

ROY EBRON

*Note: This is the **first** in a series of three feature stories on this year's inductees into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame and this year's recipient of the LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball award. The 2014 inductees will be former University of Louisiana at Lafayette player Roy Ebron (1970-73) and former University of New Orleans coach Tim Floyd. Mr. Louisiana Basketball for 2014 is long-time Baton Rouge area high school coach Kenny Almond.*

UNSUNG EBRON AMONG STATE'S ELITE

By: Bruce Brown
Written for LABC

LAFAYETTE, LA – Roy Ebron wasn't used to playing second fiddle in anyone's quintet.

So, when the 6-foot-9 center from Norfolk, Virginia arrived at the University of Southwestern Louisiana (now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette) in 1970 and joined a basketball program with Dwight “Bo” Lamar as its centerpiece, he had to adapt.

He quickly became Mr. Inside to Lamar's Mr. Outside, forming a lethal one-two punch that propelled the Ragin' Cajuns to records of 25-4, 25-4 and 24-5 over the next three years. This included a third place finish in the NCAA Division II Tournament in 1971, then two straight regional semifinal finishes in the NCAA Division I Tournament in 1972 and 1973.



Coach Beryl Shipley's teams exceeded 100 points 37 times in that span, including 5 straight in 1973, so there was plenty of scoring to go around.

While Lamar averaged 36.0, 36.3 and 28.9 points per game, Ebron scored 15.6, 23.0 and 19.5. The versatile post man was a force inside, averaging 10.2, 14.2 and 12.3 rebounds per game, and remains the school's career rebound leader with 1,064.

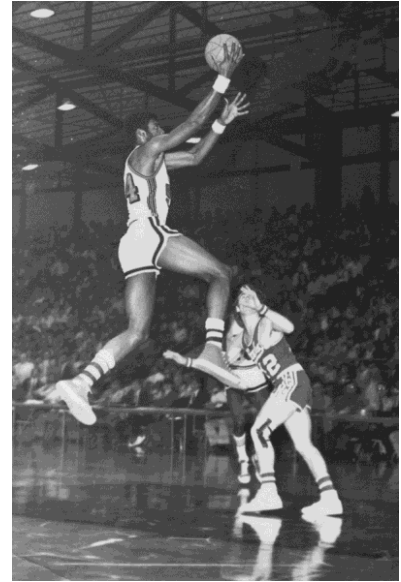
“I had to readjust when I got there,” said Ebron, who had pondered turning pro out of high school and was headed for New Mexico until Cajun assistant coach Tom Cox changed his mind. “It was a different situation.”

“Bo got there the year before I did, so you figure your situation out. You have to shoot a lot to average that many points. You have to mold yourself into what they want you to do.”

“Roy was on the same team with Bo, who was leading the nation in scoring, so he knew he wasn't going to get a whole lot of passes,” Cox said. “When Roy said Bo should pass instead of shoot, I told him, 'Bo is hitting 45 percent of his shots, so he's missing more than half of them. You'll do all right if you get the misses and put them back in.’”

“He was a very nice player to have, certainly one of the top 5 or 6 in school history. At the time, the media ranked him the No. 2 center in the country behind (UCLA's) Bill Walton.”

Ebron is also a new member of the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame, joining a 2014 induction class that includes former University of New Orleans coach Tim Floyd. They will be inducted during the Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches' 40th Annual Awards Banquet on Saturday, May 3, at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Baton Rouge. The banquet is sponsored by SportsCare, the Baton Rouge Orthopaedic Clinic, and Universal Coin & Bullion, Ltd.



He joins Lamar and Shipley as Ragin' Cajuns from that era who are members of the Hall of Fame.

“I helped him pad his rebounding stats,” Lamar said with a laugh. “He could pick real well, set screens and rebound.”

“Roy was misunderstood. He was mostly legs, so when he'd fall, it took him a while to get up. If I had to pick someone to go into battle with, I'd pick Roy. We still talk every now and then. Roy knows how I feel about him.”

“There was no conflict with Bo,” Ebron said. “We would not have made it as far as we did if there had been.”

“Going from a small college and making it to the NCAA Tournament (all 3 years) was an achievement. I enjoyed the whole time there. We tried to work together.”

“Our team chemistry was really good,” Lamar added. “You can't lead the nation in scoring and win without teammates who get you the ball. After practice, we would choose up sides and play some more. And, in the summer, we'd play every day.”

Ebron noted that the early 1970's were not always peaceful on college campuses.

“A lot of things weren't ironed out, to have that many blacks in your program,” he said. “Everybody has their own opinion. Time doesn't change people. We were just trying to win basketball games.”

“It was a very nice feeling to play in Blackham Coliseum, to do your thing and know you had that many people behind you. The more you win, the more people came.”

Winning was the goal, after all.

“You want to win in the end,” Ebron said. “You don't care how you get there. Larry Fogle (who arrived in 1972) had conflicts with a lot of people, and that did a lot to the team, but you do what you have to do.”

“People have different ideas (of) what to do. I enjoyed myself. That's why I went to the backboard – you miss, and I'll get mine.”

Ebron posted astounding single-game rebound totals of 28, 24, 24 and 21 during his memorable career.

He was an honorable mention All-American in 1972, a two-time first team All-Southland Conference and once a second team All-Gulf States Conference selection, as well as a two-time All-Louisiana selection.

He finished his three-year career as the fourth leading scorer and leading rebounder in school history, with 1,683 points for a 19.3 average and 1,064 rebounds for a 12.2 average. He also had a 57.9% career field goal percentage. His 61.0% marksmanship in 1971-72 was 7th in the nation.

When the Cajun program was shut down by NCAA sanctions in 1973, Ebron passed on his senior year and opted to play for the ABA's Utah Stars. He was also a fourth-round draft choice of the NBA's New York Knicks in 1974. Additionally, he played professionally overseas.

Today, Ebron is adjusting to health issues with the same approach he took to life when he first arrived in South Louisiana.

“I'm trying to stay healthy,” he said. “I've got high blood pressure, (high) cholesterol, and I'm a diabetic. I'm trying to hang tough. You've got to do what you do to survive.”

In addition to the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame inductions, the May 3 awards 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 LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball award to long-time Baton Rouge area high school coach Kenny Almond.

A very limited number of tickets for the banquet are available for \$25 and can only be reserved by contacting the LABC in advance at labbal@gmail.com.

The Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame is sponsored by the LABC. The Hall of Fame was created in 1975 to honor former great basketball players and coaches from Louisiana

colleges. More information about the LABC and the Hall of Fame can be obtained by visiting their website at www.labball.com.

April 28, 2014