

DAVE SIMMONS

*Note: This is the **first** in a series of four articles on this year's inductees into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame and the LABC's Mr. Louisiana Basketball award recipient. The 2007 inductees will be former star players Dave Simmons of Louisiana Tech, Paul Poe of Louisiana College and Lawrence "Lanky" Wells of Louisiana Tech. Mr. Louisiana Basketball for 2007 is long-time Bidby Basketball coach and administrator Firmin Simms of New Orleans.*

FORMER LOUISIANA TECH STAR DAVE SIMMONS TO BE INDUCTED INTO LOUISIANA BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

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RUSTON, LA -- Dave Simmons let his playing do the talking.

Quiet, unassuming, low key.

Those were trademarks of his makeup, but they also provide a paradox of just how relentless and clock-like efficient he was on the basketball court.

First at DeRidder High School and then at Louisiana Tech University, Simmons applied an indelible mark to the state's rich history in the sport.

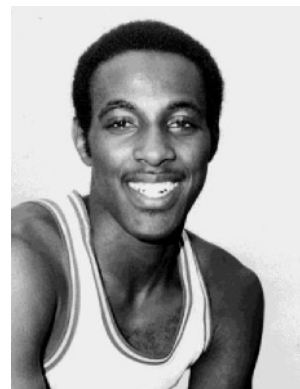
Those contributions will continue on May 5 when he will be inducted into the Louisiana Basketball Hall of Fame, along with former star players Paul Poe of Louisiana College and Lawrence "Lanky" Wells of Louisiana Tech.

"It hasn't sunk in yet, to be honest," said Simmons, now head coach at McNeese State, where he has just finished his first season. "It caught me totally by surprise when they called and told me. For me, it's never been about the statistics or the honors. I've just always wanted to make a positive contribution to the game of basketball. I've been honored to have been around so many great players and coaches in my life and whatever I've been able to achieve, it's a direct result from them."

As usual, Simmons is being far too modest.

Player, coach.

It doesn't matter.



In both areas, the DeRidder native who was a star guard at DeRidder High School before going on to become one of the top backcourt players in Tech history has clearly made an imprint on Louisiana's basketball heritage.

"He was one of the first persons I ever met when I came to Louisiana Tech," recalled two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Karl Malone, who was with the Bulldogs' program at a time (1985) when Simmons was a graduate assistant. "I have always admired the way he's carried himself. He's a great guy with tremendous qualities and there was never any doubt in my mind that he would succeed as a coach one day."

He played at Tech from 1977-81 and served as a team captain, plus was chosen as the club's Most Valuable Player.

The No. 11 all-time scorer for the Bulldogs with a total of 1,563 points and a 14.3 average, the 47-year-old Simmons remains as the program's single season record holder for free throw accuracy (89.0%, which was 6th in the nation in 1980-81) and also for a career (81.8%).

He was an assistant coach for his college alma mater during the 1985-86 season before moving on to Delta State for 1986-87 as an assistant coach and then joining the McNeese State staff with the same duties from 1987-1994.

"Dave is one of those under appreciated individuals who will now be appreciated for what he's meant to the game of basketball in Louisiana," said Andy Russo, who was the head coach at Tech at the time when Simmons served as an assistant. "When I got there (to Tech), it was guys like Dave who really made it easier for me because of the type of people they were. If ever there was a solid person, it was Dave Simmons. I'm really happy for him to be honored in this way."

Simmons earned his first head coaching responsibilities in 1994 when he was picked to head up the Edward Waters College program, a stint that lasted until 1996. In 1999, he was hired on as an assistant coach at Northwestern State University.

"It's hard to sort through all the levels of admiration and respect and love I have for Dave," said Demons' head coach Mike McConathy, who had Simmons on his staff for nearly a 10-year period. "He's a remarkable person, and that's the overwhelming quality that jumps out at me. Whether as a teammate or a coaching colleague or as a friend, he always is unselfish and gives you everything he has to offer."

"As a player, he was one of the true pure shooters of his day or any other in this state's basketball history. He was just a tremendous player, a guy who I admired because he played the game like I thought it should be played, and like I tried to play it. He gave every ounce of effort, he did whatever was asked of him by his coaches in order to help the team win, and he constantly worked to improve himself and help his teammates."

The "quiet way" has been vintage Dave Simmons, regardless of whether it has to do with playing or coaching.

He makes no big deal over it, opting to offer that "I've just tried to be a blue-collar type of person who believed in himself and let my actions do the talking."

"As long as I can look myself in the mirror and be satisfied, that's what really matters."

He was a first team All-Southland Conference, All-Louisiana, NABC All-District and SLC All-Tournament choice in 1981. Twice, he was chosen to the all-conference second unit.

In each of his four years at Tech, Simmons never averaged below double figures in scoring. He averaged 10.6 as a freshman, 15.3 as a sophomore, 14.7 as a junior and 16.6 as a senior.

His best-ever single game production was a 30-pointer against Portland State in 1980.

But the way he scored and the way he played, one would have to execute a double-take of the next day's box score to realize he might have had such a big night.

Simmons would do things quietly and minus all of the fanfare.

"Dave has always understood the game," recalled Scotty Robertson, former Tech head coach who went on to a long career in the NBA coaching ranks. "That's evident now, of course, as a coach. He's been very successful, but it isn't a surprise at all. He does an excellent job with recruiting and he's great with parents and other coaches. He's simply a good person who you knew would be very successful in whatever he does."

Among the accolades that Simmons has been able to enjoy in the coaching profession is being a part of championship teams at Tech (1984-85, Southland Conference champs; 1985-86, NIT Final Four), Northwestern State (2005-06, SLC champs; 2004-05, SLC champs), Delta State (Final Four, Division II) and Edward Waters College (EIAC semi-finals).

"There have been so many people who have touched my life," Simmons said. "I would hate to single out people or anything because then there would maybe be the chance somebody would be left out. And I don't want to do that. So many different coaches have made a difference in my life and have contributed to any success that I've been able to enjoy. The game of basketball has been good to me. It's given me the opportunity to be around great coaches and to help young men achieve things in the game and, more importantly, later in life."

During a 21-year coaching life, Simmons has been a major influence in the eventual professional careers of more than 20 players, among them Randy White and Malone out of Tech and Michael Cutright at McNeese State.

"I see basketball as being great therapy," said Simmons, who will be introduced for induction into the Hall of Fame by former DeRidder High head coach Dale Skinner. "It's almost like a medicine. No matter what problems you might have or setbacks you might experience, basketball brings you into another world. To be able to go into the state's Hall of Fame and be a part of something where your peers believe you belong, it's a very humbling experience."

Which is only appropriate for the always humble Dave Simmons.

The Hall of Fame induction ceremonies will be held in conjunction with the Louisiana Association of Basketball Coaches' 33rd Annual Awards Banquet at the Holiday Inn Select in Baton Rouge. The banquet is sponsored by SportsCare.

In addition to the induction of the new Hall of Fame members, the 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 prestigious Mr. Louisiana Basketball award to long-time Bidy Basketball coach and administrator Firmin Simms of New Orleans.

A limited number of tickets for the banquet are available for \$20 and can be reserved by contacting the LABC at labbal@gmail.com. The Holiday Inn Select is located at 4728 Constitution Avenue in Baton Rouge (College Drive exit off of Interstate 10).

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. You can learn more about the LABC and the Hall of Fame by visiting their website at www.labbal.com.

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