

DALE BROWN

*Note: This is the **third** in a series of four articles on this year's inductees into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame and the LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball award recipient. The 2005 inductees will be former LSU All-American Dick Maile and former coaches Bobby Paschal of UL-Lafayette and Dale Brown of LSU. Mr. Louisiana Basketball for 2005 is Southern Lab High School coach Joel Hawkins.*

LEGENDARY LSU COACH DALE BROWN SET TO BE ENSHRINED IN LOUISIANA BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

By: Lee Feinswog
Written for the LABC

BATON ROUGE -- Almost 31 years ago, when some of his counterparts in the state wanted to form the Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches, LSU's Dale Brown jumped right on board.

"Everyone of us, Dale included, was trying to promote basketball. Every coach in the state did something, but we were all doing it for selfish reasons and we were all doing it to help our programs only. Not to help basketball, really," recalled Don Landry, then the basketball coach at Nicholls State, later its athletic director and now retired commissioner of the Sunshine State Conference in Florida.



"So when I came up with this concept to start it (the LABC), I invited all the coaches to that first meeting in Baton Rouge. And Dale was a real key because he was the big-name in the state."

In the years since, the LABC has grown and annually honors its best, including boasting a state hall of fame that would rival any state's in basketball. And now Brown will be a member when he is inducted into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame during the LABC's annual awards banquet in Baton Rouge on May 7. The other inductees will be former LSU All-American Dick Maile and former UL-Lafayette coach Bobby Paschal.

"I never planned to be a coach of the year, I never planned to go into a hall of fame, I just went into coaching," said Brown, who retired as LSU coach after 25 years at the end of the 1996-97 season. "So this is all lagniappe for me."

Brown's record at LSU was 448-301. His 238 regular-season Southeastern Conference victories rank second only to Kentucky's Adolph Rupp. He took the Tigers to the 1981 and 1986 NCAA Final Fours, along with two other NCAA Tournament regional finals, four SEC regular season championships, one SEC Tournament championship, 13 NCAA Tournament appearances, two NIT appearances and ten 20-win seasons.

Along the way Brown received National Coach of the Year honors in 1981 and was a four-time SEC Coach of the Year, seven-time Louisiana Coach of the Year and four-time NABC District Coach of the Year.

“I wasn’t even going to coach,” said Brown, who turns 70 on Oct. 31. “But I got into it and loved it.”

Landry, Brown, Northwestern State head coach Tynes Hildebrand, Northeast Louisiana head coach Lenny Fant and his assistant coach, Benny Hollis, were the driving forces behind the formation of the LABC in the fall of 1974.

“It was a group of guys who really got along with each other,” Brown recalled. “There were no jealousies. Everybody liked each other, it seemed to be genuine, there was no hoopla, there was no television, it was just competition. They were nice people.”

Brown, who said he hopes Shaquille O’Neal will be there for his former coach’s induction, will be introduced by Tim Brando, the CBS broadcaster who got his start in Baton Rouge.

Brown, already a member of the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame, won the LABC’s most prestigious annual honor, the Mr. Louisiana Basketball award, in 1988 and is a past winner of the organization’s Don Landry Award for meritorious service in 1998.

“I had the privilege of introducing him (in 1998),” Landry said, “and I mentioned that yeah, Dale’s controversial and not everybody sees everything he’s done the way he did, but there’s no one in this state who has tried to help more coaches than Dale Brown. There were so many coaches in this state who when they went to apply for a job, they went to Dale to get him to try to help them.”

Brown, a native of Minot, N.D., came to LSU in 1972 from Washington State, where he was a relatively unknown assistant coach.

Landry took over as head coach at Nicholls State in 1966. Six years later, the new LSU coach was making news throughout Louisiana.

“As soon as he was hired he started traveling the state and giving out nets. Wherever there was a basketball goal, he would stop and introduce himself as the new coach at LSU and hand out nets. I had never heard of such a thing and I really looked forward to meeting him after learning how hard he worked, how aggressive he was and how conscious he was of spreading the word about basketball in this state.”

He still is. Brown still gives about a speech a week and now does a weekend stint on Fox Sports radio and only a few years ago stopped putting on basketball clinics, which he continued to do around the world after his retirement from LSU.

Remarkably, two years ago he had a stroke from which he shows no effects. That wasn't all that surprising to those who were witness for those 25 years to Brown's competitive nature, enthusiastic personality and ability to make others rise above, earning him the nickname "The Great Motivator."

Brown's memoirs were published last fall. In it, Baton Rouge businessman Stan Harris offered the following:

"The most important thing he did for me – and this is true for countless others whose lives he has touched – was to challenge me to reach my potential, to achieve more than I had ever thought possible. He set an example as a friend, mentor, father and counselor. He spoke his mind, he always spoke from his heart. His passion, energy and love for others is contagious."

Just some of the reasons why he will finally be enshrined into the Hall of Fame established by the organization which he helped form more than three decades ago.

"I give Dale a lot of credit for helping the LABC get started and prosper in those early years," Landry said. "Dale, being a much bigger name than any of the rest of us, was right there with everybody trying to do his part. He really got involved and I give him a lot of credit for making it successful."

The Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame, which is located in LSU's Pete Maravich Assembly Center, is sponsored by the LABC. The Hall of Fame was created in 1975 to honor former great basketball players and coaches from Louisiana colleges. You can learn more about the LABC and the Hall of Fame by visiting their website at www.labball.com.

The Hall of Fame induction ceremonies will be held in conjunction with the LABC's 31st Annual Awards Banquet. The awards banquet, sponsored by SportsCare, will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Baton Rouge on Saturday, May 7, 2005 at 7:00 p.m.

In addition to the induction of the new Hall of Fame members, the banquet will include recognition of Louisiana's major college, small college, junior college and high school players and coaches of the year, the top pro player from the state, and the presentation of the Mr. Louisiana Basketball award to Southern Lab High School coach Joel Hawkins.

Tickets for the banquet are \$15 and can be obtained by contacting the LABC at labball@gmail.com. The Embassy Suites Hotel is located at 4914 Constitution Avenue in Baton Rouge (College Drive exit off of Interstate 10).

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