

REGGIE JACKSON

*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 2004 inductees are Reggie Jackson of Nicholls St. and Vernon Wilson of Northwestern St. Mr. Louisiana Basketball for 2004 is former De La Salle and St. Aloysius High School coach Johnny Altobello.*

NICHOLLS STATE STAR REGGIE JACKSON TO BE INDUCTED INTO LOUISIANA BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

By: Alex Songe
Written for the LABC

THIBODAUX, LA -- A quiet and unassuming Reggie Jackson let his play on the court do his talking - and it spoke volumes. Jackson joined Nicholls State University's basketball team with little fanfare in 1991, but when he left the Thibodaux school in 1995 he piled up numerous accolades and accomplishments.

Jackson, a 6-foot-6, 245-pound post player, was a four-time first team All-Southland Conference selection and was the SLC and Louisiana Player of the Year in 1995. He was also a two-time first team NABC All-District and four-time All-Louisiana selection.



Jackson became one of only 75 players in NCAA Division I history to score more than 2,000 points and grab more than 1,000 rebounds, finishing his career as the second leading scorer and the leading rebounder in Nicholls St. history (as well as the tenth leading scorer and second leading rebounder in SLC history), with 2,124 points for a 19.3 average and 1,271 rebounds for an 11.6 average. He also set a school record with a 58.1% career field goal percentage.

The former Baker High School standout was a key ingredient in Nicholls St. earning the Southland Conference championship and its first NCAA Tournament berth on the Division I level in 1995. Less than a decade later, those numbers have earned Jackson a spot in the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame, where he will be inducted on May 1 in Baton Rouge along with former Northwestern St. All-American Vernon Wilson.

Nicholls St. did not have to fight a bunch of schools to get Jackson. Coming out of high school, most colleges wrote him off because of his lack of height. Former Nicholls St. coach Rickey Broussard recruited Jackson throughout his senior year. One day in the spring Broussard showed up at an AAU practice to watch Harvey Baker, a player who ended up signing with Southeastern Louisiana.

"We were after Harvey Baker, another kid who was also a good player," Broussard said. "We kept watching these drills and Reggie kept beating Harvey, outplaying him. (Former

Nicholls St. assistant) Jeff (Norwood) and I were wondering if we were going after the wrong kid. A lot of people thought he was undersized. A lot of people didn't recruit him because of the way he was built." At the end of the practice Jackson had a scholarship offer.

But the work had only just begun. Jackson didn't carry a lot of grand dreams to Nicholls St., but did bring a strong work ethic. It was as much that as his talent that landed him in the starting lineup after only a handful of games his freshman season.

"When I first went to Nicholls I was hoping to get a little bit of playing time," Jackson said. "I never realized I'd be able to start off as a freshman and put up big numbers. It was just a lot of hard work. Coach Broussard and his staff pushed and challenged the young players."

The pushing started in the fall with strenuous workouts and continued in preseason workouts. "Reggie was about 250 pounds with a lot of baby fat," Broussard said about Jackson when he came to Nicholls St. "He played at 245 pounds (most of his career at Nicholls) but he was all muscle then. When we played our first game of the season (Jackson's freshman year) he was at 218. We were running all these stadiums and gassers (sprints). We would have an hour of fastbreak drills every day."

"His body made a transformation. We knew we had something special." Broussard and his staff let Jackson know he was a player brimming with potential. "One of the assistants, coach Norwood, told me I could be better than anybody in the league my first year," Jackson said. Jackson also impressed the league's coaches, being named the SLC Freshman of the Year in 1992.

Broussard marveled at Jackson's strength, which made him nearly unstoppable on the blocks and as a rebounder. "We used to do this drill where we would bring out these football (blocking) dummies," Broussard said. "We'd push them (players), so the players would get used to players hanging on to them. We could never move Reggie off the block (with the dummies)."

Strength wasn't Jackson's only asset, though. "He became quick, very quick for his size," Broussard said. "Reggie really could run the floor. Not only was he quick and powerful, but he was also fast. In the sprint drills, when he exerted himself, he could beat the guards. He could be that fast."

Jackson was a model of consistency, averaging in double figures in points and rebounds all four seasons including 70 double-double games. He led the SLC in scoring and field goal percentage in 1995 and in rebounding for two straight years. He averaged 21.6 points and 10.8 rebounds as a senior in 1995, 18.6 points and 12.0 rebounds (7th in the nation) as a junior in 1994, 20.5 points and 12.5 rebounds (3rd in the nation) as a sophomore in 1993, and 16.4 points and 11.1 rebounds as a freshman in 1992.

In his junior season of 1993-94, Nicholls St. took LSU to overtime before losing 95-90. That helped earn the respect of former LSU coach Dale Brown. "When we took LSU to

overtime I distinctly remember Dale (Brown) saying ‘how did we let that one (Jackson) get away,’” Broussard said.

All the hard work came to fruition, when Jackson reached the ultimate team goal for most Division I schools, a berth in the NCAA Tournament in 1995. "That was the exciting moment of my basketball career," Jackson said. "We started off as a young team. All the hard work had paid off. Coach Broussard said he wanted to build a program and one of his goals was to be the first team from Nicholls to be there (NCAA Tournament)."

The Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame, which is located in LSU's Pete Maravich Assembly Center, is sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches (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 30th Annual Hall of Fame Awards Banquet. The awards banquet, sponsored by SportsCare, will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Baton Rouge on Saturday, May 1, 2004 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 prestigious Mr. Louisiana Basketball award to former De La Salle and St. Aloysius High School coach Johnny Altobello.

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).

April 24, 2004