Johnson, who has a luxury home, is being interviewed.

"I see that home and I don't say that's supposed to be me," Lewis says. "I say that will be me. I'm not envious of any man in this world. I've always been the type of person who wishes everybody does well."

On days when his anger over the past is dormant, life is OK for Lewis.

"Kids who have had their dreams evade them and think life is a downer can see me still smiling and laughing," Lewis said, "and they say, 'If you can accept what happened to you, maybe I can.' Maybe that's my mission."



At Verbum Dei High School, Lewis says, "God kinda spoke to me. He said, 'You can be a great player.' After that, I started doing great things."

He led Verbum Dei to three Southern Section championships, then went to Cal State Los Angeles where he averaged 39 points as a freshman (scoring 75 in one game) and 33 as a sophomore.