

## BO MCCALEBB

*Note: This is the **second** in a series of four feature stories on this year's inductees into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame and this year's recipient of the LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball award. The 2025 inductees will be former University of New Orleans stars Ledell Eackles and Bo McCalebb, along with former University of Louisiana at Lafayette star Elfrid Payton. Mr. Louisiana Basketball for 2025 is long-time Peabody Magnet High School coach Charles Smith.*

### BO KNOWS SCORING AND DEFENSE: UNO'S BO MCCALEBB MADE MARK ON BOTH ENDS OF COURT

By: Rod Walker  
Written for the LABC

NEW ORLEANS -- Bo McCalebb made sure his name will never be forgotten.

His name is etched on the practice court at the University of New Orleans, where he starred from 2003-2008. He donated the money for the court.

His name is all over the UNO record books, too.

McCalebb played more games and scored more points than anyone to ever wear a Privateers' uniform.

Those 2,679 points aren't just the most by a UNO player, but also the most by anyone who has ever suited up to play in the Sun Belt Conference and ranked twenty-first in NCAA Division I history at the end of McCalebb's career.



Those accolades are why McCalebb is being inducted into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame as part of its 2025 class during the Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches' 51st Annual Awards Banquet on May 3, at the Baton Rouge Marriott. This latest accomplish is one McCalebb doesn't take for granted.

"It means a lot," McCalebb said. "Just being from New Orleans and going to the school in your city and being able to play in front of your family for those five years was a blessing."

Those five years weren't just a blessing to McCalebb. They were also a blessing to UNO.

It didn't take him long to make his mark as he was named SBC Freshman of the Year and Tournament Most Outstanding Player in 2004, while averaging 13.1 points and 3.5 rebounds. As a sophomore in 2005, he increased those averages to 22.6 points (5th in nation and 1st in SBC) and 4.3 rebounds in 2005.

After missing all but four games during the 2005-06 season, McCalebb returned the following season to earn honorable mention AP All-American and SBC Player of the Year honors, with averages of 25.0 points (6th in nation and 1st in SBC), 6.8 rebounds and 2.00 steals (1st in SBC). As a senior in 2008, he was named a CollegeInsider Mid-Major All-American and the SBC Defensive Player of the Year, while averaging 23.2 points (9th in nation and 1st in SBC), 4.5 rebounds and 2.38 steals (1st in SBC).



During his career at UNO, McCalebb played in a total of 128 games and averaged 20.9 points to go with his 4.7 rebounds, 3 assists and a school record 250 steals for a 1.95 average. He was a two-time Louisiana Player of the Year and a three-time first team NABC All-District and two-time USBWA All-District selection. He was also a three-time first team All-Louisiana All-SBC selection and was twice named to the SBC All-Tournament team.

All the lofty numbers, records and honors are special to him, but they aren't the most important thing.

"The best memories are having some New Orleans guys on my team and some great teammates," McCalebb said. "We had some great times. I think that's why we were able to play like we played. We were actually winning games. I wasn't over there just scoring points. We were winning games because we had a good team."

It's a school that McCalebb didn't plan to attend. He had his eyes on Oklahoma State, one of the schools he had talked to during his senior year at O. Perry Walker High School. But when signing day came, he never heard from Oklahoma State. He was upset about that.

"I remember going straight home after school and seeing these three white guys in my living room," McCalebb recalls.

The three guys were UNO head coach Monte Towe and two of his assistants.

"A week later, I was at UNO," McCalebb said.

He wasn't far from home, just across the river from the Fischer Projects and then the Cutoff in Algiers where he grew up. This is where his love for sports first began, starting with his days playing at McDonogh Playground in Algiers.

He knew back then he had a chance to be good.

"I was always strong and always physical," McCaleb recalls.

He was so strong, in fact, that the parents of other kids would protest thinking he was too old.



"I was always having to show my birth certificate," McCaleb said. "I don't know how I got that good that early, but I was really good."

And he wasn't just good at hooping. McCaleb was also good in football. But when he arrived at O. Perry Walker, a principal and a coach there who had also coached his father told him he couldn't play football. They knew that basketball was what McCaleb needed to be doing. Turns out, they were right.

McCaleb averaged 32.1 points per game in high school. His best game came on Valentine's Day of his senior season when he scored 76 points against Benjamin Franklin High School.

"And I didn't even play in the fourth quarter," McCaleb said

Then it was on to college. While UNO may not have been his first choice, it turned out to be the right choice.

"Me going to UNO made things easier," McCaleb said. "It wasn't as hard as it would have been if I had left the state. I felt at home the whole time at UNO. I never got rattled. The support system was still the same people. I could go see my family whenever I wanted to. I'd see all the familiar faces at games."

But things weren't always easy at UNO.

His college career was interrupted by Hurricane Katrina, which forced the team to relocate. The Privateers vacated to Texas-Tyler during the first semester of the 2005-06 season

before returning to New Orleans in the spring. With Lakefront Arena damaged, McCalebb played home games the rest of his college career at the Human Performance Center.

On top of that, he went through several coaching changes.

“I just wish I didn’t have to play for three coaches in four years,” McCalebb said.

He made the most of it. Almost two decades after he left UNO, his scoring record at the school and in the Sun Belt Conference still remain.

“That’s crazy,” McCalebb said. “Especially the way these guys are scoring now.”

Basketball ended up taking McCalebb all over the world. He played in places like Turkey, Serbia, Germany and Spain. He was also a part of Macedonia’s national team, where he became that nation’s fifth all-team leading scorer.

He also had a brief preseason stint with the New Orleans Pelicans in 2015.

McCalebb, who turns 40 in May, still had some unfinished business to tend to at UNO though. He wanted to make sure he got his degree. He knows his mother, Tara Butler, would have wanted that. Butler passed away in 2018, around the same time McCalebb was finishing up his professional basketball career overseas. He had also been dealing with a torn meniscus injury that his team in Spain was trying to make him play through.

“I lost the love for playing after that,” McCalebb said. “When I stopped playing, I realized that you can’t do nothing without a degree.”

In December, McCalebb received his degree in interdisciplinary studies. The graduation came about 15 years after one of the greatest basketball careers in UNO history had come to an end.

Now six months after he walked across the stage to get his degree, he’s about to receive another honor as he makes his way into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame.

“That’s why you put in the work you put in,” McCalebb said. “You want to be remembered. You want to be recognized. You want to make your mark in the world. I’m happy.”

In addition to the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame inductions, the May 3 awards 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, as well as the presentation of the LABC’s Mr. Louisiana Basketball award to long-time Peabody Magnet High School coach Charles Smith.

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. More information about the LABC and the Hall of Fame can be obtained by visiting their website at [www.labball.com](http://www.labball.com).

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