

BOBBY PASCHAL

*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 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.*

LOUISIANA BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME TO WELCOME FORMER UL-LAFAYETTE COACH BOBBY PASCHAL

By: Bruce Brown
Lafayette *Daily Advertiser*
Written for the LABC

LAFAYETTE -- Postseason play became a frequent occurrence for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette when Bobby Paschal was its head basketball coach from 1978-86.

The Ragin' Cajuns of then-USL won 153 games under Paschal and lost only 85, competing in the NCAA Tournament twice and three times playing in the National Invitation Tournament.

That was a far cry from 1975, when Paschal arrived on campus as an assistant under Jim Hatfield.



The Cajun program had been dismantled for two years for NCAA infractions, and it was the task of Hatfield and Paschal to get it back on its feet as quickly as possible.

Hatfield stayed for three seasons, and then turned the reins over to Paschal, whose 1979-80 squad reached the quarterfinals of the NIT, finishing 21-9 and earning Paschal Louisiana Coach of the Year honors.

"I think the very first time we got back in postseason play after we re-started the program will always be a special moment," said Paschal, who will join the 2005 induction class into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame on May 7. The other inductees will be former LSU coach Dale Brown and LSU All-American Dick Maile.

"We were able to get into the NIT, then beat Alabama-Birmingham and Texas to reach the quarterfinals against Minnesota. That was a big moment."

Future Philadelphia 76ers star Andrew Toney led that team, along with fellow seniors Dion Rainey and Carl Jordan.

Paschal's 1981-82 team stunned No. 1 Georgetown, beat Washington State and then Marquette in the finals to open with a title in the Great Alaska Shootout on the way to a 24-8 record, a Southland Conference title and an NCAA Tournament berth. Following the season Paschal was named both the Southland Conference and NABC District Coach of the Year.

Graylin Warner, Dion Brown and Alonza Allen were on their way to a special era for Cajun basketball.

"Winning the Great Alaska Shootout was probably one of the highlights of my time at USL or anywhere else," Paschal said. "I still remember now, flying back into Lafayette, and it seemed like there were thousands of people waiting to greet us. We started the season unranked, and I think we ended up as high as 13th. That was certainly a tremendous highlight."

The long flight back from Alaska was quite different from the trip back from Marquette ending the 1982-83 regular season. In their first year as an independent after leaving the Southland, the Cajuns suffered an 85-64 loss that seemed to put postseason in jeopardy.

When the announcement came that the Cajuns were in the NCAA for a second year in a row, Paschal wept tears of joy.

"Obviously the flight back from Milwaukee was tough," Paschal said. "I looked at it every way possible, and at one point I had us completely out of the NCAA and the NIT. The fact that we got in showed the tremendous amount of respect that the basketball program had around the country." That year the Cajuns achieved another 20-win season, finishing at 22-7.

The Cajuns got an NIT bid in 1983-84, and promptly defeated Utah State and Weber State in a pair of two-point thrillers and routed Santa Clara by 21 to reach the NIT Final Four, closing the year with a 23-10 record.

"The run to the NIT Final Four in New York City was another obvious highlight," Paschal said. "It was USL, Virginia Tech, Michigan and Notre Dame in Madison Square Garden. Obviously that was a tremendous thrill."

The final postseason experience in the Paschal years came in 1984-85, when the Cajuns defeated Florida at home but lost on the road at Tennessee in the second round of the NIT.

Paschal moved on to the University of South Florida in 1986 and enjoyed more success on the court, then successfully served USF in athletic administration before recently retiring.

"All of our years at USL were extremely enjoyable," Paschal said. "The respect for basketball that Lafayette and the Acadiana area had was special."

"Obviously, it was great to be able to go from where we started to getting players like Dion Rainey, who was the Player of the Year in Florida, and Andrew Toney, who was the Player of the Year in Alabama, and to have the opportunity for postseason play. We could not have done it without the enthusiasm the university and the community showed."

That residual fondness for Louisiana makes Paschal's Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame induction that much more meaningful.

"It's extremely exciting to me," Paschal said. "I look at it as a very high honor because of the respect I have for basketball in Louisiana at every level and the tremendous times we had at USL."

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 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 prestigious 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).

April 28, 2005