

PHIL HICKS

*Note: This is the **first** in a series of three articles on this year's inductees into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame and the LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball award recipient. The 2009 inductees will be former Tulane University star players Phil Hicks and John "Hot Rod" Williams. Mr. Louisiana Basketball for 2009 is former Haughton High School coach and Louisiana legislator, Billy Montgomery.*

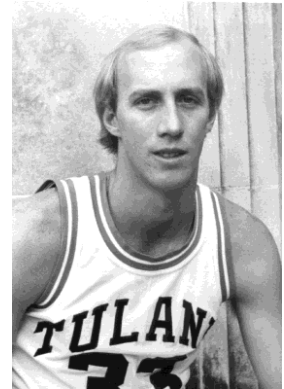
HICKS TOOK A DIFFERENT PATH

By: Les East
Written for the LABC

NEW ORLEANS -- Phil Hicks took a road less traveled to reach the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame.

Hicks, a native of Chicago, started his college career at Loyola University in New Orleans, but the university dropped athletics after his freshman season. "I don't know if I didn't do my due diligence," Hicks said, "but I had no idea that was coming."

Hicks transferred to Long Beach State for one season to play for legendary coach Jerry Tarkanian.



He then decided to return to New Orleans and enrolled at Tulane University. He became eligible between semesters and played 2½ seasons (1973-76) for the Green Wave, leaving the school as its all-time leading scorer.

"I enjoyed my time there," Hicks said. "We had a good group of guys, not too many knuckleheads."

For his stellar career at Tulane, Hicks, who also played two seasons in the NBA and nine in Europe, is part of the 2009 Class that will be inducted into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame on May 2.

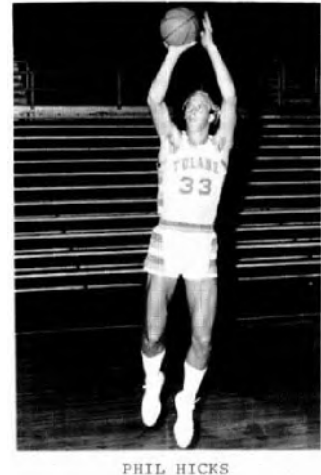
But even Hicks' entrance into the Hall is unconventional as he was selected to be a member of the 2008 Class. The induction date conflicted with Hicks' son, Spenser's graduation from Lake Forest College in Chicago, so the Hall agreed to postpone Hicks' enshrinement until now.

"There's nothing normal in my background," Hicks said with a laugh.

Hicks was an honorable mention All-American and received first-team All-Metro Conference honors in 1976. He was also a three-time first team All-Louisiana selection and an All-South Independent pick in 1974.

Hicks scored 1,586 career points at Tulane (an average of 21.1) and finished as the No. 2 rebounder in school history (895 rebounds and an 11.9 average). For his career he made 52.2% of his field goal attempts.

He averaged 20.6 points (which led the Metro) and 10.8 rebounds in 1976, 22.7 points and 12.4 rebounds in 1975, and 20.0 points and 12.8 rebounds in 1974. He had single-game highs of 41 points and 25 rebounds.



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Hicks played for Green Wave coach Charlie Moir, who is a member of the Virginia Tech Hall of Fame for his success as the Hokies head coach.

“Coach Moir was an excellent coach for older players who were more mature and knew how to work,” Hicks said. “He was always a gentleman as far as I was concerned.”

Hicks participated in one of the most memorable games in Green Wave history, a four-overtime loss to national powerhouse North Carolina in the Superdome in 1976. The Tar Heels, whose coach (Dean Smith) was the U.S. Olympic coach that year, guided a team featuring players such as Phil Ford and Walter Davis.

Though he fouled out during the second overtime, Hicks surpassed Johnny Arthurs’ Tulane career scoring record during that game. Hicks still seemed bothered by the Tar Heels “bringing their own referees” to the game, recalling a controversial block-charge call that went Ford’s way at a pivotal point in the game.

Following his senior season, Hicks was selected by the Houston Rockets in the second round of the 1976 NBA Draft, as the 27th overall pick.

He spent two seasons in the NBA, making stops in Houston, Chicago and Denver before deciding, “I needed to try something different.”

His unconventional path veered overseas. Hicks said he liked that he had more control over his career when he went to Europe. He was able to try out for different teams and he negotiated his own contracts.

He played for teams in Rome, Florence, and Reims, France, staying a total of nine seasons. He met his future wife, Claire, while he was in France.

“After the NBA I went to Europe and had a real good time there,” Hicks said. “I really enjoyed the style of basketball. It was toned down just a little bit.”

Instead of playing 82 games as NBA teams do, the European teams played 32 to 40. The games were more spread-out, allowing for more practice times, sometimes two-a-days, which Hicks said helped his development.

Hicks now lives in Glendale, Wisconsin, a city on Lake Michigan near Milwaukee, and works as a wealth management adviser for Northwestern Mutual.



Hicks will be inducted into the Hall of Fame along with another former Tulane star, John “Hot Rod” Williams.

The Hall of Fame induction ceremonies will be held in conjunction with the Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches 35th Annual Awards Banquet at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Baton Rouge. The banquet is sponsored by SportsCare and the Baton Rouge Orthopaedic Clinic.

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 prestigious Mr. Louisiana Basketball award to former Haughton High School coach and Louisiana legislator, Billy Montgomery.

A limited number of tickets for the banquet are available for \$25 and can be reserved 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).

The Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame 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.

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