

TYNES HILDEBRAND

*Note: This is the **third** in a series of three feature stories on this year's inductee into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame, this year's recipient of the LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball award, and the recipient of the LABC's Don Landry Award. The 2024 inductee will be former University of Louisiana at Monroe star Carlos Funchess. Mr. Louisiana Basketball for 2024 is former long-time Scotlandville Magnet High School coach Carlos Sample. The Don Landry Award recipient is former long-time Northwestern State University coach and athletic director Tynes Hildebrand.*

A BASKETBALL LIFE: TYNES HILDEBRAND'S CAREER IMPACT EARNS ELITE HONOR FROM THE LABC

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Written for the LABC

NATCHITOCHEs, LA – Beginning his playing days in junior high during World War II, riding for an hour in the back of a pickup truck to start college at Northwestern State University, and finishing eight decades in organized basketball helping choose officials for the NCAA's Division I Final Four, Tynes Hildebrand has lived an unparalleled career.

Player, coach, athletics director, officials observer. From the 1940s until a decade ago, the 93-year-old Hildebrand has been immersed in his favorite game, the only sport he could play growing up in rural Sabine Parish and attending tiny Florien High School.

He has counted among his friends and colleagues legends such as longtime USA Olympic coach Henry Iba of Oklahoma State, national-championship coaches John Wooden (UCLA), Indiana's Bob Knight, UTEP's Don Haskins, and Louisiana icons including Dale Brown, Fred Hobdy, Billy Allgood, Lenny Fant and Benny Hollis. Hildebrand, Knight and Haskins helped Iba pick the country's 1972 Olympic team.

As head coach at Northwestern State, Hildebrand helped found the Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches half a century ago. As the LABC celebrates that anniversary with its 50th Annual Awards Banquet on Saturday, May 4 in Baton Rouge, it's fitting that Hildebrand will become only the fourth recipient of the organization's Don Landry Award since that elite recognition for distinguished service and significant contributions to the LABC was created in 1998.



It's named for the founding father of the LABC, and Hildebrand, now living in Flower Mound, Texas, with his wife of 72 years, Julia, is touched to receive it.

"Don Landry's the one who has done so much for Louisiana basketball. He involved so many people and did so very much, and got schools around the state invested in the LABC and building our game around the state," said Hildebrand. "We had such good times with great fellowship that people wanted to be included. So to receive an award with his name on it is a distinct honor."



Another iconic figure in state basketball history, Louisiana Basketball Hall of Famer and 2023 Mr. Louisiana Basketball honoree Mike McConathy, has a far-reaching understanding of Hildebrand's impact. McConathy's father Johnny, the No. 5 pick in the 1951 NBA Draft, was a senior at Northwestern State when Hildebrand joined H. Lee Prather's Demons. The younger McConathy was a prep All-American at Bossier City's Airline High, recruited nationally but ultimately choosing Louisiana Tech over his father's alma mater. Later, he was tabbed to be the Demons' head coach in 1999 and in 23 seasons became the state's all-time winningest coach when considering both college and junior college results.

"His connections to every aspect of the game in our state, and beyond, from a player to a coach to international play, to referees, he has run the whole gamut. That's rare, anywhere, and he's one of a kind in Louisiana," said McConathy.

Said Landry: "When we formed the LABC, Tynes was not only one of the founders, he was one of the early presidents (its third, in 1977-78). I credit him for being one of the founders of the LABC, a great advocate for our sport, and one of the LABC's leaders for many years. We've been such close friends, with our wives and families, for so long, and I'm delighted he's being recognized once again."

Landry, already a college assistant at Louisiana Tech, first encountered Hildebrand as a state championship-winning coach at Natchitoches High School, a featured speaker at the Louisiana High School Coaches' Association clinic in Baton Rouge.

"Tynes brought his entire team to show their full-court press defense, and it was one of the best clinic presentations I had ever observed, because it wasn't just him talking, it was demonstrated for us," said Landry. "He could teach the game. And he was a particularly outstanding defensive coach."

That was the hallmark of his 16 seasons (1965-80) as head coach at his alma mater, Northwestern State, where he posted 191 wins, won two consecutive Gulf South Conference

championships and received two conference Coach of the Year awards. He retired, and was named the LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball a year later, but returned in 1983 as the Demons' athletics director for 13 years, working at half-salary in a financially-strapped department that under his guidance developed into one of the more successful in the Southland Conference on, and off, the field of competition.

"I enjoyed him," said James Smith, who won 340 games in 17 seasons as the Lady Demons' head basketball coach, the first eight under Hildebrand. "He did all he could to help us as AD. Tynes enjoyed traveling with us at a time not many AD's gave enough attention or respect to their women's sports. He was very supportive."

As a coach and administrator, Hildebrand was an outstanding mentor. Among his prize pupils: Demons' guard and future long-time Notre Dame basketball coach Mike Brey along with athletic department interns Greg Burke, his successor as AD who held that post for the next 26 years, and Greg Sankey, now in his 10th year as the commissioner of the Southeastern Conference.



Hildebrand was enshrined in the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame in 1992 for his collegiate coaching career. A year following his retirement as AD, Hildebrand became one of the NCAA's Division I officials evaluators in 1997, a role he fulfilled for 17 seasons. In 2006, he became one of the NCAA inaugural four regional officiating supervisors.

Frequently accompanied by his wife, he traveled across the Midwest and South, grading officials during the regular season in a wide range of conferences and in some of the iconic venues of college hoops: Allen Field House at Kansas, Cameron Indoor Arena at Duke, and Kentucky's Rupp Arena, to cite three, along with a variety of bandboxes and showplaces, taking meticulous notes from press row seats. At times, that meant pushing through winter storms on icy roads, and making tight travel connections. Detailed, timely reports were filed on each officiating crew. It culminated each year with helping select officials for each round of the NCAA Tournament – an ironic role for a coach who had more than his share of run-ins with referees.

"I always think of Tynes in two different worlds," said Landry. "He was so fiery during the games, and yet, personally, he's not like that. He's a charming fellow, and has been a great representative of our game."

Hildebrand saw his last job as a way to give back to the sport he's loved since hitchhiking with Florien teammate Ken Corley three miles in the early morning ("on the Holsum bread truck

coming from Natchitoches”) and evening (“whoever might know us”) to school and home from practice or games.

“I’ve tried to speak out for basketball in a football-dominated state where there’s a lot of really good basketball at the high school and college levels. I was fortunate as an LABC member, with Don and others, to do (international) trips promoting basketball, and I tried to set good examples, and not show my butt too much – although I did a time or two,” he said, laughing. “I was a competitor and I did like to win. Winning was always important, but most of all it was playing to the best of our ability.”



Landry and McConathy stressed Hildebrand’s career was a partnership with Julia extremely involved. The couple has two sons, Tynes Jr. and Bruce, five grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. The Hildebrands fell in love late in their high school years.

“I walked her home from church,” he recalled. “There was a swing on her front porch, and we’d sit there and call that dating.

“Julia has been the best assistant that anybody could have, from when I was at Natchitoches High School, from my years as coach and athletic director at Northwestern, and then in my time as an NCAA officials observer. We’ve been a team,” said Hildebrand, a 1999 inductee into the Southland Conference Hall of Honor and a 2014 winner of the Dave Dixon Louisiana Sports Leadership Award and inductee into the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame. “I would say Julia has been as big a part of this as I have.”

Generations of coaches, players and fans – and certainly, officials – have felt their influence. He says it’s been more than an equal trade.

“Louisiana basketball has been my life,” he said. “The Hildebrand family has lived a Louisiana basketball life. And it’s been good to us.”

In addition to honoring Hildebrand, the May 4 awards banquet will include the induction of former University of Louisiana at Monroe star Carlos Funchess 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, as well as the presentation of the LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball award to former long-time Scotlandville Magnet High School coach Carlos Sample. More information about the LABC can be obtained by visiting their website at www.labball.com.

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