

43rd Annual Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches Awards Banquet

May 13, 2017
Embassy Suites Hotel
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

BATON ROUGE --- The superstar player who led LSU to the NCAA Final Four in 1986 and a former long-time college basketball official from Denham Springs were the major honorees at Saturday's 43rd Annual Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches Awards Banquet.

Inducted into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame was LSU's John Williams.

The other major honoree was former basketball official Mark Whitehead, who received the LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball award. This award is given annually to someone who has made a significant, long-term contribution to the game of basketball at any level in the State of Louisiana.

Also honored at the banquet were Louisiana's major college, small college, junior college and high school basketball players and coaches of the year, along with the top pro player from the state.

Williams played at LSU from 1984 to 1986, where he was a two-time honorable mention Sporting News All-American, as well as a two-time All-Southeastern Conference and All-Louisiana selection. He was also the Louisiana Player of the Year in 1986 and the Louisiana Newcomer of the Year and SEC Freshman of the Year in 1985.

Williams finished his two-year career with 1,046 points for a 15.8 average and 503 rebounds for a 7.6 average. In the Final Four season of 1986 he averaged 17.8 points and 8.5 rebounds, which followed freshman year averages of 13.4 points and 6.6 rebounds in 1985. Following his sophomore season he was the 12th player selected in the first round of the 1986 NBA Draft.

After 40 years as a basketball official, the past 29 working over 2,000 NCAA Division I games in eight different conferences, Whitehead hung up his whistle and striped shirt in 2016 to become the Coordinator of Men's Basketball Officials for the Southeastern, American Athletic, Sun Belt and Atlantic Sun conferences.

During his career Whitehead officiated in 23 NCAA Division I Tournaments, including 18 regionals, five Final Fours and the 2012 championship game in New Orleans.

The LABC also presented the Pete Maravich Memorial Award, honoring Louisiana's Major College Player of the Year, to senior forward Erik Thomas of New Orleans. This season Thomas was an honorable mention AP All-American and a CollegeInsider Mid-Major All-American, along with being the Southland Conference Player of the Year and Tournament Most

Valuable Player. He averaged 19.3 points and 7.8 rebounds and had a 58.8% field goal percentage (1st in the SLC). He scored in double figures in all 32 games and had single game highs of 31 points, 13 rebounds and 4 steals.

Coach Mark Slessinger of New Orleans received the Tommy Joe Eagles Memorial Award as Louisiana's Major College Coach of the Year. He led the Privateers to the Southland Conference regular season and tournament championships and to their first NCAA Tournament appearance in 21 years with a 20-12 record. This was New Orleans' first conference title and most wins in 20 years. Slessinger was the SLC and a NABC District Coach of the Year.

The Bob Pettit Award, which is given to Louisiana's Professional Player of the Year, was presented to forward Paul Millsap of the Atlanta Hawks. In his 11th year in the NBA, the former Louisiana Tech star averaged 18.1 points, 7.7 rebounds, 3.7 assists and 1.3 steals. Millsap had 19 double-double games and single game highs of 31 points, 19 rebounds, 10 assists, 5 blocks and 5 steals. He was also selected to play in the NBA All-Star Game for the fourth straight season.

Senior forward Brian Sylvester of LSU-Alexandria received the Louisiana Small College Player of the Year award after being named a first team NAIA All-American and the Red River Athletic Conference Defensive Player of the Year, while averaging 14.0 points, 7.8 rebounds and 2.03 blocks and finishing third in the nation with a 60.4% field goal percentage.

Third year coach Larry Cordaro of LSU-Alexandria, who was named the Louisiana Small College Coach of the Year, guided the Generals to a No. 1 ranking in the final regular season national poll, to the Red River Athletic Conference regular season and tournament championships and to the semifinals of the NAIA National Tournament with a 34-1 record, which was the most single season wins in Louisiana since 1938. Cordaro was the NABC NAIA DI National Coach of the Year and the RRAC Coach of the Year.

Lasani Johnson of Bossier Parish and Ricky Wilson of Baton Rouge were honored as the Louisiana Junior College Player and Coach of the Year, respectively. Johnson, a sophomore guard, averaged 21.1 points and 4.06 three-point field goals made (3rd in the nation) and had a 40.1% three-point field goal percentage. Wilson led Baton Rouge to a second place finish in the Miss-Lou Conference and to a No. 4 seed in the NJCAA Region 23 Tournament with a 17-9 record, which represented an improvement of 10 wins over 2016.

2017 LABC Honorees:

Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame Inductee: John Williams, LSU

Mr. Louisiana Basketball: Mark Whitehead, Denham Springs, Louisiana

Bob Pettit Award for the Louisiana Professional Player of the Year: Paul Millsap, Atlanta Hawks

Pete Maravich Memorial Award for the Louisiana Major College Player of the Year: Erik Thomas, New Orleans

Tommy Joe Eagles Memorial Award for the Louisiana Major College Coach of the Year: Mark Slessinger, New Orleans

Louisiana Small College Player of the Year: Brian Sylvester, LSU-Alexandria

Louisiana Small College Coach of the Year: Larry Cordaro, LSU-Alexandria

Louisiana Junior College Player of the Year: Lasani Johnson, Bossier Parish

Louisiana Junior College Coach of the Year: Ricky Wilson, Baton Rouge

Louisiana High School Players of the Year:

Class AAAAA: Ja’Vonte Smart, Scotlandville

Class AAAA: Davontavean Martin, Ellender

Class AAA: C.J. Jones, Wossman

Class AA: Romin Williams, Metairie Park Country Day

Class A: Greg Williams, Lafayette Christian

Class B: Brian Brown, Negreet

Class C: Tony Brown, Atlanta

Louisiana High School Coaches of the Year:

Class AAAAA: Brian Gibson, Landry-Walker

Class AAAA: Albert Hartwell, Washington-Marion

Class AAA: Paul Kelly, De La Salle

Class AA: Damon West, Rayville

Class A: Charlie Williams, Tensas

Class B: Carlo Maggio, Hathaway

Class C: Dirk Ricks, Jehovah-Jireh