

JERRY REYNOLDS

*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 2003 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.*

LSU'S JERRY REYNOLDS TO BE INDUCTED INTO LOUISIANA BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

By: Lee Feinswog
Written for the LABC

BATON ROUGE --- Almost 20 years after he occasionally schooled Southeastern Conference opponents while playing at LSU, Jerry "Ice" Reynolds is back in school, working toward his college degree.

"I just finished up with finals today," he said in a recent interview. "I'm studying computer science."

"I want to be a computer geek."

Reynolds is attending Florida Metropolitan University near his home in Tampa. But basketball remains close to his heart.

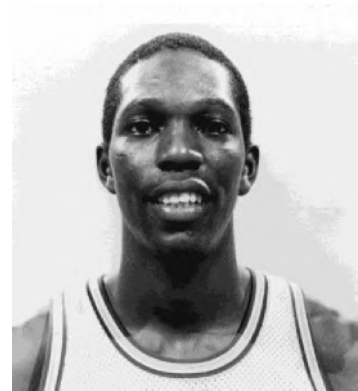
"I really want to coach," Reynolds said. "I really want to mess with computers and whatever, but I really want to coach."

That shouldn't surprise anyone who knew Reynolds as a player at LSU and later in the NBA, where the product of Brooklyn has made a habit of taking the road less traveled. He played for Milwaukee, Seattle and Orlando in the NBA, and even made a comeback in the mid-1990s after three years away from the game. He finished playing professionally in Europe.

Reynolds grew up on the tough streets of Bedford-Stuyvesant, befriended as a youngster by an AAU coach named Lester Roberts who later moved to Baton Rouge. Reynolds originally signed with the University of Wisconsin, but academic deficiencies forced him into a year of prep school. At the end of that year, the Wisconsin coach who signed him was fired, so Reynolds explored his options.

"I knew about him when he was in high school, but Lester Roberts called me and told me Jerry wanted to transfer from the University of Wisconsin," former LSU coach Dale Brown recalled. "He wanted to come to LSU."

Brown, long regarded as a master recruiter, got Reynolds the easy way. And what a find.



The 6-foot-8, slender swingman with the sweet hands was a two-time All-SEC and All-Louisiana selection. During his three-year career he scored 1,069 points, which placed him 15th on the all-time LSU list at the end of his career, for an 11.9 points per game average. He averaged 6.8 rebounds and finished his career ranked second in LSU history with 194 steals for a 2.16 average. He led the SEC in steals in 1984 with a 2.79 average. For that matter, his 81 steals in 1984 remain a record for an LSU sophomore and rank fifth as the best in one season for a Tiger.

But Reynolds said his outstanding sophomore year is what convinced him to turn pro before his senior year. As a freshman, he averaged 10.6 points and 6.2 rebounds. As a sophomore, he averaged 14.1 points and 8.2 rebounds. But as a junior, those figures dropped to 11.0 points and 6.1 rebounds.

"I think Jerry was even a better pro than he was a college player. But big games, when you turned the cameras on, especially if it was a nationally televised game, Jerry always did well," Brown recalled.

Most observers were pretty surprised when Reynolds decided to enter the NBA Draft.

"I've never told anybody this story why I left LSU. My sophomore year I had my best year as a college player. I played like 35 minutes a game. My junior year, I was very excited and ready to play at even higher level and play more minutes and contribute more to the team."

LSU went to the NCAA Tournament again in 1985, but lost to Navy and David Robinson in the first round. And Reynolds thought he'd taken a step backwards.

"I played less minutes and averaged less points and less rebounds. I guess it was a selfish thing, but I thought if I came back for my senior year and it dipped a little more and I got even less playing time, I didn't think it would turn out well."

Reynolds laughed.

"I didn't confer with anyone. I didn't talk to anyone. I just made that decision one day walking around campus."

So he went to see Brown, who was less than thrilled.

"I told him I was going hardship. He looked at me and said, 'Jerry, you've got be realistic, you're a good player and a good athlete, but you don't have the body to play in the NBA and those guys will eat you alive. You don't have an outside shot and I don't think you'll make it.'"

"And that was his opinion and I respected that."

What's more, Brown picked up the phone and called NBA scouting guru Marty Blake, who also told Reynolds to stay in school.

"But I knew otherwise in my heart," Reynolds said.

He was right and they were wrong.

The Milwaukee Bucks made him the 22nd pick of the first round of the 1985 draft.

"You know who the very first phone call was from that day? Coach Brown."

Oddly enough, LSU made a most unlikely run to the Final Four in 1986. But Reynolds never looked back. He played three seasons for the Bucks before spending a year in Seattle. And then he became the first veteran pick of the newly formed Orlando Magic. His best scoring seasons were in Orlando, where he averaged 12.8, 12.9 and 12.1 points, respectively, from 1990 to 1992. Reynolds played with the Magic through the 1992 season, dealing at the end with a crushed disc in his neck.

"Patrick Ewing fell on me trying to block my shot," Reynolds said. "He fell on my head. It snapped my head back. It was lucky I didn't break my neck that day."

After surgery and an attempted comeback, Reynolds shut it down. He opened a nightclub in Orlando and immersed himself in it. But one day, watching the NBA on TV, he decided to try a comeback after three years.

"I still have a six-pack," Reynolds said, talking about his outstanding physical condition, which he said he still maintains now at 40. "And I wanted to see if I still had the skills to make it back to the NBA."

Evidently he did. Reynolds played for Atlanta in the USBL, Connecticut in the CBA and his offensive game was impressive enough for the Bucks, who picked him up. But Glenn Robinson was the young star into which Milwaukee had invested and Reynolds was his rarely used backup.

At the end of the 1996 season, Reynolds left the Bucks for a couple of seasons in Italy, one in Cantu and another in Siena, and then he played in Cypress as a 37-year-old.

And now he's back in college, almost twice the age he was when he left LSU.

"I really liked him as a person," Brown said. "He occasionally would play a little out of control. He was so aggressive going to the basket with the ball, so he would get out of control, but he really took care of that in the pros. He always had a smile on his face, got along with everybody, never was a problem and never created a problem. And if you could see where he came out of, that really speaks a lot for him."

Accordingly, Reynolds is honored the Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches will induct him into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame on July 24, along with former 1960s Dillard star Marlbert Pradd and Louisiana Tech great Randy White.

"LSU was a really great experience. The whole experience in Baton Rouge was great," Reynolds said. "Coming out of Brooklyn I really was trying to find a different lifestyle and pace and try something new."

"He was a real good guy to coach," Brown said. "He was very uncomplicated, he had a wonderful mother and sister who were always in his corner. He came from a very tough background and made a lot out of his life."

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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