

O.K. "BUDDY" DAVIS

*Note: This is the **second** in a series of two articles on this year's inductee into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame and the LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball award recipient. The 2010 inductee will be former LSU star player Ricky Blanton. Mr. Louisiana Basketball for 2010 is the long-time sports editor of the Ruston Daily Leader, O.K. "Buddy" Davis.*

BUDDY DAVIS, "MR. LOUISIANA BASKETBALL" -- WRITES RIGHT, PLAYS BIG

By: Teddy Allen
Louisiana Tech University
Written for the LABC

RUSTON, LA -- "Mr. Louisiana Basketball 2010" Buddy Davis is 6-4 – if he stands on his typewriter.

O.K. "Buddy" Davis, sports editor of the *Daily Leader* in Ruston since Pete Maravich was a senior at LSU, has built his game more around grammar and heart than height. He's 5-9, but in basketball lingo, "he plays like he's 7-3," said Northwestern State men's basketball coach Mike McConathy.



Covered by Davis both as a player at Louisiana Tech and as a coach, McConathy said the game has remained just as important to Davis now as it was when the Ruston native first started writing.

"He wants to be in the gym just like we want to be there," McConathy said. "The most successful people are the ones most passionate about what they do. Buddy's passionate. He loves basketball. He's one guy who can make you feel like you're special because he believes the game is special. He honors the game."

Given annually by the Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches (LABC) to someone who has made a significant, long-term contribution to the game in the state and at any level, the Mr. Louisiana Basketball award will be presented to Davis during the LABC's 36th Annual Awards Banquet on May 1 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Baton Rouge. The banquet is sponsored by SportsCare, the Baton Rouge Orthopaedic Clinic and Chesapeake Energy Corporation.

"There is no one more deserving of the award," said Sporting News Radio and CBS Sports journalist Tim Brando, "than Louisiana hoops' Little Big Man, Buddy Davis."

A graduate of Louisiana Tech and Ruston High, Davis has played a major role for the past four decades in telling the story of sports in Louisiana. He's served as a voter for national basketball polls and awards, covered 13 women's Final Fours, 26 NCAA women's tournaments, three men's NIT and two women's NIT tournaments.

He's covered everything basketball from NBA All-Star Games to preseason high school tournaments. His estimated number of bylines? Try 42,000, give or take. At least 10,000 of those have been about basketball.

And while he's won more than 100 awards in statewide and national writing contests, one of his biggest awards was received last June when the Louisiana Sports Writers Association recognized him with its Distinguished Service Award in Sports Journalism during the LSWA's annual Hall of Fame Banquet in Natchitoches.



Now, he adds Mr. Louisiana Basketball to his resume.

"I'm appreciative that there's no height limit involved with this award," deadpanned Davis. "Really, it's surreal getting this because of having written about so many winners through the years. The tables have been reversed. It's a strange – but nice – feeling."

"Buddy is finally getting the recognition he richly deserves," said Hall of Fame coach Leon Barmore. Like Davis, Barmore was on the ground floor of the explosion that would come in the women's game, in large part through Tech's Lady Techsters. Davis was there to chronicle it all.

"Buddy has made so many players and teams well-known because of his stories about them," Barmore said. "He made us look better than what maybe we sometimes were. He took the high road. As a player and especially as a coach, I appreciate that and respect him dearly for it. 'Legend' may be a word that's overused, but he really is a legend to so many people, and he's really made a lot of people legends. He's made us all look good."

Besides the Techsters dynasty, Davis counts as extra special the 1985 Tech men's team of Karl Malone, Wayne Smith and others, "the best Bulldogs squad I ever covered." And for pure fun and excitement, there were the Mike Green-led Tech teams of the early 1970s coached by Scotty Robertson, a former Mr. Louisiana Basketball who will introduce Davis on Saturday.

"Buddy started out as a little fish in a little pond, and he grew and he grew to the point in his profession that he was winning all sorts of awards, and with that came his chances to leave," Robertson said. "But he decided he wanted to stay in Ruston and spend his time writing about Tech and Grambling and all the local high schools and North Louisiana athletes, and I've always appreciated him for that. He's a 'stayer,' and we need 'stayers.'"

"I found out in the pros quickly that a lot of young sportswriters wanted to rip you up, but Buddy wanted the people he knew to do well," Robertson said. "If you got beat by 30, he was going to write that you got beat by 30. But he wasn't going to write that you couldn't coach a lick. Buddy is a good guy who understands the game and the people who play and coach it."

Besides McConathy, Green, Malone, Barmore and Robertson, Davis' list of personal favorite and best players and coaches is an all-star roll call. "Kim Mulkey, Sonja Hogg, Teresa Weatherspoon, Janice Lawrence, Angela Turner, Venus Lacy, Pam Kelly, Fred Hobdy, Aaron James, Willis Reed, Pat Cage-Bibbs...I could go on and on," Davis said. "See what I mean about the privilege I've had to cover so many good folks?"

"One of the things I've always found particularly pleasing with having covered basketball in Louisiana is the incredible number of great players," he said. "Willis Reed, Pistol Pete, Karl Malone, Robert Parish, Bob Pettit...Unbelievable that so many legendary players have come from one state and I've been blessed to have written about a lot of them."

Other players not as familiar to fans but just as passionate about basketball as its marquee names have also appeared under his byline, a distinction treasured by Buddy's loyal readership.

"Buddy has that ability to deal with the biggest stars in the game - like a Karl Malone - down to the Choudrant girls junior varsity - with equal enthusiasm," said New Orleans *Times-Picayune* sportswriter Ted Lewis. "That's why he has the most appropriate name in the world - Buddy."

In addition to the honoring of Davis, the banquet will include the induction of one new member into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame. There will also be recognition of Louisiana's major college, small college, junior college and high school players and coaches of the year, along with the top pro player from the state.

A limited number of tickets for the banquet are available for \$25 and can be reserved 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). You can learn more about the LABC by visiting their website at www.labball.com.

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