

# GERARD KING

*Note: This is the **second** 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 2006 inductees will be former star players Larry Wright of Grambling St., Gerard King of Nicholls St. and Jerald Honeycutt of Tulane. Mr. Louisiana Basketball for 2006 is former UL-Monroe coach Mike Vining.*

## FORMER NICHOLLS STATE STAR GERARD KING TO BE ENSHRINED IN LOUISIANA BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

By: Alex Songe  
Written for the LABC

THIBODAUX, LA -- Gerard King came to Nicholls State as a gangly 17-year-old from an unheralded high school program. As he grew in stature and strength, the Colonels basketball program went from a bottom feeder to an NCAA tournament team.

When King arrived in Thibodaux in 1990, he was 6-foot-7, 185 pounds and only 17 years old. He left 6-9, 235 pounds and an NBA prospect. Now King has earned another accolade - induction into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame.

Not many besides Nicholls State were beating the door down for the skinny post player from John McDonogh High School in New Orleans. First-year Nicholls State coach Rickey Broussard made him his second signee knowing he was a raw player. But he soon found that King was a diamond in the rough, not just because of his talent.

"He had the right work ethic," Broussard said. "He worked hard. If you suggested to him to come 15 minutes before practice to work on his shot, he would." Broussard and his staff worked with King that first year refining his unorthodox shot.

"He had an awkward shot," Broussard said. "We had him take his left hand off the ball. We got him to shoot the ball with one hand." King finished his career as the school's fourth leading scorer with 1,834 points for a 16.7 average, and its sixth leading rebounder with 786 rebounds for a 7.1 average.

The gangly big man with the awkward shot had become a deadly accurate shooter. At 6-9 many would think his field-goal percentage of 56.3% his senior year came on a lot of dunks, which he did have, but he also hit a lot of jumpers on the baseline and at the free-throw line.

There were growing pains, though, for the Colonels and King in Broussard's first year, a 3-25 season. "When he was a freshman, we sat him down for two games," Broussard said. "It was one of those situations where it was going to be my way or hit the road."



The Colonels and King gradually improved and in his junior year they were primed to make a run for the Southland Conference tournament and earn the league's automatic berth to the NCAA tournament. But those were derailed when King went down with an injury in December and when he tried to comeback he was tentative on the court. In January, King told Broussard he wanted to redshirt. Nicholls played well down the stretch without King but missed that first elusive NCAA Division I tournament berth.

King didn't take a light approach the next few months. Broussard said this time in his life was a defining moment in his career, even though he wasn't on the court. "I think it was turning point of his career," Broussard said. "He really worked on his game." As a redshirt junior, King averaged 18.5 points and 8.9 rebounds and led the SLC in steals with a 2.26 average, while being recognized by as a second team All-SLC selection.

Nicholls and King would not be denied his senior season two years later. With the strong-as-an-ox Reggie Jackson and King, the Colonels had a 1-2 inside punch that forced opponents to pick their poison. In the 1994-95 season, King averaged 21.6 points and 7.8 rebounds, earning first team All-SLC and NABC All-District honors. He and Jackson led Nicholls to the SLC regular season and tournament championships, rolling up a 17-1 conference record on the way to a 24-6 overall record and a rare No. 13 seed for an SLC team in the NCAA tournament.

Nicholls' only problem - it was pitted in the NCAA tournament against a Virginia team that finished in a six-way tie for the Atlantic Coast Conference regular-season title. The Cavaliers' stout defense, especially on Nicholls' guards, made the Colonels' stay in the tournament one game. It might have been a disappointing end, but now King would get a chance to show he could play on a higher stage.

Broussard hoped to get Jackson and King into some pre-NBA draft camps. NBA scouting director Marty Blake liked Jackson because of his production, but wasn't completely sold on King. "It took me to convince him," Broussard said of Blake. "He was having guys like Georgetown's John Thompson and North Carolina's Dean Smith telling him he needed to take their guys and I was asking to take two of ours." King ended up going to the camps.

Neither player ended up being drafted, but at the end of the camp then Los Angeles Lakers General Manager Jerry West told Broussard something he already knew about the scoring machine tandem - that went unnoticed by the average fan - they could play defense.

"I distinctly remember Jerry West saying he was impressed with 'your two players,'" Broussard said. "He said, 'they know more about playing defense than any of the other players.'"

Defense and rebounding would eventually be King's ticket to the NBA. He signed as a free agent with the Lakers after the draft but did not make the club. After stints in the CBA and in the Italian League, King landed with the San Antonio Spurs at the end of the 1998-99 season, one that ended in an NBA title.

King played the next two seasons with the Washington Wizards. He's out of the NBA now, but his brief pro career was further proof of a resilient man. "It was fun watching him mature," Broussard said of King. "He was a bright young man. He took the program and believed in the system."

King will be inducted into the Hall of Fame on May 6, along with former stars Jerald Honeycutt of Tulane and Larry Wright of Grambling St.

The Hall of Fame induction ceremonies will be held in conjunction with the Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches' 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Awards Banquet at the Holiday Inn Select in Baton Rouge. The banquet is sponsored by SportsCare.

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 UL-Monroe coach Mike Vining.

A limited number of tickets for the banquet are available for \$20 and can be reserved by contacting the LABC at [labball@gmail.com](mailto:labball@gmail.com). The Holiday Inn Select is located at 4728 Constitution Avenue in Baton Rouge (College Drive exit off of Interstate 10).

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](http://www.labball.com).

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