

State Farm Chicago

Legends

Friday, December 20, 2019

Corie Blount

Ronnie Lester

Donnie Boyce

Roosevelt Chapman

SHON MORRIS: Thanks everyone for coming today. We really appreciate you taking time out of your busy day to join us. My name is Shon Morris. I'm with the Big-10 Network. We're very pleased to be broadcasting the second part of the double-header tomorrow, the game with Cincinnati versus Iowa.

As you know, Chicago is routinely recognized on the national stage as a leading hotbed for top basketball talent. Many of the game's greatest legends, including those we have here today, have called Chicago home. I would like to introduce our group of legends who are here with us representing the four schools participating in this year's Chicago Legends doubleheader. First, if I might interject here, one of my personal heroes growing up in the great state of Iowa. He was an All-American during his time in Iowa City, leading the Hawkeyes to the 1980 NCAA Final Four. He's also a six-time -- or six-year NBA veteran, NBA champion, and gold medalist for Team USA during the 1979 Pan-American games. Please welcome from the University of Iowa, Ronnie Lester.

(Applause.)

SHON MORRIS: Next, from Cincinnati. A talented center, during the 1990s. He helped the Bearcats reach the Final Four and Elite 8 in back-to-back seasons. He was selected by the Chicago Bulls in the first round of the 1993 NBA draft and would go on to play 11 seasons in the league. Please welcome Corey Blount.

(Applause.)

SHON MORRIS: From Colorado. A three-time all Big-12 conference selection in the 42nd overall selection in the 1995 NBA draft by the Atlanta Hawks. He grew up in Maywood, Illinois and attended Proviso East where he now works as the head coach of the men's basketball team. He ranks third on the Buffaloes all-time scoring list with 1,995 points. Please welcome



Donnie Boyce.

(Applause.)

SHON MORRIS: And finally, from Dayton, the all-time leading scorer in Flyers' history. He led the team to the Elite 8 in his senior season averaging 26 points per game in the NCAA tournament. He is a member of the University of Dayton Athletic Hall of Fame and the prestigious Ohio Hall of Fame. Please welcome Roosevelt Chapman.

(Applause.)

SHON MORRIS: We're going to start off with some questions for our legends and then after that, we'll open it up to the floor for some questions.

First, we'll start with the gentleman to my left, to my immediate left. Ronnie, you know Chicago has a great history in basketball. You're part of it growing up here and playing at Dunbar before going to the University of Iowa. Why is it special to see Iowa make the trip here to Chicago? And what does it mean for the program to play in the Chicago Legends against three other outstanding programs?

RONNIE LESTER: I think Iowa is -- there are a lot of students here from the Chicago area that go to Iowa. I think this is sort of Iowa's backyard. I think they consider this their backyard. And I'd love Iowa to get back into Chicago to recruit some Chicago area kids to go back to Iowa City.

SHON MORRIS: Well, it paid dividends for them in the '80s. Trust me, I know. And I know you have a lot of great memories playing at the University of Iowa, but if you had to select one from your tremendous career in Iowa city, what would that be?

RONNIE LESTER: Going there, we weren't very good in my first year or so there, going in there. And Coach Olson and his staff built a really good program. And my last year there we were fortunate enough to go to the Final Four. So I think the culmination of four years of hard work by not only the players but the coaching staff that put us in that Final Four in 1980.

SHON MORRIS: So a little editorial comment. If

Ronnie doesn't tear up his knee in a Christmas tournament game at Dayton, they're going to win the whole thing that year. But that's just my opinion. I grew up in Iowa and enjoyed watching Ronnie play when I was in high school and listening to all the games, so it's a personal thrill for me to be up here with all these guys.

Corie, you spent 11 years in the NBA, your early years here with the Chicago Bulls. What was it like to play here in Chicago? And how did the experience playing with the Bulls impact and prepare you for the rest of your NBA career?

CORIE BLOUNT: Well, for me, it was just an incredible honor to be drafted by Chicago at that time. They had just won three championships. And I really didn't know where I was going to land in the draft. I just remember Jerry Krause coming to me saying, if you are around when we pick, you're going to be our guy. And I was getting told that a lot during the draft, but when he made that call and told me that he was going to draft me, I was excited. So I came and I was playing with Scottie Pippin, Horace Grant, and it just prepared me mentally to be a good NBA player because those guys were awesome at that time.

SHON MORRIS: You know, you played at the University of Cincinnati, had a great career, went to the Final Four in the Elite 8. In addition to playing for, shall we say, one of the most demanding college coaches in Bob Huggins, what other things about your time at the University of Cincinnati prepared you for your extensive NBA career?

CORIE BLOUNT: Well, I was blessed to play with a good group. When I look back at our team, we all got along and that really made a difference because when you play with a group of guys that really care about winning but also care about each other, it carries and shows on the court. And I think that's what prepared me because we had an intensity about it us and we all thought that we were underdogs and we wanted to show everybody that we could play. So that kind of prepared me. Once I got here, I know I still had something to prove at this level, and I was able to carry that on.

SHON MORRIS: Thanks. Donnie, we'll turn it to you now. You grew up in Chicago, high school legend at Proviso East, kind of returned home to coach your high school alma mater. What experiences and values that you learned during your time at Colorado as a student-athlete there are you trying to carry over and instill with your young guys at Proviso?

DONNIE BOYCE: Well, I think the biggest thing I learned was how to learn how to fight through

adversity. The University of Colorado, when I got there, they weren't on the map and known for basketball. It was more of a football school. I actually lost more games my freshman year than I did my four years in high school, so that was a little rough adjustment. But the main thing was it taught me to understand sacrificing for the betterment of the team. It wasn't until my senior year that the -- as a team, as a group, we learned that and understood that and that's why that was our best year. Unfortunately, I broke my leg. If I didn't break my leg, I would have had, I felt we would have had a chance to experience the NCAA. But I also thought just having that recruitment and being in part of the process with Chauncey Billups played a big role to help get the university started on the right path, and they have grown into it from, I think, my sophomore and junior year we only won 10 games, to where they are right now.

SHON MORRIS: At what point during, whether it was in college or after college, did you decide that you wanted to go into coaching? And was there a particular coach that kind of inspired you to maybe go in that profession?

DONNIE BOYCE: Well, initially, when I got done, I looked to get into scouting and I really didn't enjoy that. But it was actually by accident how I got into coaching. A friend of mine was starting a local AAU and asked me, would I help out, not knowing that he wanted me to coach. I was thinking on the lines of maybe helping out with some drills. And it started from that experience. And I would say my grammar school coach, high school coach, but probably put the idea in my head about coaching, because they used to always tell me when I get done playing my basketball career, they think I would be a great coach. And I would always kind of counter, why would you say that? And they would always say, I'm just standing there and you understand the rotations, you know where everybody's supposed to be on the offensive side of the ball. And I would always counter back, well, on offensive, I know where everybody's supposed to be because I'm trying to find out my scoring opportunities. But those two guys probably played the biggest impact in me deciding on the coaching.

SHON MORRIS: Thanks, Donnie. Finally, we'll turn to Roosevelt. Dayton has such an unbelievably deep tradition of college basketball. Been to the NCAA Final Four, long, long runs in the NCAA tournament, you played for one of the greatest coaches in college history in Don Donoher. With that in mind, what does it mean to you to be up here on this stage right now representing Dayton and the Flyers?

ROOSEVELT CHAPMAN: Oh, this is a great feeling, a great opportunity to be involved in the Chicago

legends. The university has a great tradition of basketball going back many decades, and I'm truly proud and honored that I chose that school. I was pretty widely touted for colleges. And Michigan State, Georgetown, those like that, UCLA, and for some reason or another the University of Dayton just stuck out. It wasn't on the map like the other schools, but they had a lot of potential. And I'm so glad that I chose that school. I feel out of place now to come out and sometimes they want to go too big a lot of times. They get kind of lost in the program. But that school was a great size for me and I utilized it and it worked out great.

SHON MORRIS: Roosevelt, everybody up here, there's a special place in their heart for their alma mater and what the school meant to them. You got to, in my opinion, the highest honor any school can give somebody that wore the jersey. You're in the University of Dayton Athletic Hall of Fame. What does that mean and what did that moment mean to you and to your family?

ROOSEVELT CHAPMAN: Oh, it means a great deal. But a lot of people understand that if you get an honor or something like that, you earn it. It takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of hard work behind the closed doors. And nobody gives you anything. You have to go out and work for it. You got to tie those shoe strings up tight, you got to sweat. It takes a lot of sacrifice. And just recently I just, in May I got inducted into the Ohio Hall of Fame, and that's another big honor as well. So I just, like the other gentlemen said, I feel blessed also.

SHON MORRIS: Well, we're blessed to have all of these legends here today. How about one more round of applause for all these four legends representing their respective alma maters in the Chicago Legends Classic.

(Applause.)

And with that, we'll take some questions from the audience.

Q. I would like to get a perspective from each of you. Coach, especially, you live it every day. When you guys played, which wasn't terribly long ago, it was a different game, and now you got the transfer portal to every game's televised, you're playing all hours of the day, every day of the week. These kids are being asked to do a lot. Oh, and by the way, go to class and get your degree. As you survey the college landscape today, what do you think about the game that you helped put it where it is?

CORIE BLOUNT: Well, me personally, I watch the game and I see the transition as far as, to me, it's not

as physical as it was back then, and I'm speaking on the pro level. But on the college level, the game is a little, it's sped up a little bit, but the demand for players are a lot more. And what I mean by that, these kids have a lot of things to deal with, especially with the social media aspect. I think it's hard for them to stay focused and not, kind of like, get the big heads when they get a little fame or notoriety because now their expectations are high. And I think it's like the gentleman said down there, it's important that you earn it first, and a lot of these kids are given a lot of things, and I think that kind of messes up the whole state of college basketball. Because everybody thinks they're a pro or wants to be a pro without putting in the full body of work to show it.

DONNIE BOYCE: Like Corie said, I'm a fan of basketball so I'm always watching all levels of basketball. But on the college level, I think the biggest change is, kind of piggybacking off of Corie, just the outside influences. When we were playing, I know for me personally, I didn't really have a lot of outside people reaching for me or contacting me or being a distraction, whatever their influence may be. On the court, I would like to see the kind of be a little bit more fundamentally sound, but I think AAU plays a little effect in that. The biggest thing is I didn't know when playing hard and competing at a high level became a skill. For me, personally, you couldn't get on the floor for any coach I played for if you didn't play if you didn't compete at a high level. So that is probably the biggest change.

RONNIE LESTER: Well, for me, the big change I see, and I'm probably the oldest guys up here, so when I played, there was no shot clock, there was no three-point line, so I'm kind of dating myself. But I think the three-point shot has really changed the game tremendously. It's opened the game up so much. You are never out of the game because of the three-point line. And I think that the game has changed so much just because of that, the three-point line.

ROOSEVELT CHAPMAN: Ronnie is a few years older than me so I can relate when he's talking about no shot clocks, no three-point play. I used to have to get in the hard way (laughing), so that's how I look at basketball. The game has changed a lot. They spread out a lot more, the three-point shot, you don't see too many pick-and-rolls no more, give-and-goes, things to that effect. It seems like the imaging now, college game off of the pro game gradually, and so that's what's expected to come. But it's like one of the honorees said earlier. He said that the game has changed and I don't know if it's for the better, but it's evolving.

DONNIE BOYCE: I would like to add to that. I can give you a scenario or something I experienced at the

University of Cincinnati. When I first got there, we played Athletics in Action and it was a scrimmage game, I mean an exhibition game, and I shot two 3-pointers and they both went in and out. And next thing I heard was the horn going off, and I'm walking to the bench. And I don't know, my coach at the time, Bob Huggins, told me, don't you ever, as long as you live, shoot another three-pointer as long as you have a University of Cincinnati jersey on. I'm like, coach, they went in and out. He said I wouldn't give a -- -- I got these little guys for that. And my reason for saying that is now you got guys six-eight and up, seven-footers shooting the three so often now that it's just becoming a part of the game. And to me, to piggyback off what he said, the three-point game has really change the whole evolution of basketball. And I'm not saying that in a bad sense, but for guys like us, who like tough, gritty in the paint big men or the inside style of basketball, it's really no longer exists.

Q. Corie, looking at this as a pro game, you were there for -- you mentioned playing with Scottie Pippen, and you were there during the glory years. What you do think the Bulls need to do to kind of get back to where they were?

CORIE BLOUNT: Get Scottie Pippen and Michael Jordan back. (Laughing).

No. I'm a big fan of NBA basketball. When I look at the amount of talent that is all over the league now, it's going to be tough for the Bulls to really just get back to that upper echelon. I mean, I think they're going to have to probably do it through the draft. You still got the superstars and everybody knows the superstars seem like they're gravitating towards the mild weather cities to be able to enjoy a true NBA life still, I guess. So I think it's going to be hard for the Bulls unless they get it through the draft or get a big-name player to come here and really try to revamp the whole franchise. But I'm a Bulls fan. I love the city of Chicago. It's been good to me and I would love to see them get back to the top.

Q. For Ronnie and Donnie, the game has changed a lot. One and done. We saw the kid from Memphis yesterday. What did he play, four games, now he's, forget school. He's going to the NBA draft. Ronnie, best guard ever to come out of Chicago, point guard. And that includes Isaiah. I said it. Donnie, one of them if he is forwards ever to come out of Chicago. You both would have been lottery picks as juniors. You both went back for your senior year. You both got injured your senior year. What advice would you give maybe a freshman that's getting a lot of pressure to put your name in the draft and forget school?

RONNIE LESTER: Well, me personally, that's always going to be a family decision, in my opinion. That's

something that, you know, it's a tough decision to make. For me, one of the reasons why I felt I needed to come back, there was some areas I needed to work on, personally, my outside shot, I wanted to work on, I wanted to get a little bit more stronger. But nowadays if I had to do it all over again, get out of the kitchen when you're hot. That's probably the best advice that I would give.

DONNIE BOYCE: For me, I think it's a personal decision when a guy decides if he's going in the draft or not. Today, with the salaries that they're paying today, I don't personally think you can take a chance. If you are one of the top pics, say a Top-10 pick, I personally think you should go because there's always a risk of getting hurt or something else going wrong. So I think if you are a top pick, if you're a lottery pick, I think with what they're, how you can set yourself up with an NBA contract, I think you probably should go.

Q. Donnie, I talked with Tad Boyle about trying to recruit out of Chicago. Guys like you are actually few and far between, the guys from here that went to Boulder. Even though they have had a track record of success under Coach Boyle, there are so many power conference programs within a few hour drive of here. What would it take to pique a kid's interest to head west and go to a program like that?

DONNIE BOYCE: Well, I always think the style of play plays a big part. I think Coach Boyle's style is perfect for kids here in Chicago. I think for him to reconnect in this area the main thing that he probably would need was a guy like me on his staff (laughing).

No, no. But on a serious note, it's just about doing your due diligence, Chicago is always a hotbed full of talent. The AAU game has probably played a bigger factor now days compared to when we were being recruited it was all through the high school coaches. But probably build a better relationship with the high school coaches would probably help as well, reestablishing, not only in Chicago, I told Coach Boyle he should try to recruit all the major cities. That's one thing Coach Terrence and Coach Whittenburg, they made an emphasis of trying to recruit the major cities and if they can pluck one kid here from Chicago, one from Detroit, one from L.A. -- when I was there we had kids from those cities and even though we didn't have the winning win/loss stats we were looking for, I think it helped build the culture and it helped build to where the program is now today.

Q. Corie, your comments were interesting, they don't -- rarely do they refer to it as the center position anymore, the day of the big man - now Iowa has a kid, Luka Garza, who's got seven double double, he's leading the nation in scoring

for big men, he's been compared to Jack Sikma because he can hit the step back, he can score with either hand. I've heard him compared to Kevin McHale. It's kind of a sad testament though, a testimony, when you look at the starting lineups any more on a spreadsheet and they're all forwards or they're big guards. What does that say about basketball? Are they intentionally trying to get away from the post-play?

CORIE BLOUNT: I don't think they're intentionally getting away with it, I just think that things change and styles change. Me and Donnie were talking earlier, AAU is a guard-oriented style of play. And when you go to an AAU game you mostly see up-and-down basketball where they're getting it out and they're letting it go as soon as it gets past half court. So that's just what these kids are really enthused by and that's how they want to play. We were talking also like he's coaching and I'm coaching, and the first thing our kids do is when they go in the gym they don't even go in the paint any more to warm up, they're shooting three. So that's just the sign of the times that this is what kids like to do now it's either dunk or shoot a three, the mid-range game is gone, I think and that's just got, that, as fans I think that's what we got to get used to until another Shaq or a Jack somebody that's so dominant in the paint that all the teams say, man, we got to go find more guys like that. And I don't think we have that yet, so I think that has a lot to do with it.

Q. Ronnie, I'm sure we know who you want to win the Big-10 but here we are two games, two conference games in, everybody's 1-1 except for two teams, one team is 2-0, the other is 0-2. How do you size up the race, who do you think the major players are going to be in the conference league race?

RONNIE LESTER: I keep up with Iowa, I keep up with the Big Ten through Iowa. Michigan State's always good, looks like Maryland's pretty good this year. I would say those two teams probably have the best chance of winning the league.

DONNIE BOYCE: Yeah, Michigan too.

RONNIE LESTER: Yeah, I think Michigan is going to be pretty good, but I would put them behind those two teams. I think Ohio State's pretty good too, forgot about Ohio State. The Big-10's always a tough league, it's always a tough league. And they will get a lot of teams in the tournament, they will get a lot of teams in the tournament.

DONNIE BOYCE: The one thing I find interesting about the Big-10 and we're talking about the evolution of the game, it was known as the bump and grind type of league and it's starting to move more now into the pick

and pop, spread four league. You look at a school like Wisconsin where they put four shooters out there, five shooters out there at all times and to spread you out and run the motion offense. And they have been successful with their style, but I'm used to the bump and grind, it's going to be a dog fight every night, kind of wish the Big-10 was still that way, but the evolution of the game has kind of changed the Big-10 outlook overall.

SHON MORRIS: Any other questions for the legends? If not, thanks a lot, guys, we really appreciate your time.