

LEGENDS

MAGAZINE

20/25 Spring



**ISAIAH
RIDER**

CONTINUES TO SOAR

1974-75

GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS

THE "CARDIAC KIDS" HAVE A SPECIAL PLACE IN NBA HISTORY



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METTA WORLD PEACE

"I REALLY WANT TO INSPIRE PEOPLE TO GET INTO ENTREPRENEURSHIP. I FEEL LIKE SOMETIMES PEOPLE DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO DO BECAUSE LIFE CAN BE HARD."

-METTA WORLD PEACE







TURKEY, HOOPS, AND GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

THE NBRPA'S PHOENIX CHAPTER MADE A THANKSGIVING TO REMEMBER FOR LOCAL YOUTH

by JULIO MANTEIGA



While most of the country was gathering with family and settling in for a Thanksgiving feast, our Legends were doing their part to do what they do best: promoting the game of basketball and giving back to their respective communities. Our Phoenix chapter was no different, taking part in a Turkey Day college hoops extravaganza and putting on an impressive clinic for over 100 youth from the Phoenix area.

Thanksgiving Day began with a college basketball double-header at ASU's Mullett Arena presented by Intersport. Butler took on Northwestern in a nail biter that saw the Bulldogs emerge victorious 71-69, and then Mississippi State defeated UNLV 80-58 in the nightcap. The next day, the championship game between Butler and Mississippi State did not disappoint, as the Bulldogs won the tournament 87-77.

However, the action on the court was not the only treat for fans in attendance. During both days of play, our Phoenix-area Legends were honored at center court much to the crowd's delight. Among the Legends were Arizona State and NBA greats Fat Lever and "Jumping" Joe Caldwell, plus Jeff Malone (a Mississippi State alum) and Billy McKinney (a Northwestern alum), who was also calling the game for the Northwestern broadcast. As if that wasn't enough, the locals were

treated to two additional treats, as recent Naismith Hall of Fame inductee Doug Collins was in the house to support his son, Chris, who coaches the Northwestern squad, and WNBA star Caitlin Clark came to watch her boyfriend, an assistant on Butler's staff. With these Legends and star power in the building, we all had one more wonderful reason to give thanks on this holiday.

With the games concluded and the crowds heading home, it was time for the Phoenix chapter of the NBRPA to put on a show of their own. Led by Lever, the Phoenix chapter president, the Legends put on a Full Court Press basketball clinic for over 100 local youth on the Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend. The Legends led the participants through various ball-handling, defensive, and rebounding drills and finished the event with an incredible discussion on life skills to showcase how the principles of sportsmanship, teamwork, and camaraderie can help you in life. To underscore the significance and impact of these clinics, there was even one participant whose father took part in a similar event when he was a young child, receiving instruction from Lever years ago when he was playing with the Denver Nuggets. Talk about a full circle moment – both father and son had received basketball instruction from Fat years apart. We are all sure that the story will be shared with their family for years to come.

Like so many of our Legends do on an annual basis, these giants of the game continue to give back to their communities during the holiday season, make lasting memories for everyone they encounter, and provide direction to the future Legends of the game. For so many, this past Thanksgiving is a holiday to remember – all thanks to our Legends.



NBRPA Phoenix Chapter President Fat Lever and "Jumping" Joe Caldwell are honored at center court during the 2024 Arizona Tip-Off in Tempe, AZ.



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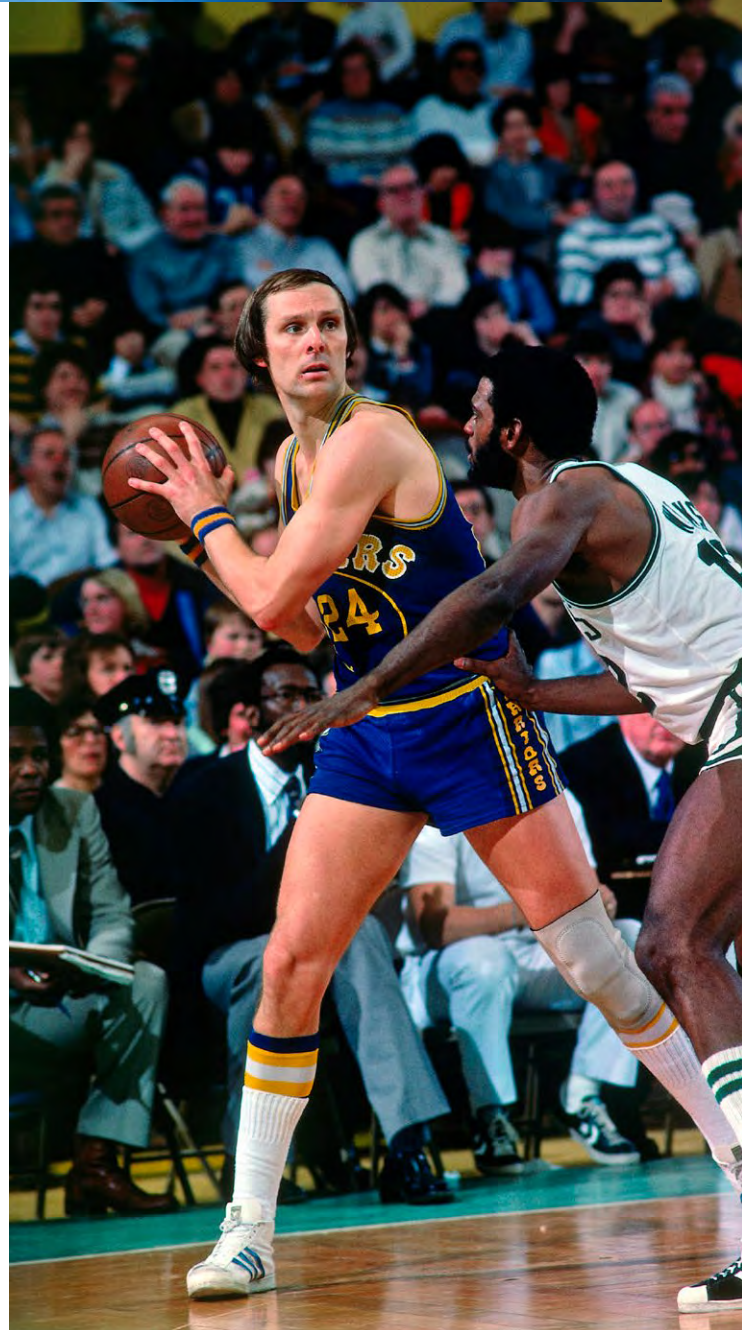
Presenters: Ewa Schafer, MD and Disha Narang, MD



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Presenter: Brian Helfand, MD



THE MOST UNLIKELY NBA CHAMPIONS EVER?

*THE 1974-75 GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS' "CARDIAC KIDS"
HAVE A SPECIAL PLACE IN NBA HISTORY*

by **CHRIS SHERIDAN**



Aside from the 1968 New York Jets winning the Super Bowl, what is the greatest championship achievement in U.S. sports history?

Rick Barry thinks he has the answer, in large part because he lived it (and will be reliving it again at the 2025 NBA All-Star Weekend).

It is the 1974-75 Golden State Warriors, who defeated the Washington Bullets 4-0 in the NBA Finals when Steph Curry's dad, Dell Curry, was only an 11-year-old.

"It is the most overlooked championship in the history of U.S. sports. It is just like [Joe] Namath, except we didn't predict it," Barry told Legends Magazine earlier this winter on a seven-way call with his teammates.

"There is nothing remotely close. To be expected to do nothing and then to sweep a team that was supposed to sweep us, it has never happened before or since."

The championship Barry referenced is part of NBA lore for a generation that is aging into its 60s, 70s, and 80s. The Warriors won Game 1 in Landover, Maryland, 101-95. They took Game 2 at the Cow Palace in Daly City, 92-91. Golden State won Game 3 in the old San Francisco rodeo facility, 109-101. Then, they finished the sweep on the road with a 96-95 victory in which head coach Al Attles was ejected by referee Richie Powers in the first quarter for joining the fray after the Bullets' Mike

From left to right: (1) Head coach Al Attles of the Golden State Warriors looks on against the Washington Bullets during an NBA basketball game circa 1980. (2) Rick Barry #24 of the Golden State Warriors holds the ball against a tight defending Don Cheney #12 of the Boston Celtics during a game played in 1978 at the Boston Garden in Boston, Massachusetts. (3) Butch Beard #21 of the Golden State Warriors shoots over Phil Chenier #15 of the Capital Bullets during an NBA basketball game circa 1973 at the Capital Centre in Landover, Maryland. (4) Jeff Mullins #23 of the Golden State Warriors drives to the basket during the game against the Milwaukee Bucks circa, 1974..



NBA CHAMPIONS 1974-75 GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS

TOP (LEFT TO RIGHT): ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER HAL CHILDS; CHARLES DUDLEY; BILL BRIDGES; CLIFFORD RAY; GEORGE JOHNSON; DERREK DICKEY; KEITH WILKES; STEVE BRACEY; DIRECTOR OF PLAYER PERSONNEL BOB FEERICK; GENERAL MANAGER DICK VERTLIEB.

BOTTOM (LEFT TO RIGHT): CHARLES JOHNSON; JEFF MULLINS; ASSISTANT COACH JOE ROBERTS; HEAD COACH AL ATTLES; PRESIDENT FRANKLIN MIEULI; RICK BARRY; BUTCH BEARD; PHIL SMITH; TRAINER DICK D'OLIVA. NOT PICTURED: FRANK KENDRICK.

Riordan grabbed Barry around the neck in an effort to get the Warriors' best player ejected.

"It was obvious what Riordan was trying to do, and Al just shot off that bench and got involved," Barry said. "At dinner the previous night, I got word through some mutual friends that they were going to do that. And Richie Powers, in his infinite wisdom, throws out the coach."

Powers was the best-known referee in the NBA at that time, a designation that was later handed to the likes of Dick Bavetta, Ronnie Nunn, Joey Crawford and may now be owned by Bill Kennedy. As much as the league has evolved, the best-known referee thing has endured.

Now, 50 years removed from that title, these former Dubs are excited to be heading back to the Bay Area for the league's showcase event to remind anyone who will listen that they were the quintessential Warriors success story long before Curry, Draymond Green, and Klay Thompson earned four rings, reached the NBA Finals in five straight years, and won an NBA-record 73 games in the 2015-16 season.

"I just read that the current Golden State Warriors have 211 employees," said former

Warriors reserve guard Jeff Mullins. "We had 11, and that included the owner."

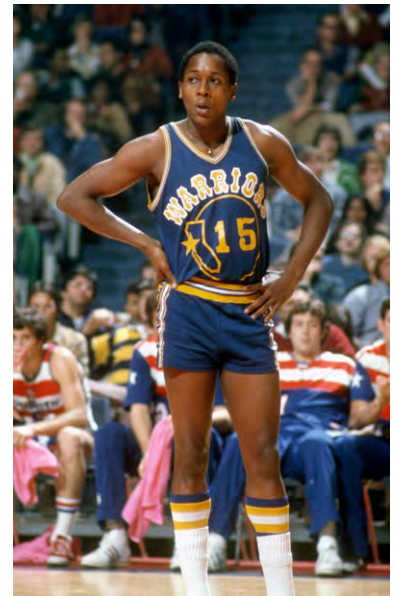
"The similarities to the recent Golden State championship teams is incredible," Barry said. "We were deep, we had shooters like Steph and Klay in me and Jamaal (Wilkes), we had shot blockers. It is incredibly interesting how similar we were."

"That team had an IQ that was off the charts," recalled former Warriors center Clifford Ray. "Jamaal was young, but he still knew how to play."

Former Warriors reserve guard Charles Dudley is trying to find a broadcast outlet deal for a completed documentary about the championship that anyone 60 or older remembers vividly. It happened one year before the NBA-ABA merger, it was televised by CBS Sports, and the lead broadcaster was Brent Musburger.

"Prior to the first game, I am shooting around, and Brent came over and said, 'This is my big chance. Try to go at least six games,'" Mullins recalled. "At 3-0, Brent was still saying the same thing, saying he needed the air time."

The seven players who participated on the call remember all sorts of unusual details from the championship run, including how the Warriors'



Charles Dudley #15 of the Golden State Warriors looks on against the Washington Bullets during an NBA basketball game circa 1975 at the Capital Centre in Landover, Maryland. Dudley played for the Warriors from 1974-78.

Former Warrior and NBA great Rick Barry hold the 1974-1975 Championship Trophy as the Warriors honor that championship team after the first quarter of a game between the Washington Wizards and Golden State Warriors at ORACLE Arena on March 23, 2015 in Oakland, California.



home games had to be played at the Cow Palace in Daly City because the Oakland Coliseum had been booked that May for the Ice Capades.

But because it was 1975, Game 1 was in the East, Games 2 and 3 in the West, and Game 4 in the East.

"I saw them outside the arena, I saw that they were smoking cigarettes, even Elvin Hayes, and I knew the Cow Palace was dusty, so I thought we would beat them," Dudley said.

"In The Cow Palace, you could run up and down," Mullins said. "It was an elongated building where they did motocross, rodeos and where Evel Knievel did jumps. The visual perception was that it was a long court."

To a man, among the seven players interviewed by Legends Magazine – Dudley, Wilkes, Mullins, Barry, Ray, Butch Beard, and George Johnson – there was unanimity that the championship had sort of been won in the Western Conference Finals when the Warriors defeated the Chicago Bulls. Golden State came back from a big deficit on the road to win Game 6 at Chicago Stadium, then pulled off a similar comeback in Game 7 at home in Oakland. The Warriors ended up winning their final six games. And Ray did it against the team that had traded him for Nate Thurmond.

"Nate Thurmond had been an idol for me, and I thought the Bulls did me a favor when they traded me," Ray said. "In Game 7, we got down and dirty. We always challenged ourselves defensively and could win on both ends. That's what makes any team special.

"I had given away a game earlier in the series because I saw Al shouting and thought it was because of the shot clock, which I could not find because they were not atop the backboard in those days. So, I took a baseline shot and missed, (Tom) Boerwinkle rebounded, and they



Jamaal Wilkes #41 of the Golden State Warriors drives on Spencer Haywood #42 of the New York Knicks. Wilkes played for the Warriors from 1974-77.

won by 1 point," Barry added. "I also remember Game 7 was a horror show for me."

Barry shot 8-for-23 in that Game 7, but Wilkes had 24 points in the 83-79 win. The Warriors had a 23-6 edge in bench scoring and got five of their 11 blocks from Johnson, who came off the bench. The Warriors held the Bulls to 14 fourth-quarter points after being down 11 at halftime.

"In the second half and the fourth quarter, great defense was the catalyst, and in that series, I knew the key would be the guards," said Butch Beard. "We had to at least equal what their guards (Jerry Sloan and Norm Van Lier) would do."

Several of the players recalled the turning point of the season was after a team dinner in Milwaukee at the Pfister Hotel, where owner Franklin Mueli purchased much wine.

Following a lopsided loss, Coach Attles threatened to send the entire team to the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City to learn alcohol abstinence.

"You never wanted to let Al down," said Ray of the former coach, who passed away on August 20 of last year.

What made the nation regard the Warriors' sweep as an upset was the fact that Golden State had gone 1-3 against the Bullets during the regular season, and Washington was coming off a six-game victory over the Boston Celtics in the Eastern Conference Finals. The Celtics and Bullets had won an NBA-best 60 games that season, while the Warriors went 48-34 for the best record in the West.

"We had gotten better over the course of the season," Johnson said. "We had grown together and were confident at that point. I was nervous, but then we won Games 1 and 2, and it was all downhill."

"I was more fearful of the Bulls," Beard said. "Because all the regular season games against the Bullets had been close."

"The Bullets may have been overconfident," Wilkes says, "and we just went out and played better."

The championship was the crowning achievement of Dudley's career, and the documentary is a project that he spent countless hours putting together. His next step is getting it into the hands of a company that will get it widely distributed so that everyone from Baby Boomers to Gen X and Gen Z can have a full visual recollection of what happened in Bay Area basketball circles half of a century ago.

Given the closeness of this team that has remained constant for five decades, somebody will make the proper connection and help Dudley complete his final step.

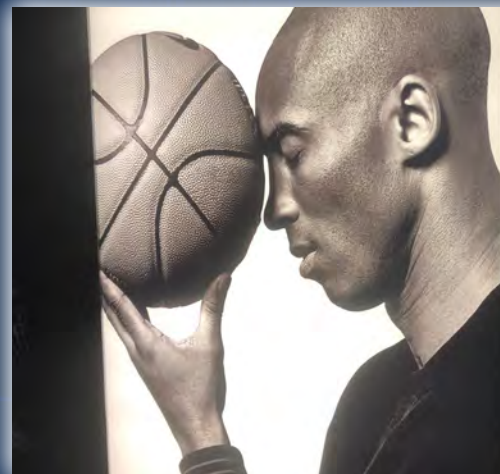


The 1974-1975 NBA Champions Alvin Attles, Rick Barry, Bill Bridges, Charles Dudley, George Johnson, Clifford Ray, Joe Roberts, and Jamaal Wilkes and the 88 Warriors Season Ticket Holders (who have been Warrior's Season Ticket Holders since 1974-75 season or before) on February 25, 2011.



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JACK OF ALL TRADES

RENEE MONTGOMERY IS LEAVING HER MARK ON EVERY VENTURE SHE TAKES ON

by **A.J. MCCORD**

There does not appear to be a lane in which two-time WNBA champion Renee Montgomery is not confidently making her mark.

Fashion? Montgomery launched C-Suite 21, a clothing line designed to fill in the gaps for athletes who need to be as comfortable and confident in a board room as they are in their field of play.

Entertainment? Check out ThinkTank Productions, Montgomery's production company. Their mission is to invest in and showcase stories of underrepresented voices.

Sports? In case her own WNBA titles and NCAA championship aren't enough, the co-owner of the Atlanta Dream made history when she joined the ownership group in 2021, becoming the first WNBA player to move into league ownership. She's also a co-owner of the FCF Beasts, a professional indoor football team in the Fan Controlled Football League.

Kids? The Renee Montgomery Foundation invests in the next generation by promoting equality in women's sports and advocating for social justice. They give out multiple Last Yard scholarships every year to HBCU (historically black colleges and universities) student-athletes to help level the playing field.

"I'm Renee Montgomery, and I like to make things better," Montgomery said, just days before she joined her Unrivaled commentary team for the league's inaugural season.

"That's what I think of when I go into any situation. I'm a student of every game that I play. Whether it's the fashion industry, whether it's the TV, film, and production industry, whether it's the sports industry, I study."

A lifelong student of the game of basketball, Montgomery is systematically, and intentionally, applying the lessons she honed on the court to everything outside of it.

"It's a certain level of discipline," Montgomery explains about how she tackles everything all at once. "It started young for me."

Montgomery grew up with her parents and sisters in Saint Albans, West Virginia, whose population was just over 10,000 in the 2020 census. It's the town where her parents, Bertlela (AKA Snook) and Ron, met at West Virginia State University, a historically black college.

"Being from West Virginia, sometimes I felt like I don't know if the coaches would be able to come down here and see me as much as they will see the New York players or the California players or the Georgia players, so I knew that every moment had to count, especially when I'm playing AAU."

That discipline helped Montgomery catch the attention of legendary University of Connecticut head coach Geno Auriemma. In her four years with the Huskies, Montgomery was named a two-time All-American, won the Nancy Lieberman Award (given to the best point guard in the country annually) as



CBS sports college basketball analyst Renee Montgomery on air during media day of the Final Four of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament at State Farm Stadium on April 5, 2024 in Glendale, AZ.

a senior, and led the 2009 team to an undefeated season and national championship.

"At every turn, I was playing in a big pond," Montgomery reflected. "I'm in the pond of UConn and I'm still undersized, and then when I'm about to get drafted, that's the first thing they're talking about; our team went undefeated my senior year, but they're curious can I make it in the WNBA because of my size."

It's the discipline she practiced relentlessly and saw the results of that kept her grounded whenever there were doubts.

"The idea of seeing discipline be successful, I think, is also something people may not talk about as much," she said. "You can be disciplined, but why do you continue to be disciplined? Because I saw it work. I saw the fruits of my labor in a sense of, 'Man, I worked on my ball-handling so much and so when it was a big game, I had zero turnovers – let me go work on it some more.'"

Discipline in basketball showed in tangible, statistical categories. As she's moved into the business world, Montgomery says the

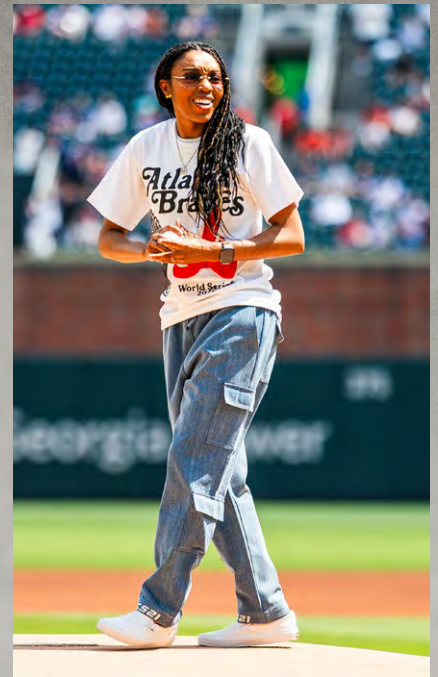
results aren't necessarily as easy to track – but they're no less certain.

"I try to align with things I'm passionate about," Montgomery explained in terms of her portfolio. "For all the things that you [see me doing] doing, there were a lot of things I had to say no to."

The confidence to know what to green light and what to pass on as a businesswoman is derived from the same discipline that gave her confidence in big games as a player.

"When we say things in sports like 'trust the process,' we know what that means. People might think 'trust the process' and believe that it means everything's going to be alright in the end, [but] that's not necessarily what I think of when I think of 'trust the process' as an athlete. I think that the season is long, you're going to take a lot of Ls," she explained.

"I've had years where I didn't win the championship, I've had years where we had losing seasons [and] we lost more games than we won. But I've also had years where I won, and I've also had years where we were successful. So trusting the process doesn't necessarily mean



Renee Montgomery throws out the ceremonial first pitch before the game against the Tampa Bay Rays at Truist Park on June 15, 2024 in Atlanta, GA.



Renee Montgomery #21 of the Minnesota Lynx celebrates during the game against the San Antonio Stars on June 25, 2017 at Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, MN.



Renee Montgomery looks on during the game between the Atlanta Dream and Indiana Fever on June 21, 2024 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta, GA.



"SO TRUSTING THE PROCESS DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN THAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE SUCCESSFUL AT THAT VERY MOMENT, IT JUST MEANS THAT IF YOU KEEP WORKING AT THIS PACE AND YOU KEEP STAYING THIS FOCUSED AND YOU KEEP DOING ALL THE THINGS RIGHT THINGS, IT WILL PROBABLY WORK OUT BETTER THAN NOT."

RENEE MONTGOMERY

that you're going to be successful at that very moment, it just means that if you keep working at this pace and you keep staying this focused and you keep doing all the things right things, it will probably work out better than not.

"You're putting yourself in the best position to win. There are some great players that have never won championships, but they're still great players and they still trust the process and they still were successful – maybe not winning the ultimate championship, but success looks different in a lot of different ways. When you trust the process, you gotta check the wins along the way and that's what I be sure to do."

Montgomery is in the process of checking those wins now.

C-Suite 21 successfully launched its first collection, ensuring that 90% of C-Suite executives who play a sport have luxury comfort.

"I'm excited about C-Suite21 because I felt that gap when I went from athlete to retired and instantly was inside the corporate world and sitting in meetings. Now, even sitting alongside Larry [Gottesdiener, managing partner of the Dream], he's a billionaire, so I'm excited that I filled a gap in the clothing where I want to be comfortable – I'm still an athlete – but I'm also now a businesswoman and doing business at a high level."

The Dream are coming off a season in which they became just the second team in WNBA history to sell out all 20 home games, including two games of more than 17,000 fans in State Farm Arena.

"I'm excited about the Atlanta Dream in the sense of how things are growing in the WNBA and how our ownership group is moving alongside with that," Montgomery said.

ThinkTank Productions is in the midst of finalizing projects and deals that will be announced soon.

As for the Renee Montgomery Foundation, it is continuing to give back to the community she was raised in.

"One thing I'll never leave is the community because I was raised on it," said Montgomery. "We try to provide Last Yard scholarships to those student-athletes to help them be able to compete at their highest level and reach their potential and use those scholarship checks for nutrition, for food, so they don't have to work a job while they're playing."

And so Montgomery continues, in every lane she touches, to make things just a little bit better.



Atlanta Dream Co-Owner/VP Renee Montgomery poses with Atlanta Dream players Rhyne Howard and Allisha Gray after a game during the 2023 WNBA season.

ISAIAH RIDER CONTINUES TO SOAR

FROM THE 1994 DUNK CONTEST TO SERVING HIS COMMUNITY TO PUBLIC SPEAKING

by **ANDREW POLANIECKI**

Since the invention of the camera in 1816, life's most significant and cherished moments have been captured, preserving them as frozen snapshots in time. Throughout sports history, iconic imagery has transcended generations, immortalized in books, trading cards, and posters that grace the walls of passionate collectors. These treasured moments aren't just frozen in time — they have become etched in our memories forever. With the advent of video, the internet, and platforms like YouTube, those frozen moments have been transformed into timeless treasures, allowing sports fans to revisit and relive them just as they did decades ago.

Since the inaugural NBA Slam Dunk Contest in 1976, the greatest dunks in basketball history have been immortalized through the camera's lens, cementing their place as timeless symbols of the sport's artistry and athleticism. Posters of Dr. J and Michael Jordan soaring from the free-throw line adorned the walls of young basketball fans everywhere. Equally iconic were the unforgettable images of Dominique Wilkins and MJ executing electrifying windmill dunks during the legendary dunk contests of the late '80s.

Over the years, however, these once groundbreaking and iconic dunks began to lose their novelty. What was once a rare spectacle reserved for the dunk contest gradually became commonplace during regular season games. As a result, contestants had to push the boundaries of creativity to keep their performances fresh and captivating, ensuring the dunk contest remained an exciting showcase of innovation and athleticism.

In 1991, Dee Brown brought a fresh twist to the dunk contest by attempting a left-handed tomahawk jam while covering his eyes with his right forearm — a move never seen before.



following year, in 1992, Cedric Ceballos elevated the concept of "blindness" by introducing props to the dunk contest for the very first time, a trend that has since become a staple for nearly every contestant. Using a blindfold, Ceballos completed what appeared to be a daring and dramatic dunk, earning him the title. However, if you strip away the blindfold, the dunk itself was merely an ordinary two-handed flush.

As props and gimmicks became increasingly common in an effort to maintain creativity, the days of original acrobatics that had mesmerized fans during the '80s began to fade. Gone were the groundbreaking dunks with iconic names, such as Dr. J's "Rock the Baby," Terence Stansbury's "Statue of Liberty" dunk, or Kenny "Sky" Walker's "Windmill 360," which left audiences in awe. Year after year, the pure athletic artistry that once defined the dunk contest gradually gave way to more theatrical performances, shifting the focus from raw innovation to spectacle.

As a high school freshman in 1986, Isaiah "J.R." Rider was already performing dunks that redefined the limits of what had been witnessed in the NBA. Drawing inspiration from Jordan and Wilkins, Rider studied their signature moves and sought ways to elevate them with innovations of his own.

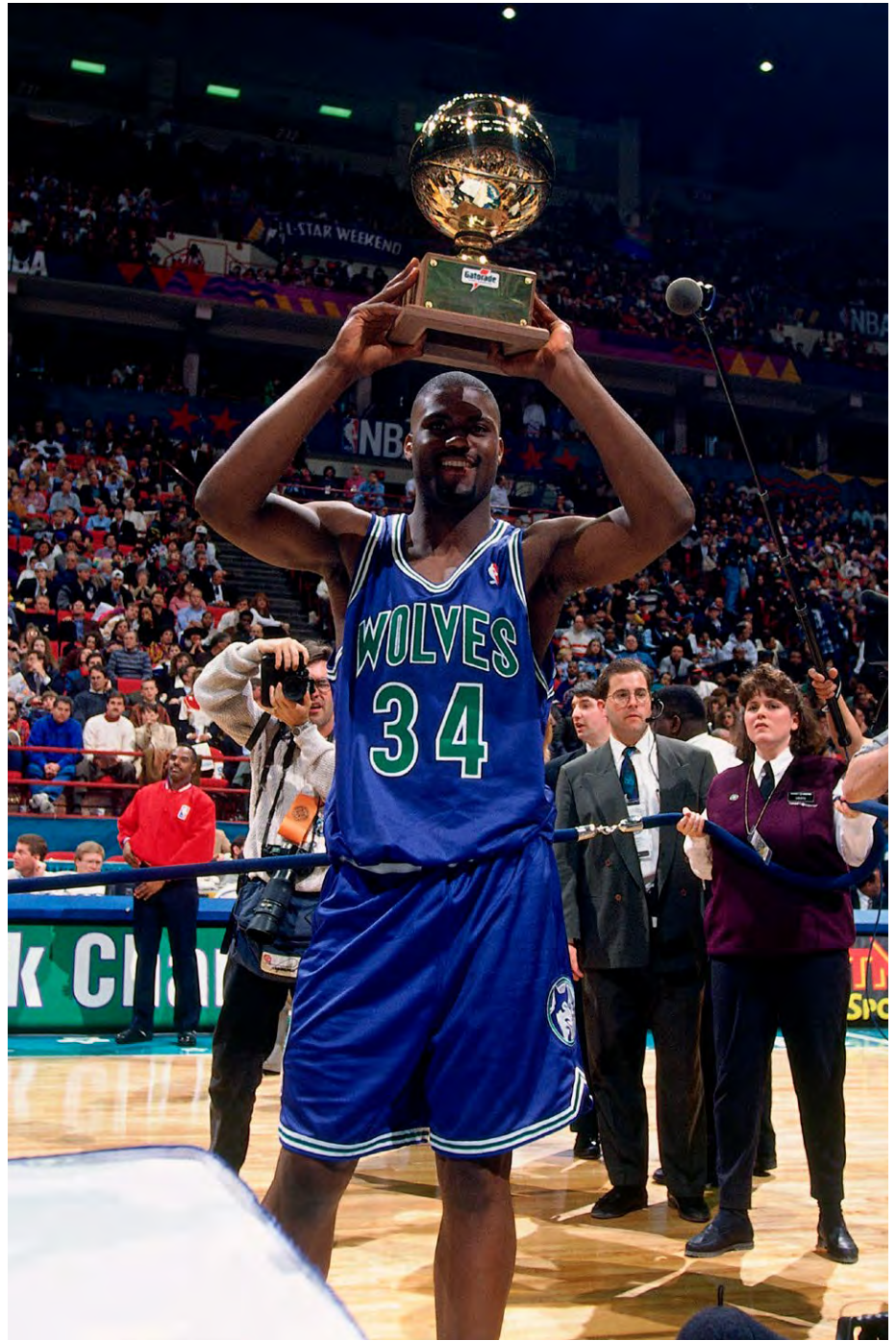
"Jordan had his signature dunks from the free throw line and leaning in, getting sideways. Dominique had the windmill," Rider explained. "But, no one was going between their legs."

Determined to bring something new to the game, Rider began practicing the groundbreaking dunk during the summer before his freshman year of high school.

"The summer leading into freshman year, I tried to go behind the back, between the legs, and I got real close," Rider recalled. "So, then I said, forget the behind the back, and I just went between the legs, and I got even closer. Then, all of a sudden, I threw it down after the third or fourth one, so it was just a timing dunk for me after that."

By the time ninth grade began, Rider was effortlessly executing what he would later coin "The East Bay Funk Dunk," a tribute to the entire Bay Area. Meanwhile, the NBA's elite players were still offering audiences nothing more than repetitive windmills and free-throw line dunks year after year.

As Rider's trophy case grew with countless Slam Dunk trophies, so did his notoriety. Fans packed the Boys Club and other high schools throughout the Bay Area, eager to watch Rider leave them in awe with dunks no one had ever



Isaiah "JR" Rider of the Minnesota Timberwolves holds the trophy after winning the 1994 Slam Dunk Contest on February 12, 1994 at the Target Center in Minneapolis, MN.

seen before at any level. Rider would later introduce the East Bay Funk Dunk to the national stage for the first time as a contestant in the NCAA dunk contest, a competition he won with ease.

Confidence cannot be taught; it is a trait cultivated through an individual's own belief in themselves.

Just minutes after being selected by the Minnesota Timberwolves as the No. 5 overall

pick in the 1993 NBA Draft, Rider showcased his unwavering confidence during his first TV interview as an NBA player. Live on air with Craig Sager, he boldly guaranteed a victory in the 1994 Slam Dunk Contest to the roar of the crowd, months before he would even attempt his first NBA dunk.

"From watching prior dunk contests when I was younger, I was really tuned into it back then... so, I had the confidence with that

between-the-legs dunk because no one else was doing that," he said.

With Jordan retired and Wilkins' dunk contest days well behind him, Rider was aware of his current competition.

"I knew that Shawn Kemp and Robert Pack, and maybe Sky Walker potentially would get into the dunk contest, but I knew that none of those guys would do anything like that, and I probably could match their best dunks... No one was going between the legs."

The 1994 NBA All-Star Weekend just so happened to take place in Minnesota during Rider's rookie season. With the NCAA dunk contest title already in his possession, a stunning highlight reel of in-game dunks as an NBA rookie, his audacious guarantee made on draft night, and his home city providing the perfect backdrop, the opportunity for Rider to fulfill his bold prediction made for an excellent storyline for the NBA.

Now, it was only a matter of putting together his Saturday night routine.

"You know what is so funny? I did not prepare for the dunk contest because I won it in college, and I just knew that I wanted to do a windmill and then the between-the-legs dunk... [It] was second nature," Rider recalls. "I was not really prepared... I was more worried about the music I was going to pick, that was my dilemma."

After selecting "More Bounce to the Ounce" by Zapp, and a song by Seagram, who hailed from Rider's hometown of Oakland, Rider was all set for the bright lights of All-Star Saturday Night.

As Rider's name echoed throughout the arena, the nearly 20,000-strong crowd erupted in cheers for their hometown hero. Sensing the surge of energy, Rider raised his hands to embrace the crowd before stepping to midcourt. When Zapp's music blasted through the speakers, he got into a quick two-step dance routine before proceeding to improvise and launch the ball from half-court. Running at full speed, he caught it off the bounce in mid-air and delivered a powerful two-handed slam.

Rider's second dunk became almost as legendary as the East Bay Funk Dunk, immortalized by a flawless photograph of his signature "Rock the Baby" move. That iconic image continues to remain relevant today, nearly 31 years later, as it appears everywhere, from vintage posters to newly released Timberwolves memorabilia.

With 30 seconds left in the first round, Rider had the option to attempt the between-the-legs dunk, but confident that his first two dunks were strong enough to secure his place in the next round, he chose to hold off. Instead, he opted for a simpler yet very impressive windmill dunk, which he once again executed off the bounce.

With his spot secured in the final round, anyone who had witnessed Rider's dunk in the NCAA Slam Dunk Contest or seen his between-the-legs dunk in high school knew exactly what was coming next. Isaiah was poised for the moment he had been perfecting since his high school days. Even the play-by-play announcers had anticipated the upcoming spectacle. Everyone watching was on the verge of witnessing one of the greatest dunks and most unforgettable moments in NBA Slam Dunk Contest history.

As Rider had predicted months earlier, the finals featured Pack, Kemp, and himself. After scoring a 46.8 in the first round, Rider made his way to the left corner behind the basket. Announcer Hubie Brown, anticipating the next move, speculated that Rider was positioning himself for his signature between-the-legs dunk. Rider took off from the baseline, dribbled three times, picked the ball up with his right hand, quickly switched it to his left, then passed the ball under his right leg back to his right hand before slamming it home with a powerful tomahawk dunk. That moment would forever be etched in NBA dunk contest history as "The East Bay Funk Dunk."

Immediately after completing the dunk, the play-by-play announcer cut to Charles Barkley sitting courtside and asked him what he thought. "Oh my god, that might have been the



(Left) Isaiah Rider #34 of the Portland Trail Blazers shoots against the Sacramento Kings circa 1997 at Arco Arena in Sacramento, CA. (Right) Isaiah "JR" Rider of the Minnesota Timberwolves attempts a slam dunk during the 1994 Slam Dunk Contest on February 12, 1994 in Minneapolis, MN.



Isaiah Rider #34 of the Portland Trail Blazers shoots a layup against Kobe Bryant #8 of the Los Angeles Lakers in Game Four of the Western Conference Quarterfinals during the 1998 NBA Playoffs.



Isaiah Rider #34 of the Minnesota Timberwolves looks on against the Sacramento Kings circa 1994 at Arco Arena in Sacramento, CA.

best dunk I have ever seen,” Barkley responded. “That was awesome, we have a winner!”

Rider’s flawless dunk earned him a near-perfect score of 49. Caught up in the moment, Rider was unaware of his exact score.

“I assumed I would get a 50 for sure,” he said. “I didn’t even fully realize that I got a 49 and not a 50. I was in the moment... I do remember hearing the announcer say 49, and I was like a 49? So, I was a little shocked, but I know they sometimes leave room for someone else to do something amazing, and I know Shawn Kemp was a contestant once or twice prior to that year... Being the Reign Man, I think they wanted to give him a little room to do something amazing... But I was a little shocked.”

To this day, Rider still doesn’t know who gave him the nine. It didn’t matter, though. Rider had already sealed the dunk contest victory before attempting his final dunk.

For his final dunk, Rider had intended to top his previous one by throwing the ball up, catching it off the bounce, and then executing a between-the-legs dunk. However, Antonio Davis of the Indiana Pacers, who had participated but was eliminated in the first round, advised him to simplify the move. Davis suggested Rider avoid overshadowing his earlier between-the-legs dunk in case the more ambitious attempt failed. Taking the advice to heart, Rider still delivered an impressive two-handed rock-the-cradle dunk that kept the crowd roaring with excitement.

As Rider accepted his trophy, he delivered on the promise that he made that previous June on the night of the NBA Draft. Now, 31 years later, the East Bay Funk Dunk is still revered as one of the greatest dunks in dunk contest history.

From 1997, when Kobe Bryant executed the same dunk as Isaiah, to last year’s dunk contest, countless variations of the between-the-legs dunk have emerged. From Vince Carter and Jason Richardson to Zach LaVine and Aaron Gordon, just about every contestant since Isaiah has attempted to add their own twist to the iconic move. While all their dunks were impressive, none will ever replace the original.

Today, the same between-the-legs dunk that was once considered an anomaly is now viewed as a standard move that fans see every year, even during regular-season gameplay. Unfortunately, the dunk contest has waned in appeal, with many basketball fans believing there is nothing left to astonish or captivate them.

Rider feels the issue with the dunk contest runs deeper than that.

“Back in our day, making the All-Star game was the ultimate goal... But in our era, we wanted to go dunk against the best, show our athleticism against the best, compare and contrast who has the most hops in the league, and who is dunking on heads,” Rider said. “It was a no-brainer for athletes, jumpers, leapers to get in the dunk contest – no matter who was in it. Just like Jordan’s era and Dominique’s era, they didn’t care who was in it, they were going to go for it. David Thompson and Doc, they were going to go for it. Spud [Webb] came in, he didn’t care what size guys were, he was going to go for it.”

Such is not the case today, as the superstars of the league choose not to participate, whether due to a fear of failure, concerns about damaging their brand, or the risk of tarnishing their reputation by finishing in second place. The aftermath of these decisions has left fans watching lesser-known players, some even called up from the G-League just days before the dunk contest, competing for the spotlight. This has resulted in a diluted product, causing the dunk contest to take a back seat to the Three-Point Shootout.

Rider believes it can be fixed, though.

“If you get the big names, then you get the eyes, and you get the audience, and you get everyone excited again,” Rider explained, “You’ll get everyone coming to the dunk contest again... all the celebrities, all the stars, all the top names from other sports locked in and glued into the best in the world doing the dunk contest, seeing them in a different element where they could freestyle like they’re at the park.”

As Rider reflects today, if he could assemble the ultimate dunk contest featuring himself at his peak against five other players in their prime, his dream lineup would include Aaron Gordon, Jason Richardson, Vince Carter, Dominique Wilkins, and Michael Jordan.

“I’m throwing it up with two hands, leaping high off two, grabbing it with two, putting it between the legs, and dunking with one down the middle,” Rider said.

With the spotlight of the 1994 Slam Dunk Contest dimmed but never completely out, Rider now dedicates his time to giving back as a mentor and role model to youth for over a decade. In addition to his mentoring efforts, Rider coaches an EYBL team in Arizona comprised of 15- to 17-year-old athletes. Beyond coaching, he trains his players, helping them develop their athletic skills while also guiding them off the court.



(Left) Head coach Dan Issel of the Denver Nuggets talks to guard Isaiah Rider #34 during the NBA game against the Houston Rockets. (Right) Isaiah Rider of the Los Angeles Lakers celebrates with his teammates after winning the 2001 NBA Championship by defeating the Philadelphia 76ers in game five of the NBA Finals June 15, 2001 at the First Union Center in Philadelphia, PA.

Rider takes pride in shaping young individuals, fostering their growth, and helping them transition from boys to men and girls to women, instilling values that transcend basketball.

"It comes full circle," Rider said. "I'm still at it, and that's been something that's been my calling where I get satisfaction. I get to pay it forward. I get to mentor kids. I get to help different people trying to get to college and achieve their goals. I get to help mold and mend hearts, personalities, and character through basketball and sports. It's been a fun ride and a great journey."

In addition to Isaiah's community work, he has recently started taking courses and attending seminars to hone his skills as a keynote speaker. These sessions have helped him learn how to grow his brand and master the craft of public speaking. When Rider takes the stage, he speaks from the heart, drawing on his own life experiences and the challenges he faced navigating the highs and lows of fame as a professional basketball player. Through his speaking engagements, he has discovered that countless kids across the country resonate with his story. As a mentor

passionate about educating others through his journey, Rider realized he could transform his speaking appearances into a full-fledged business. He's found it to be the perfect blend of earning a living by doing what he loves while also pursuing what he finds most rewarding.

It has been 31 years since the legendary East Bay Funk Dunk was immortalized on basketball's grandest stage. In the decades since, innumerable iterations and tributes have celebrated iconic dunkers, often adorned in nostalgic throwback jerseys. However, not once has anyone donned the distinctive blue-and-green No. 34 Timberwolves jersey while executing a between-the-legs dunk. Beyond the prestigious role of serving as a judge, what would constitute the ultimate homage for Isaiah?

"If Ant-Man being from Minnesota, did it and wore my jersey... brought me out, and I threw him an oop or a lob..." Rider said. "That would mean a lot to me and a lot to the dunk community around the world."

As the basketball world has already seen Nate Robinson honor Spud Webb, Gerald Green pay tribute to Dee Brown, Chase Budinger emulate Cedric Ceballos, Larry Nance Jr. celebrate his father Larry Sr., and countless players channel the legendary Vince Carter, all while wearing their throwback jerseys, it's only a matter of time, Isaiah.



Former NBA player, Metta World Peace poses for a portrait during the 2019 NBA Awards Show at the Barker Hangar on June 24, 2019 in Santa Monica, CA.

Tyrese Haliburton #0 of the Indiana Pacers embraces Metta World Peace after the game against the Milwaukee Bucks during Round 1 Game 4 of the 2024 NBA Playoffs on April 28, 2024 at Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, IN.



METTA WORLD PEACE

THE SAME TENACITY THAT DROVE HIM ON THE COURT IS DRIVING HIS LATEST BUSINESS INITIATIVE, TRU SKY VENTURES

by **ANDREW POLANIECKI**

Metta World Peace is nothing short of an icon. His extraordinary NBA career spanned 17 seasons, punctuated by a 2010 championship with the Los Angeles Lakers and a host of accolades, including Defensive Player of the Year, NBA All-Star, All-NBA Third Team (2004), and four All-Defensive Team selections.

Yet, these achievements do not define him, nor are they the legacy he seeks to leave behind. Since stepping away from the game, he has reinvented himself as a philanthropist, mentor, educator, and, above all, a visionary entrepreneur. To date, he has successfully founded over 40 portfolio companies.

His latest initiative, Tru Sky Ventures – named after his granddaughter, Tru, and his partner Steven Stokols' daughter, Skye – endeavors to generate enduring generational wealth through strategic and impactful venture capital investments.

When did you officially launch Tru Sky Ventures?

Metta World Peace: I started it two years ago with my partner Steve Stokols. It took us a little bit of time to build it. It takes a lot to launch a fund. We had to put some things into place, plan deal flow, and then find our thesis.

What inspired you to establish Tru Sky?

MWP: The fund, Tru Sky Ventures, is an offspring of Artest Management Group because we have about 40 portfolio companies and Artest Management Group is more of a service-providing company, and we wanted to take the venture capital model we had with Artest Management Group and give it its own identity, and we did that with True Sky Ventures Fund. Now, we have taken the burden off a venture capital model on top of the service model for Artest Management Group, and we gave it its own entity.

Where does the company currently stand in terms of its growth, impact, and current projects?

MWP: Two years later, we have general partners. Allison Lam is a former BlackRock and former Carlyle Group worker, she's a general partner. Tarey Gettys is a former Navy Seal and Stanford grad, and he's a general partner. Gerard Casazza, a former Wall Street entrepreneur, he's a general partner. Stephen Stokols is the former CEO of Boost Mobile and the founder of FreedomPop. He's also a co-founder with me on the entity. Right now, we made an investment into one company, Barcode. We haven't raised capital yet; we just did that as a first investment because it was an opportunity.

How much capital is Tru Skye seeking to raise?

MWP: The goal for Tru Skye is to be a \$100-million fund. We also have a couple of other funds. Steve and I have some small special-purpose vehicles that we invested together, and we wanted to create it into a business model, so now we're looking into raise a little money and launch this fund. We're also advising companies too, so we're not just waiting for the fundraising. We're actually very active right now.

Are you looking to get other athletes involved with you?

MWP: We definitely want to get other athletes involved. I went back to school for some extension courses when I retired, and because I was studying so much during those eight years since I had retired, I was pretty much just sitting back and watching as other athletes were investing in funds and launching their own funds. I was watching the type of businesses [they were investing in]. I didn't want to make it a thing where I felt like I was late. I made it a thing where, when I'm ready, I'll be early.

Sometimes when you rush, you get in trouble. Even though I missed out on opportunities in the past, I wanted to make sure I kept that patience. So now, we would like to start talking with athletes and have them learn a little bit more about what I'm doing.

Are you focused more on getting them involved in raising capital and managing the business or is your priority to help them launch and grow their own ventures?

MWP: Both. My holdings company just launched our sports management vertical. We have two sports agents and one attorney who can do football and baseball. So, we want to have golfers, and we want baseball players. We [also] have an entertainment manager on the team, and we have a party with Jay Bienstock, the director of Survivor. My production company Artest Management Group, which we've been building for five years, now has a sports and entertainment vertical.

My first company was a CPA accounting firm. It was called Intrinsic. I recently just partnered with one of the juniors from my CPA accounting firm, and now she's in-house with me, (along with my) CFO, and my general counsel. It's taking me a little while to build this... but we're building it. We have different verticals with different stakeholders and account managers running each vertical. I'm the lead operator, but I'm also the chairman operator.



Metta World Peace #91 of Team Stephen A dribbles the ball during the game against Team Shannon during the Ruffles NBA All-Star Celebrity Game as part of NBA All-Star Weekend on Friday, February 16, 2024 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, IN.

What's your long-term goal?

MWP: Long-term goal is to IPO hopefully within three-to-five years.

Where did you decide to go back to school, and what courses or areas of study did you focus on to support your current endeavors?

MWP: I retired in 2017. Around 2009, I wanted to get into an agency business. In 2010, I started to seek out mentorship from high-level people that took companies public. In 2012, I started to dabble with capture technology of my own. The new technology I was presenting was stuff like Shopify, Facebook ads, and YouTube ads. In 2014, I took to building my first CRM with some partners... that didn't go too well. I was also getting into merchandising, and then I realized I didn't have the skill set. When I realized that I did not have the skill set, I couldn't keep throwing money away, and I told myself that it's going to take a long time.

Then in 2015, I launched my agency AMG at a \$10-million valuation with no tangible assets. I didn't know much about the space of private equity, but I did know that one day, my

company would be worth \$10 million at least. Early on, I was kind of going in blind. As I was playing, I was always on the (team) bus and I was doing different things; I was always working and thinking about how I couldn't wait to get back to my laptop when practice was over. But when I'm practicing, I'm practicing. I'm going hard. But when my time is up, then I can't wait to get back.

What I found out when I retired, I tried to coach, but it was taking too long. I wanted to coach for five years and that's all. So, I said, I'm not going to start now because I'm not committed. But once I get my business up and running, and it can run on its own, then I'll coach, which is right now. So, I'm looking for the right coaching job right now because I have a great team, and I don't need to be around.

When I officially stopped playing, I was trying to figure out what I was going to do. I was already getting equity in companies. I didn't have a thesis at the time, and I was just like, "Okay, what do I want to do?" ... I love coaching. I love the stock market, so I was thinking

about getting my Series 7. At this point, I love digital (marketing), and I also love rapping. So, I said I'm going to do one of those things and that's it, I'm not doing two. I (thought) about rapping, which is what I really wanted to do, but the problem with that was the lifestyle and being away from the family again, having to be in the studio 14-16 hours a day, which I would have done, but it just didn't fit me as a 37-year-old.

With coaching, I thought that I wouldn't want to get right back into coaching because I was gone for the last 17 years. I wanted to be with my family, and I needed something where I could be home, and I found that on my laptop. So, I studied for my Series 7 and then with the Series 7, I knew I really wanted to help athletes, but with the Series 7, it was like, "Man, I'm going to have to be behind a desk." I wanted to be more in the action.

I figured that I could always launch a financial company, but I didn't know how I was going to get there. I signed up online for a UCLA extension course, and I did my first class online, but I couldn't learn online so I told them I wanted to come into the class. So, I would enter the classroom. I did digital marketing, social media, and I signed up for the coding class. When I found out that I had the endurance and I wasn't tired, I thought that I had really found something. That led me to learn how to work Alibaba, AWS, GitHub, even Terminal on a MacBook. I learned how to work all these different programs on the job. Not real fundamental training, so I had flaws,

but over time the more you do, the more you learn. I figured I'll just be like a product manager at some point. I also did a two-week course in Google Analytics in Vancouver. That was my journey.

How has your NBA career shaped your current entrepreneurial journey, and do you feel it gives you an edge as you start this new venture?

MWP: You know what the NBA career did? It comes down to two things. One, the experience. And two, the missed opportunities. So, the missed opportunities... not being an Olympian, which I should have been in 2004, but because I was getting in a lot of issues, I wasn't able to make that team. When I got suspended, I missed out on another Defensive Player of the Year, another All-NBA, another All-Star, and more. So, my career is not complete.

Being a colorful character, I was one of the first athletes outside of Shaq to have their own signature shoe three times. Outside of Shaq, [I was] one of the only guys that was rapping. People were rapping, but they weren't putting themselves out there like I was. People were rapping, but they were in the closet. I was out there putting out records. So, with that experience of sports where if you play well, you can market yourself, you can get endorsements... but I didn't want the endorsements anymore. I didn't want to be the influence anymore. I want to build a company. How do you do that? At that point in 2016, I didn't know. But I think with my experience in brands, sports, content, and media, it definitely gave me the upper hand.

Kobe Bryant was known for his investments off the court. Did you ever turn to him for advice or insights when it came to business?

MWP: Not until after he retired. When he was into business, I was focused on finishing my career strong. It wasn't at the top of my mind. I was in my own world. I didn't know what anybody was doing on the bus. I didn't know if I was going to be an operator. I didn't know if I was going to be an investor. I didn't know what path I was going to take in business, so I didn't even know what question to ask. But when I found out I loved digital marketing, I did text Kobe, and I said, "I need to speak to you." We met in my office, he signed a bunch of jerseys for my family, and then I told him what I'm trying to do. We had a great conversation. I told him about my digital marketing and how I wanted to be the one to operate it.

With no experience, I just needed something to push me, because it's really tiring when you really don't understand this world. He definitely gave me that extra motivation, and not necessarily motivation because he's Kobe, but he gave me confidence. And, even more than confidence, he gave me encouragement. And even more than encouragement, he was just so supportive. He just kept on saying to me, "You should do it; just keep working hard."

One thing Kobe knows about me is that if I say I'm going to lock somebody up, I'm going to lock somebody up, I'm not doing something different. So, if I say that I want to do digital marketing, and even though I maybe should



(Left) Metta World Peace #37 of the Los Angeles Lakers raises his arms after making a shot against the Boston Celtics in Game 7 of the 2010 NBA Finals on June 17, 2010 at Staples Center in Los Angeles, CA. (Right) Metta World Peace speaks as a panelist during the Emerging Technology & Player Opportunities Summit at the NBRPA's 2023 Legends Summer Getaway in Las Vegas.



Metta World Peace #37 and Kobe Bryant #24 of the Los Angeles Lakers celebrates as the Lakers defeated the Boston Celtics in Game Seven of the 2010 NBA Finals at Staples Center on June 17, 2010.

be coaching, the one thing I understand about Kobe, and he understands about me, is I'm going to do digital marketing. If I want to learn how to code, and if I say I want to learn how to code, that means exactly what I said. It doesn't mean anything different.

Is there a piece of advice from Kobe that has stayed with you over the years and continues to influence your approach today?

MWP: He did say that a lot of the greats made it in their 40s. I was in my 30s feeling old and getting discouraged. I felt like time was racing. He reminded me that a lot of greats made it in their forties, so that led me to believe that since it took me 11 years to make it pro from the age of 8 to 19, I said, "Okay, it's just going to take me 11 years to make it pro in digital marketing." And I said, "Fine, I'm all in."

Do you feel a greater sense of fulfillment in your current endeavors compared to your playing days?

MWP: I think I will always be an individual athlete because I can control what I can control, and I know where my passion is, so I think it is really complete. Business is different. It's relationship building. You have to have different types of skills. Depending on what you're trying to do, whether you're going to build an app, or you're going to build an institution, or you're going to build a digital modern company... it's all a different skill set. And, depending on what level you're trying to do it at, this has been fulfilling because I truly believe in academics. I truly believe people should work hard in school, and now I'm able to tell my part of the story from an academic perspective, which I think is

more inspiring than how many times I dove on the floor for a loose ball.

You mentioned that you have one company under Tru Skye Ventures. What types of businesses are you looking to invest in, and how do you evaluate potential opportunities? What kind of research and due diligence are you conducting to ensure both the success of your holding company and the businesses you invest in? Could you walk me through your process?

MWP: In Tru Skye, we are looking for sports, tech, consumer, brands, media, and direct-to-consumer companies. We have a really robust digital marketing company and that's why we like anything direct-to-consumer because we can really help the direct-to-consumer companies perform. And that's in anything. That's in entertainment, it's in consumer, media, and in SaaS (software as a service)... Sometimes you have a product, and you need marketing technology... Well, do you build that out or do you focus on your value prep? And sometimes, if you don't have all those kinds of wires and plumbing inside of your company, then you use somebody else. Maybe you'll use HubSpot, or maybe you'll use MailChimp... Or you could use a one-stop-shop solution, and that's why we love digital D2C companies.

And that's also what Tru Skye's value with our capabilities through our digital marketing company called Just Slide Media, which is going to be a big multiplier for our portfolio companies. Then, the holdings company, Artest Management Group, we are an over-the-top service company with a sales force, so we add value to our portfolio companies and Tru Skye is one of our portfolio companies. It's venture capital, but it is one of our portfolio companies. So, we have contractors and agents, so when we do make an investment out of Tru Skye, we're able to add value. Essentially, we might not have anchor capital, but we are essentially an anchor because we add value to the investment, which is why I have 40 companies.

Now, we're trying to build up the venture capital fund and make investments. My holdings company is structured a little differently. It's a service-based model, and sometimes we'll give free services for great economics.

Did you have any interest in business during your time at St. John's, or did that develop later?

MWP: No. I wanted to be an architect major because I wanted to build community centers. The only reason that I got into business is because I wasn't getting support with



Former NBA players Metta World Peace and Kevin Garnett attend the game between the Los Angeles Lakers and the Boston Celtics on February 7, 2019 at the TD Garden in Boston, MA.

philanthropy. Even though I was doing the most philanthropy in the NBA, and I got the NBA Citizenship award, just to prove it, [other] people were giving more money than me. But in terms of what I was doing behind the scenes, I was making more of an impact.

When the writers gave me the Citizenship award... it was just overwhelming because every day, I was giving my time to social impact. I [realized] I had to get into business because I wasn't doing any business... When I wasn't getting support from the corporations, I said to myself that I'd have to build my own business so that I can give back.

My initial entity was Excel University in 2007, which is now Artest University. We went from just giving scholarships to kids, to high schools, and a few colleges... to now we are an online EdTech platform. We have built out our EdTech already, and we are getting our curriculums ready. We are also trying to launch a higher-learning EdTech. The technology is fully built out with my dev shop that we control in house.

Now, we've got the 501(c)(3), which since I wasn't getting support, that's what got me in the business. I knew nothing about business. I was playing basketball, doing philanthropy, and I was enjoying L.A. That was it, and I had to cut something out, so I cut off the enjoyment part.

Which company was the first to be added to Tru Skye Ventures, and what made it a good fit for your vision?

MWP: Barcode. It's a drink that is another option from the already served beverages on the market. The founder, Bar Malik, used to be a trainer for the Knicks. The drink was everywhere, and we knew we could add value to the beverage and add value to the founder. The experiences that we had are awfully inspiring.

We know so much about different things, so we can talk to the founders and give them directions real fast, which is why they like working with us. Victor Wembanyama invested in Barcode. He's the lead athlete investor involved. It's the official drink of a couple of teams. It's a great, healthy product.

We also have another company called FanUpm, which is doing approximately \$70 million of revenue per year, so we did those two companies first, and that's before we raised capital. We just did it because it was an opportunity.

Where do you want to take those two companies?

MWP: Hopefully, billion-dollar companies, for sure. The first two companies we invested in under my holdings company, both went public. The other 30-plus companies that we have are just services for those companies.

What does Tru Skye provide to a company that traditional banks might not be able to offer?

MWP: We offer strategic advisory, business consultation, marketing services, digital marketing services, networking across businesses, coaching, financial structure and consultation with finance partners, and our experiences. We offer different infrastructure and consultation, and we can really help the founder scale. We really dig into the staff, especially the C-suite. Tru Skye has a lot of different capabilities that we can help a founder with.

We are actually exiting the start-up phase. Even though we're helping start-ups, we can now help Series-C and A-round companies, B-series companies also – not just the start-ups. We're leveling up slowly. When you're talking to a startup founder, for example, you get a lot of experience, especially when they get past my basketball career because sometimes people can't get past that piece. But once they get past it, they forget that I play basketball quickly.

Have you encountered doubters or investors who hesitate to do business with you because of your past? How do you navigate those situations?

MWP: Yeah, for sure. I think sometimes there are two things an investor or someone may not want to work with you based on your past, or because you're just not ready. Everybody has their own opinion, and everybody deserves to think how they want to think, so I don't want to get in the way of somebody's perception of my past, and if that's the reason why they don't want to partner, I totally accept it because I have my reasons for things too. But I also got to accept the constructive criticism, which is like being drafted and you're a rookie on the team. You got to accept and listen to the reasoning, and not just assuming and making these assumptions, and that's what's really helping me grow.

Everybody has their own timelines, and their own thesis. Just because somebody is a billionaire – female or male – doesn't mean that they want to invest in your company. Maybe they want to invest in their (own) child's. There could be many different reasons, now I realize, why people don't partner. But I can't say that now, because people are looking beyond whatever [is in my] past, and they're looking at the hard work. Life is about execution.

What does a typical workday look like for you at this stage of your career, balancing your various ventures and responsibilities?

MWP: Every day is operations, and every day is administrative work. The bulk of my business

is administration. Sometimes there is travel involved, but for the most part, it's more just updating and getting my operators ready... I don't know if I'm the best, but I'm trying to be the best.

Going from the limelight of the NBA to doing administrative work every day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., how was that transition?

MWP: What I've realized is if I do it every day, that means my work is done early. Stay ready so that you don't have to get ready. There was a point in time we were like, "Oh my goodness, this is so overwhelming doing pitch decks, and updating pitch decks and updating documents, and doing all this stuff, updating models, and working alongside administration." [But] everybody's working hard. It's like if I practice on my left hand, my left hand will only get better.

In addition to Tru Skye and your other ventures, you're also deeply involved in the mental health space. Can you share more about that work and what motivates you to focus on this area?

MWP: I've been involved for quite some time. I know a lot of the concepts, products, and services out there. I've been inspired by some of the products and services, especially the government services. Obviously, private services, such as therapy, and seeing what it did for me and how I was able to pay for multiple therapists in different areas. It was in 2007 that I really started talking about it.

People have underestimated me for being vulnerable and for, like, being a cornball, if that makes sense. People totally forget I'm from the streets and they just say things as if they were trying to bully someone, because now I'm a little bit different wearing a shirt and a tie. But, if I go back home, I'm very well-respected back home.

But from my perspective, on the mental health side, I felt like if I'm going to tell my story, if you don't have enough money to pay for a therapy session, if you're hearing me, it should inspire you and maybe if you don't have \$100 an hour, then at least you know that it's okay to be vulnerable and you know it's okay to seek help and you know that you can get through it.

Since starting like that, it led to me getting the NBA Citizenship award. It led me to be on the board of the UCLA Psych Ward and Psychiatrists of America. I feel like I'm a pioneer in the space. Our first curriculum is going to be a mental health curriculum for Artest University.

You're also coming out with a new podcast. With so many people having one now, what sets your podcast apart from the rest?



Metta World Peace speaks as a panelist during the Emerging Technology & Player Opportunities Summit at the NBRPA's 2023 Legends Summer Getaway in Las Vegas.



Jermaine O'Neal and Metta World Peace talk to the media during the NBA All-Star Game as part of NBA All-Star Weekend on Sunday, February 18, 2024 in Indianapolis, IN.

MWP: I was the first one with a podcast, so let's just start there. My podcast on YouTube called "Mettaphorically Speaking" was in 2012. Look at the timeline when everyone else started their podcast. The problem with our first podcast was that we couldn't get it off the ground. We were all friends, we were all doing the same thing, and nobody was really doing anything different like PR or business or business development, sales, marketing, sponsorship. We didn't know what that was. We just did the podcasts. So, that was 2012 and a lot of athletes used to come to me and always say, "Man, you're doing something new, how did you do that? How do you know about this?" So then, when you go back to 2008, you'll see my first interview with Kobe. So, you'll see that I was the very first one there. But I wasn't able to execute, which is another reason why I went back to school.

People started to ask me to do podcasts, and I started to exit out the entertainment [and] fun



side of, you know, Ron Artest/Metta, I didn't want to do any more sports and entertainment talk. I didn't want to talk about someone's bad game. I don't want to talk about what happened [like] why did they act like that? I don't want to talk about why this coach got fired. I'm not interested in those types of conversations, so I had to turn down a lot of money from the podcast game.

I set out to launch an entrepreneurship podcast (based on) social impact, mental health, entrepreneurship, and rinse and repeat. It took me five-to-seven years to find that right partner and now we have a podcast called Crossover. I'm doing it with Greg Snow, who is my partner from my music CRM company together with Dead Maus. Greg and I are going to host the podcast, produced by our production company and our in-house producers. I really want to inspire people to get into entrepreneurship. I feel like sometimes people don't really know what to do because life can be hard.



LEGENDS CARE

Legends Care is the initiative of the NBRPA that positively impacts communities and youth through basketball. NBRPA Legends give back through clinics, mentoring, charitable outreach and other grassroots initiatives in the United States and abroad with the goal of educating, inspiring and keeping youth active, healthy, and safe.

Ongoing Legends Care initiatives include the Legends HBCU Scholarship, Full Court Press, and Legends Home Courts. Past initiatives have included international goodwill missions, Thanksgiving Community Assist turkey donation drives, BACK2BACK school backpack drives, and Legends Girl Chats between WNBA Legends and middle school & high school girls.

To learn more about Legends Care or donate to support these initiatives, visit legendsofbasketball.com/LegendsCare



LegendsTM

STUDIOS

Legends Studios, presented by the NBRPA, is the #1 podcast destination for basketball fans who want to hear from NBA and WNBA Legends.

Episodes of the Legends Lounge with Trill Withers, Hoop du Jour with Peter Vecsey, Legends Live, and the All-Access Legends Podcast can all be found in one place at Legends Studios.



HOOP DU JOUR with Peter Vecsey

Subscribe to Legends Studios on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts to stay up-to-date with all exclusive Legends content.





NBRPA INTRODUCES

MIXTAPE MONDAYS



Follow @NBAalumi on Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Threads and YouTube and be the first to see the newest #LegendsMixtapes every Monday.

In September of 2023, the NBRPA debuted a brand-new and highly anticipated content series across all @NBAalumni social media channels, remixing some of the best moves in NBA history as part of countdown to the start of the 2023-2024 NBA season.

Mixtape Mondays, also known as "Legends Mixtapes," reimagine old-school NBA highlights set to unexpected music from a different era, starting with a contemporary showcase of 6x NBA Champion Bob Cousy accompanied by M.O.P.'s "Ante Up." The Houdini of the Hardwood himself loved seeing the new interpretation of his ball-handling talent and said: "What a treat!"

In the first 24 hours after its release, the inaugural mixtape produced over half a million views on @NBAalumni social media. The series has also featured Isiah Thomas's legendary handles, "Pistol Pete" Maravich's smooth moves, "Nick the Quick" Van Exel's timeless highlights, and Larry Bird proving why he'll forever be called "Larry Legend." The Legends Mixtapes series has, to date, produced over 3 million views and hundreds of thousands of engagements, and counting.



TRILL'S TAKE:

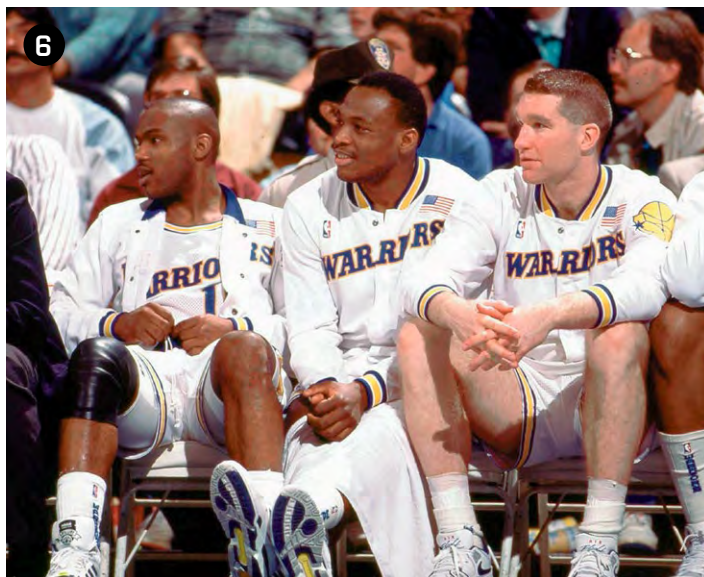
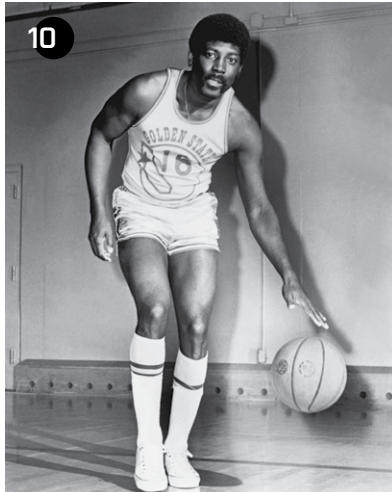
TOP 10 MOMENTS IN GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS HISTORY

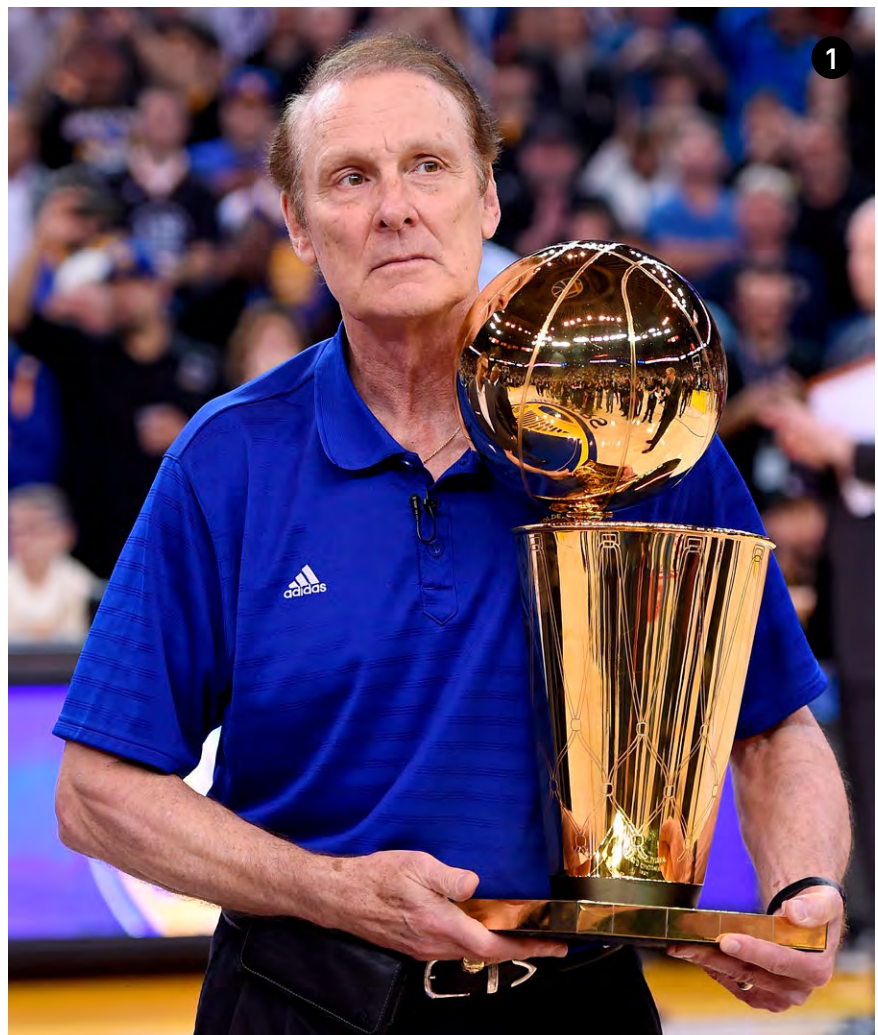
by TRILL WITHERS

The 74th edition of the NBA All-Star Game makes its way back to the Bay Area. The Warriors have hosted the game in the past, but not since 2000 and their days in Oakland. With the festivities debut in San Francisco, let's take a look back at some of the best moments in Golden State Warrior history.

TOP 10 TOP 10 MOMENTS IN GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS HISTORY

10. The organization arrives in San Francisco from Philadelphia (1962)
9. Mitch Richmond wins Rookie of the year after averaging 22 PPG for a playoff team (1988)
8. Klay Thompson erupts for 60 points in 29 minutes on only 11 dribbles (2016)
7. Kevin Durant, two seasons removed from an MVP campaign, signs with Warriors (2016)
6. Run TMC (Tim Hardaway, Mitch Richmond, Chris Mullin) finishes as the league's highest scoring trio on the way to a Conference Semifinals appearance (1991)





TOP 10
TOP 10 MOMENTS IN
GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS HISTORY

5. Steph Curry sets the all-time 3-point record, passing Reggie Miller with his 2,561st make (2021)
4. Sleepy Floyd goes for 51 points and 10 assists in the Conference Semifinals. His records for playoff points in a quarter (29) and half (39) still stand (1987)
3. Coached by Steve Kerr, the team set the record for most regular season wins after going 73-9 (2015)
2. Steph, Klay and Draymond Green win their fourth title together in eight seasons (2022)
1. First championship in franchise history led by Finals MVP Rick Barry and player turned player-coach turned coach Al Attles (1975)

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LEGENDS CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT
NEW YORK

The NBRPA's New York Chapter distributed over 500 turkeys and turkey breasts at the Church of the Ascension on 107th St in NYC as part of its 10th annual Thanksgiving food drive, lending a helping hand to families in need in New York this holiday season. Participants included NBA Legends Tom Hoover, Smush Parker, and Sam Worthen.





LEGENDS CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT
DALLAS

The NBRPA Dallas Chapter conducted its annual distribution of Thanksgiving meals on Saturday, November 23, 2024. Former players in the Dallas - Fort Worth area teamed up with the Fort Worth Police Department for outreach and H-E-B/Central Market to supply turkeys and traditional trimmings to Fort Worth residents in need. Officers, city officials, community leaders, youth from Shiloh Baptist Church, and former basketball pros handed out food provided by Central Market to 115 families pre-identified by Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, the site of the event.





LEGENDS CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT
PHOENIX

The NBRPA Phoenix Chapter wrapped up the 2024 holiday season by participating in numerous toy drives in the Phoenix area. One special toy drive took place at the George Gervin Preparatory Academy, where Legends including Chapter President Fat Lever, Mark West, Charles Bradley, and Steve Colter spent time with faculty and staff while gifting students with lots presents and positive words.





LEGEND SIGHTINGS

WNBA FINALS 2024



The 2024 WNBA Finals concluded on October 20 with a thrilling Game 5 overtime battle that saw the New York Liberty defeat the Minnesota Lynx. The Liberty, led by head coach and WNBA Legend Sandy Brondello, took to the streets of New York following their win to celebrate their first WNBA Championship in franchise history alongside their devoted fans. WNBA royalty graced the sidelines during the series, including Lindsay Whalen, Teresa Weatherspoon, Swin Cash, Kym Hampton, and Vickie Johnson. Celebrities and current athletes alike also showed up in masses to show their support, including Angel Reese, Spike Lee, Fat Joe, Aubrey Plaza, Jason Sudeikis, Jennifer Hudson, and Common.





LEGEND SIGHTINGS

EMIRATES NBA CUP 2024

The Milwaukee Bucks capped an unbeaten run in the 2024 Emirates NBA Cup with a 97-81 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder in the Championship. Milwaukee Bucks lead assistant coach and NBA Legend Darvin Ham helped guide his team to the big in-season win, earning his second consecutive NBA Cup trophy after steering his team to victory last year as head coach of the Los Angeles Lakers. Numerous Legends — including Spencer Haywood, Oscar Robertson, Blake Griffin, Joakim Noah, Rip Hamilton, Shaquille O’Neal, Andre Iguodala, and Ray Allen — were in attendance to watch and support their favorite teams and players.





DERRICK COLEMAN



LEGEND SIGHTINGS

SOUTH FLORIDA BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION LUNCHEON

On Wednesday, January 15, 2025, the South Florida Basketball Association hosted its annual Legends Charity Luncheon at Broken Sound Club in Boca Raton. This year's honored guests included NBRPA Detroit Chapter President Derrick Coleman, who received the Willis Reed Courage Award, and Hall of Fame college basketball coach Bob Huggins, who received the Lenny Wilkens Lifetime Achievement Award.





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20/25 Spring



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