

MARLBERT PRADD

*Note: This is the **first** 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 2003 inductees are Marlbert Pradd of Dillard, Jerry Reynolds of LSU and Randy White of Louisiana Tech. Mr. Louisiana Basketball for 2003 is Scotty Robertson of Louisiana Tech.*

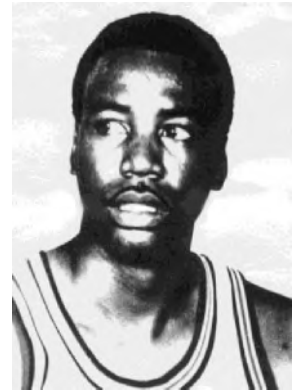
DILLARD ALL-AMERICAN MARLBERT PRADD TO BE INDUCTED INTO LOUISIANA BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

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Written for the LABC

NEW ORLEANS, LA --- It has been almost thirty years since Marlbert "Spider" Pradd played college or professional basketball, yet he is still regarded as one of the greatest athletes in Louisiana and certainly one of the finest in the history of his alma mater Dillard University.

Pradd's college career spanned from 1963 to 1967.

As Dillard's first All-American basketball player and National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) scoring champion, Pradd set an incredible 22 school records including most points in a career (2,907), highest career scoring average (37.5), highest single season scoring average (42.0), most points in a game (55) and most consecutive free throws (27), just to name a few.



Pradd was a three-time NAIA All-American, who led the nation in scoring in 1966 with a 39.1 average. He also averaged 42.0 points in 1967, 35.4 points in 1965 and 34.3 points in 1964. He set a school record in 1967 with a 92% free throw percentage.

In recognition of his outstanding career, on July 24 Pradd will become the first person from Dillard ever to be inducted into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame. He will be joining a pair of former NBA first round draft choices, Jerry Reynolds of LSU and Randy White of Louisiana Tech, as this year's inductees.

"I really wanted this to happen as a living person, not as a martyr-type situation," says Pradd. "And I wanted to show my grandkids that this is what you need to strive for -- to be a role model."

Pradd developed his game as a child riding his bicycle through the Southside of Chicago from one basketball court to another.

“I had this bike with a little basket on it like a basketball goal, and I would just be looking for somebody to play with,” says Pradd.

He spent the rest of his time gleaned from the basketball superstars of the time, like Oscar Robertson, Wilt Chamberlain, Connie Hawkins and the Harlem Globetrotters.

“I was a clown,” says Pradd. “I was very acrobatic. I had a lot of elusive moves—just dancing across the court. I put all those styles together and I figured out my own style of how I wanted to play. I called it the ‘Spider.’”

The name stuck, partly because of his long arms and legs and also because of his movement on the court.

His unique playing style is what eventually earned him the opportunity to play for then Dillard head basketball coach Bill Martin.

Pradd was Martin’s point man. No matter what position he played, and there were many, it was always his job to score. He took big chances and made some potentially dangerous moves, but with the help of the crowd there was no fear.

“The fans screaming and hollering at me from the stands made me do some unnatural things,” he said. “One time, we needed some points and they were just egging me on and on, and so I just went and took [the basketball] from somebody and jumped over three men and shot it. You know the spirit just hit me. Afterward, I said I would never do that again!”

Following his senior year at Dillard, Pradd was drafted by the Chicago Bulls in the 6th round of the 1967 NBA Draft, as well as by the American Basketball Association (ABA) Oakland Oaks in the 1967 ABA Draft. He ended up playing for two years with the ABA’s New Orleans Buccaneers, which included a trip to the inaugural ABA Finals, before being drafted into the Vietnam War.

After the war, Pradd says his focus became clear, and he returned to Dillard to complete his education.

“I realized I was a real student,” says Pradd. “I didn’t have to worry about basketball. My focus was education, and I got all As at that point.”

He began working with the mentally ill at a local New Orleans hospital, participating in drug prevention programs and learning to use physical education to help people rehabilitate their lives.

“The problem is, people throw out the child,” says Pradd. “They become so serious that they destroy themselves.”

“I am that person that will put the child back in them. Stressful things will kill you. You will take yourself out.”

At 59 years old, Pradd is enjoying his present job as physical education coach at Corpus Christi School in New Orleans.

“I still play, I still run,” he says. “For me it was always about being a role model. It was always about finding some way to help the kids and making that step forward for recreation and for the community.”

It is in recognition of this dedication and skill that Pradd will be inducted into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame.

“This means that I’ve been recognized as an All-American, as a player,” says Pradd. “It reminds me of all the things that happened in college, and I want to keep them close to me and reminisce.”

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 29th Annual Hall of Fame Awards Luncheon. The awards luncheon, sponsored by SportsCare, will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Baton Rouge at noon on July 24.

In addition to the induction of the new Hall of Fame members, the luncheon 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 Louisiana Tech and NBA coach Scotty Robertson.

Tickets for the luncheon 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 (exit 158 off Interstate 10).

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