O'Bannon, Jr. v. National Collegiate Athletic Association et al Doc. 255 Att. 1

EXHIBIT A

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Oscar Robertson

THE BIG O

My Life, My Times, My Game

3741-1

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My Life, My Times, My Game

Oscar Robertson

University of Nebraska Press
Lincoln and London

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First Nebraska paperback printing: 2010

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Robertson, Oscar, 1938–
The big O: my life, my times, my game / Oscar Robertson.
p. cm.
Includes index.
Originally published: Emmaus, Pa.: Rodale, c2003.
ISBN 978-0-8032-3463-5 (pbk.: alk. paper)
1. Robertson, Oscar, 1938– 2. Basketball players–United States–Biography. I. Title.
GV884.R6A3 2010
796.323092–dc22
[B] 2010013129

3741-6

Acknowledgments

MY THANKS TO Charles Bock, Jeremy Katz, and Rodale for fulfilling this project. And special thanks to Zelda Spoelstra.

To my grandparents Early and Pearl Bell and all my Bellsburg, Tennessee, family. To my hardworking mother and father and my brothers, Bailey and Henry, for providing an innocent, happy childhood.

To Crispus Attucks High School for those wonderful growing and learning years—two state high school basketball championships, one undefeated—and for providing the catalyst for the black population of Indianapolis to be proud. My greatest teachers were from Crispus Attucks High School, who showed me the great value of education. It certainly made it easier for me to compete in college.

The success I enjoyed came from those teammates and those I played against. Thank you, all those players from Colton Street, Lockefield Gardens, and "Mr. Lockefield," James "Bruiser" Gaines.

Thank you, Coach Tom Sleet, Albert Spurlock, and especially Ray Crowe for helping me achieve against odds that I had not even met yet.

To George Smith, my coach at the University of Cincinnati, for letting me use all my talents on a national level. I am grateful to the University of Cincinnati for an indispensable role in my educational growth. I

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appreciate those talented professors who did not hinder me from achieving academic excellence.

I owe Jimmy and Para Lee Brown deep appreciation for providing a safe haven away from home. My heartfelt thanks to Austin and Gladys Tillotson for their love and many kindnesses, to Art Hull for his friendship, and to Dr. Odell Owens for his enthusiasm.

Thank you to Mrs. William C. Swatts Sr. for all your care; for producing my best friend, Dr. William C. Swatts Jr.; and for helping to shape my childhood.

To all those special friends . . .

To Walter Paul for his persistence in getting me to the University of Cincinnati. Thank you for being a sensitive, supportive, and wonderful friend. To J. W. Brown, my attorney and dear friend, who provided guidance, wise professional advice, and loyalty. Jake understood people and made our personal talks so very enjoyable. I sincerely miss his presence. To his son, Robert, my attorney now, my profound indebtedness for writing the Milwaukee Bucks contract and for being a steadfast supporter and lifelong friend. And special thanks to Larry Fleisher.

Thank you, Michael O'Daniel, Ira Berkow, Leonard Lewin, and Tom Collins—the elite of sportswriters. A special thanks to another special writer, Milt Gross, for his wisdom and advice starting when I was a shy, young player and continuing on to the end of my career.

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Preface

I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT that a wonderful thing about sports is that they give everyone a chance. A child doesn't have to be the best. He or she doesn't have to make the team in high school or college. A child can decide if he or she doesn't want to play, doesn't like the sport, or doesn't want to do the work it takes to improve. But all people should be given the opportunity to go out and compete and see what they can do in comparison to others. That's one of the wonderful things about America as well. This country promises everyone a chance. It is a promise that has not always been kept. A promise many of us had to fight for, even die for. But the promise has always been here, a shining beacon down the road.

And when some shy, small boy somewhere gets a chance and picks up a ball—say, a basketball—who knows what can happen, what heights to which he might rise? If he is dedicated enough, talented enough, strong enough, he just might do things on the basketball court that no one has ever seen before. Things no one has done since. He might wind up changing how the game of basketball is played.

Maybe, just maybe, if he works hard enough and is strong enough, he could be called the best who ever lived.

And maybe this would be just the beginning.

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Papa dug his own 187-foot well on the property. He worked his own mills and milked his own cow; he raised hogs and a kitchen garden—one he kept in the wintertime as well as the summertime. He grew crops of corn, black-eyed peas, hay, and tobacco, using a horse and mules even when most other people got tractors. Papa also worked twenty acres along the Cumberland River for a white man named Lightfoot.

Papa wasn't a complex man. What he did with his life was raise the crops that kept his family and the animals fed, make a little money, and pay off his farm so that his family had something that belonged to them. He read the Bible every night, sang church songs, and talked about the Bible. I have distant memories of him leaving the house before sunrise and returning after dark. He used to sit on his porch all night and rock in his favorite chair, shelling peas and singing hymns.

I wish I could provide a romantic story about how my parents met. But the truth is, I don't know. Bellsburg, as well as the other bottomlands outside Charlotte, Tennessee, was and remains farming country. Its people are farm people. There aren't too many ways to meet folks out there, and, when you get down to it, not too many folks to meet. But my paternal grandfather, Ed, had been the minister at Mount Zion; my mother's side of the family was numerous and spread throughout Dickson County, with the church a center of their social lives. So if I had to guess, I'd say there's a good chance that my parents met at church.

They were young when they met. My mom, Mazell, was less than twenty, and Dad was somewhere around the same age. Once they were married, they lived with Mama Pearl and Papa Bell in their small farmhouse on State Highway 29 in northern Dickson County.

My older brothers, Bailey Robertson Jr. and Henry, were born in that farmhouse. And on a snowy Thanksgiving Day, 1938, exactly one hundred years to the day after Daddy Marshall's birth, I was born there too. It was a tough birth, and I was a frail, sickly infant. According to my mother, nobody thought I would survive. If I did somehow make it, then it looked like my left foot would be deformed. Mom and my grandfather took turns massaging that foot during the first weeks of my life, telling each other that I had to pull through.

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My childhood memories of Tennessee are of stretching fields of grass and corn, with trees and mountains lining the distance, and a blue sky thick with clouds. We lived what I imagine was, back then, the typical life of a Negro family in the rural South. The Klan was active in Tennessee, but we never saw them, and no one talked about our conditions. We were simply happy to be around our families, see our relatives, go to church, work in the fields, and get together on Sundays and socialize. There were cakes and chickens and other food. My memories of those days are wonderful ones, and it's not crazy to imagine that my family could have stayed on that patch of land forever, passing the farmhouse and the chores down from generation to generation, with nothing changing except the names on the birth certificates and the names on the gravestones.

But the 1930s were a brutal decade for American farmers—harsh on whites, and you know that only deepened the hardship for blacks. As the decade came to a close, farming throughout the South was in the middle of something of a revolution. Tractors and harvesters were replacing mules and manual labor, and mechanization was in the process of making black tenant farmers and sharecroppers expendable. Though Daddy Marshall and Papa Bell kept working their land, my father started traveling twenty-five miles a day to Nashville to work. Over time, Dad came to understand that no black man had a realistic chance of getting the money necessary to purchase any of the expensive machinery now needed to make a go of farming. He had a wife and three kids, and we were growing. Bailey Jr. was about ready to finish grade school, and Henry and I were not that far behind. I was too young to be attending classes, but rules or not, I'd started going to school with my brothers at nearby Mount Zion, where I was taught by Lizzie Gleaves. She had to be god-sent. I knew the alphabet, could count to a hundred, and listened to a lot of the Bible.

No nearby white high school admitted black children, and none of the black high schools were close enough for us to attend. My father was intent on making sure his children had more chances at an education and a better living than he'd had.

Dad had an aunt named Inez who lived in Indianapolis. She constantly encouraged him to try his luck up north in Indiana, the self-

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I was eleven years old when my parents divorced. It's a sensitive topic for me even now, all these years later. But I think all the financial pressures may have had something to do with it. Even after the divorce, money was so tight that my father kept living in our house, sleeping in the same room as my mom. He'd get up and leave for work before me or my brothers were out of bed, or while we were getting ready for school. Then at the end of the night, he'd come home from whichever of the three jobs he might have been working. Mom and Dad didn't talk to each other. And they never told us about the divorce. We just kept living our lives. Me and my brothers wouldn't find out they'd been divorced until years later, when I was in high school.

By now, mom was working too. Although she was trained to be a beautician, she got a part-time job as a domestic, cooking for a white family. I don't remember their name, but I'll never forget the street. It was the 5500 block of Broadway. Every day she arrived at the home of the rich white family she worked for and would walk around back, to the servants' entrance. She even had to eat her meals on the back porch.

That Christmas, in the middle of all this hardship, she brought home what turned out to be the best and most important present of my life.

It seems one of the boys in that family had discarded a basketball.

It was sort of scarred up. Old. Didn't have the greatest trim on it. But then again, the tread wasn't lopsided, and the ball was regulation size.

It was my ball.

LOCATED IN THE HEART of Naptown, Crispus Attucks was a source of pride for the black community of Indianapolis. Named after the African-American who had been shot by British troops in the 1770 Boston Massacre, the school was a lumbering, three-story red brick building. The foul-smelling canal was close to its front doors, and Fall Creek was just a few blocks away. The building didn't have a regular-size fieldhouse or a regular-size track. It was overcrowded, with almost double the number of students it had been constructed to hold. And yet it was a miraculous place.

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The principal was black, and the majority of teachers were black Ph.D.'s who weren't allowed to teach in white schools.

Legend has it that the week that Attucks opened, the Klan had a parade and celebrated the separation of black and white students. That was before my time, so I can't verify the story any more than I can dismiss it. What I can say is that when I was a child, seeing the school's green, gold, and white colors on a tee shirt commanded my attention. Players from Attucks dominated at the Dust Bowl and the Y.

In those days, if you were black, you were told you weren't smart. You were bad. You were inferior. Black people needed something to look up to, something to give us hope. This was why my brothers and I listened to Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson on the Friday night fights, and this, I think, is why the Crispus Attucks basketball team was so important to the black population of Indianapolis, why the African-American newspaper, *The Indianapolis Recorder,* covered the team so fervently. They won games.

Well, imagine how important to our family it was when, in 1950, Flap made it onto the varsity squad at Crispus Attucks.

Standing five feet nine, Flap was just a sophomore. He filled in as a reserve guard on a team loaded with talent. There was Hallie Bryant, the team's leading scorer, who would go on to become one of the first black players to enroll in the University of Indiana. And Willie Gardner, a tall, thin, six-foot-eight forward, would be recruited by various colleges, but because his family was dirt-poor, he ended up signing on directly with the Harlem Globetrotters. As for Flap, after his high school career, he went to Indiana Central College (now the University of Indianapolis) and set a state collegiate scoring record, with 2,268 points in four years—a record that, as I write this, still stands for small colleges. Flap would also spend a short stretch with the Harlem Globetrotters. But that was later. In 1950 to 1951, the Crispus Attucks Tigers, coached by Ray Crowe, was the first all-black basketball team that played in the state finals of the Indiana High School Basketball Tournament.

I vividly remember watching the regionals and the game that got them into the state finals. The state tournament was broadcast on television, and we watched the regional finals in our home. It was really something—

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that game was the first Crispus Attucks basketball game I ever watched, as well as the first sporting event I ever saw on television. Even if I didn't understand that it was the state high school tournament, I knew something important was happening.

With four and a half minutes to play in the 1951 regional finals, the Crispus Attucks Tigers trailed the all-white Anderson Indians by ten points. John "Noon" Davis, the Tigers' fine forward, was called for his fifth and eliminating foul. My mother's fist curled around a napkin as she watched a five-foot-nine sophomore checking into the game to replace Davis. Bailey "Flap" Robertson.

A smattering of polite applause came from the sea of black faces stuffed behind the Attucks bench. There were shouts of encouragement from the black fans way up in the corner of the back bleachers, where all the police were on watch, ready to prevent any problems.

Coach Ray Crowe had left Flap's name off the roster during the sectional tournament for reasons he never fully explained. So this was Flap's first action in the playoffs. He later told me and Henry that when he got a chance to play, he wanted to make sure the coach would remember him. And he did. The first time Flap touched the ball, he shot. Fifteen-foot jumper. Nothing but net. Anderson's lead went down to eight.

The Indianapolis Recorder's Jim Cummings would report that this shot "rekindled a spark of hope in Attucks hearts. If sophomore Bailey Robertson—who didn't even play in the sectional games—could score so easily, so can we."

Two quick baskets by Willie Gardner. A free throw by Bob Jewell. Within ninety seconds, the lead had been cut to three.

Fifteen thousand fans were going wild in the Butler Fieldhouse. The Attucks supporters were stomping their feet and shouting. Across the floor, the Anderson fans were just as crazy.

Hallie Bryant hit a turnaround jumper to cut the lead to 74–72. Now the Attucks corner broke into their legendary "Crazy Song."

Oh, Anderson is rough
And Anderson is tough

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The neighborhood echoed with the hard reverberations of basketballs getting pounded into the dirt, clay, and asphalt, and a film of dust was ever present, wafting through Naptown's shanties and apartment complexes. There might be fifty or sixty guys on the side of the court—adults, high school cats, you name it—all of them sitting and waiting for their turn to run. If your team lost, you weren't going to play anymore that day, so players had to put out, really compete. There wasn't spare time to look around, pose, and see who was watching.

Since I was too young to run with the best players, I had to show up early if I wanted to play and get on a team when games were just forming, before the big guns had taken over the courts. Lots of times I ended up off the side, on my own, working on something basic: free throws, crossover bles, or dribbling with my weaker left hand. The basics were about all uld achieve back then, but I always liked counting down the seconds an imaginary game clock. Then, with the score tied and time running t, I'd take the same shot Flap took, for all the money.

Whether it was at the Dust Bowl, the Senate Avenue Y, or during olice Athletic League games a bit later, I took any chance I got to get in game with older players, like Hallie Bryant, Willie Gardner, Henry, and of course, Flap. The younger group of guys I ran around with and I were always trying to get in those playground games, but there was a pecking order, and the older guys wouldn't let us on the court. In order to play against the older guys, you had to have the size and strength necessary to win your way through the day. Eventually, though, we became the dominant team. The tough guys.

Basketball players—even good ones—don't become smart all at once; it takes years and years of playing the game. In my case being a smart player and a good player were wrapped up in one another. Getting a chance meant you had to make the most of it. Nobody out there was running a charity. If I wanted to stay on the court, I had to be good enough to keep myself on it. Guys were bigger and older and stronger than me, and they tried to overpower me, pushing and holding me, playing rough. Guys would try and set up down low against me all the time, getting position near the basket. Then, once they had the ball, they'd back me in, muscling their way

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I think that Principal Lane and the other school administrators believed in using sports as a corollary to their concept of black education and dignity. Their idea was to grow smart, polite, educated citizens, while also showing the white community that these citizens were good, decent young men who could compete on athletic fields without any problem. Along these lines, Principal Lane and the other administrators believed that Attucks's sports teams were best used to help build relationships with the white community. So basketball coach Fitzhugh Lyons selected his players more for their manners than their athleticism. Then he taught them polite basketball. "Keep your feet on the floor when you shoot and pass," he told them. "Don't get too close to your man on defense." Lyons even gave speeches before games about how losing now might give way to winning in the long run. Still, seeing how the state high school athletic association wouldn't admit black schools to its membership, the mandates of politesse did not help much. The school didn't have a regulation gymnasium, or even a decent track or football field. All basketball games were played on the road, very few of them against white competition except for the occasional small rural school or Catholic academy (the Klan had also made sure to ban Catholics).

Finally, in 1942, the wartime effort began a shift in the state's political mood. Some city schools, like Howe High, started winking at the Klan's zoning laws and accepted black students. Soon after, a meeting of the Council of the Indiana High School Athletic Association allowed for white schools to play black schools and share revenues from games. Attucks may not have had a gym, but the Tigers started playing a few home games nonetheless—at Tech High School, a cross-town integrated school that would become our rival, and at Butler University.

Ray Crowe was hired as an assistant basketball coach in 1948. The eldest of ten children, Ray had a younger brother, George, who had played pro baseball on the New York Renaissance with Jackie Robinson. Eventually, George would go on to a ten-year career with the Braves, Reds, and Cardinals, and was involved in a minor scandal when the baseball commissioner ordered that Stan Musial start the all-star game ahead of him. As an assistant, Ray Crowe was influenced by Lyons's approach of capitulating

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CHAPTER FOUR

"Talk Is Cheap"
1955–1956

ALTHOUGH I AM NOT WRITING this book to relate every injustice I've suffered, it's simply impossible to tell my story without talking about race. As much as I am an American, I am a black American. And to tell you about growing up in the Jim Crow South, and a segregated, Klan-infested Midwest, I must acknowledge the influence of race. Similarly, it's impossible to discuss my experiences with basketball without mentioning race, black and white. Otherwise, you might as well think about America's history during the second half of the twentieth century without acknowledging the civil rights movement. Or consider the Civil War without mentioning slavery. The subjects are all intertwined.

It wasn't until Attucks won our initial state title in my junior year that I had my first meal in a restaurant. I was seventeen years old, and before that, I hadn't so much as set foot in downtown Indianapolis, much less

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eaten there, except to catch the bus to Tennessee. Being a champion basketball player opened the restaurants' doors to me. Maybe there were some white high school basketball champs who had never been in a restaurant until they won it all, rural kids out on a farm or whatever. But they at least would have been welcome.

That first trip downtown filled me with a strange mixture of excitement and disappointment. I still felt the fresh glow of the win, an enormous pride in our achievement, a sense of giddy lightness inside. At the same time, it was a shadowed happiness, weighed down. When Ray Crowe shepherded our spiffed-up Attucks Tigers into a restaurant called La Fendricks, my smile had long faded. I don't remember being overly impressed by the place. I can't remember what I ate. But I do remember the camaraderie, the novelty, and the sense of a hushed excitement. We were on our best behavior, and we were treated like champions.

Besides the trip downtown and the restaurant meal, there were many other firsts as a result of being the state champs. Different civic organizations around the city invited the team to special ceremonies in order to celebrate our victory. The mayor called us "Indianapolis's Crispus Attucks" in public, whatever he might have said privately. People's willingness to honor us showed me that winning might not completely eclipse race, but it did rebalance the equation some. Our athleticism had always elevated our status in our own neighborhood, but now we had a chance to experience what it felt like to be welcomed and treated special *outside* our home turf.

While I was thrilled to be state champ, and while many of the experiences that came with victory were wonderful, I wasn't about to get complacent. I kept visiting the Dust Bowl and the Y, working on my shots, improving any weaknesses I could discover, doing what I had always done. I wasn't a little kid practicing with a worn-out basketball anymore. Now I was on the threshold of adulthood, and I had experienced what it felt like to win, both the sweet and the bitter. And if winning titles carried a tinge of disappointment, I sure didn't want to come close to losing.

My senior year, I was the sole returning senior player. But up from the eighth- and ninth-grade teams came Sam Milton, Bill Brown, and James Enoch, as well as a player I called "my defense," Al Maxey. I moved

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hundred schools approached him. Indiana was one of the three or four finalists. In his first autobiography, *Wilt*, Chamberlain said that when he was making his decision, rumors reached him that McCracken wasn't all that fond of blacks. Chamberlain went on to write that although Indiana recruiters later told him they would double whatever any other school offered to pay him, he signed with Forrest "Phog" Allen and Kansas. McCracken's version of events was different. He would tell at least one reporter that Chamberlain had been offered to him for five thousand dollars, up front. In McCracken's version of the story, he refused to pay Wilt, and lost him for that reason. "We thought we had Wilt. He announced he was coming here. Phog Allen stole him away from us."

Well, I was the most hyped recruit since Chamberlain. Maybe that made McCracken distrustful of me.

When track season ended, I became free of varsity obligations and could legally make home visits to universities. The first place I wanted to go was Bloomington. One cloudless spring day, Coach Crowe drove me there. I got to McCracken's office expecting a certain warmth; after all, they were one of the schools sending me information and saying they wanted me to play for their team, and I *was* the state's Mr. Basketball.

McCracken's secretary said he was busy. Could I please have a seat and wait?

Well, after I sat there for thirty minutes or so, McCracken's door finally opened. He invited me into his office, and I sat down. He was quiet for a moment, looking at me, sizing me up. Finally he said: "I hope you're not the kind of kid who wants money to go to school." I did not know that kids got money to play at schools. I grew up religious and was taught to do the right and honest thing. I didn't want money to go to college, I just wanted to go.

I didn't answer him and just walked out of his office, back to the car, seriously insulted.

If that man had said, "Oscar, we would like you to come to Indiana and play for us," I would have taken a pen from my own pocket and signed with him right there. Instead I came away thinking that I wouldn't play for Indiana University if it were the last place on earth.

"I got to leave," I told Ray.

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to know that you can take them for their word. And that promise for the future seemed to offer me something that no one else had: respect for me beyond my basketball abilities and a real concern for what was best for me as a person regardless of what I could do for them.

I hadn't actually investigated the university itself. Cincinnati was two hours or so south of Indianapolis on Highway 52. I knew the city was about the same size as Indianapolis and had about the same demographics. The Bearcats had an all-white team and a white coaching staff, and they weren't exactly basketball legends, so I hadn't placed them high on my list. At the same time, my choices were really narrowing. If I wanted to stay close to home, there weren't too many choices. These people seemed to be honest and sincere. Plus, there was the matter of the coach, George Smith.

George had grown up on an Ohio farm and had a style that put people at ease. Recruiting was one of the things he was good at. He was a charmer, but in an easygoing way that didn't make you feel like you were being charmed. When we sat down for our first interview together, I was prepared. He asked me the question that everyone asks, "What do you want out of college?" I answered him promptly: "One, naturally I want a good education. Two, I want the opportunity to play major-league basketball for exposure in the large cities. Three, I want no black problem. Four, I want to be close to my family and friends in Indianapolis. Five, I want to play in Madison Square Garden. They say that's the mecca of basketball, and that's where I want to play."

I wasn't trying to make a good impression. I was just answering honestly and being myself. I had thought plenty about what I wanted out of college, and I knew that none of it was negotiable. My friends always said, even way back then, that I was driven. A friend once told me, "At seventeen you knew exactly what you wanted by twenty-seven. At twenty-seven, you were getting right on target for thirty-seven." I might not have phrased it that way, but I couldn't disagree.

Coach Smith seemed impressed by the clarity of my list and the lack of hesitation I showed before giving it to him. He smiled at me, nodded, maybe gave a little laugh.

My trip had other memorable parts. Ted Berry, who later became

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Cincinnati's first black mayor, had a reception for me. I will never forget how nice he was to me. On another recruiting visit, Ross Hastie, a wealthy university supporter, led a private tour around his home for me and a teammate, Al Maxey. The house had a pool and tennis and basketball courts. As they showed me around, I kept shooting Al looks, *Can you believe this?* I keenly felt how little I knew about finance or culture or international relations. I couldn't add much to any conversations, so I stayed quiet.

At some point, while I was sitting by the pool, Ross Hastie's young son, who must have been six or seven years old, turned to me and said, "Gee, you sure are black."

Well, it got quiet. *Really* quiet.

I smiled at him and calmly explained that my ancestors came from another continent. It was very hot there, and dark skin was the norm. That answer was probably more words than I'd said all day, and after it came out of my mouth, it felt like the whole room exhaled.

On June 8, 1956, I wore my cap and gown along with 170 other seniors graduating from Crispus Attucks. I was sixteenth in my class, which put me in the ninety-first percentile, and a member of the National Honor Society. The next day, I announced my intention to enter the University of Cincinnati.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Collegiate Life
1956–1958

NOWADAYS, SOME GUYS jump straight from high school into the NBA. The time when Moses Malone, Bill Willoughby, and Darryl Dawkins defied convention and logic is long past. The individual and collective success of Kevin Garnett, Kobe Bryant, and Tracy McGrady burst open the floodgates. When Kwame Brown went straight from his high school graduation to the number one pick in the draft, it solidified the trend, turned what was once a rarity into a rite of passage. This past year, anyone with cable television and even a moderate interest in sports watched LeBron James become a SportsCenter celebrity, with special segments about the Hummer his mom got him and the replica jerseys that the boy was given, with announcers all the while lecturing and pontificating about exploitation, even as their network was broadcasting his games.

Coming from the kind of poverty I did, I certainly can understand

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someone making the leap right into the professional ranks, especially when there are millions of dollars involved. Hell, if someone had offered me a Jackie Robinson jersey when I was in high school, rules or not, I would have taken it.

Having said this, I also know that there's a difference between being physically capable of doing something and being mature enough to understand everything that comes with what you are doing. The NBA draft has become something of a futures market, with teams taking young, raw players and relying on the idea that they will develop gradually, blossoming into stars three or four years down the line. Kids are being put in a situation and a life they aren't prepared for. Part of playing basketball is having the game experience, maturity, and smarts to know what to do. But every year, there are more guys running up and down NBA courts with no idea how to play or handle themselves professionally. On the one hand, good for them; they made it into the big time. But the flip side is, once you get enough guys on the court who don't know how to play or conduct themselves, who throw tantrums and scream at their coaches and get into trouble and are generally too young and self-centered to know what they're doing, the end result is that quality of the game gets diluted. The state of professional basketball is adversely affected.

But my experience wasn't a textbook example on the way things should be either. In 1956, when I enrolled in the University of Cincinnati's School of Business Administration, freshmen weren't eligible to play varsity basketball in college. Schools had freshman teams. The idea was to give incoming student-athletes a year to adjust to college life, at the same time allowing them to assimilate gradually into their athletic program, mature physically, and get ready for varsity competition. That was the idea, anyway.

If you had told me then that I'd spend the great majority of my adult life living in Cincinnati, I probably would have laughed at you. Yet I have spent forty-three of the past forty-seven years living here. Shortly after I graduated from Crispus Attucks, I packed up what few shirts I had, two pairs of pants, my sneakers, and moved to Cincinnati for the summer. Walter Paul helped set me up at the Cincinnati YMCA and got me a job

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A week later I was named the college player of the year for the third straight season, the only player to be so honored at that time. In the three years I played on Cincinnati's varsity team, the Bearcats had a combined record of 79–9. I scored fifty or more points five times in my collegiate career and accumulated at least forty in twenty-three games: twenty-seven percent of the varsity contests I'd played. After my senior season, my jersey and number, twelve, were raised into the rafters, retired, never to be worn again. More importantly, now players *wanted* to come to Cincinnati. Paul Hogue, our sophomore center from Knoxville, Tennessee, said that part of the reason he came to Cincinnati was to play with me. Tom Thacker, George Wilson, and others felt the same way.

I'd come to Cincinnati as the only black player on the basketball team; the year after I left, they had three black players in the starting lineup; the year after that, four. And while some people may have second-guessed me for constantly passing the ball against California, I think that the experience Paul Hogue, Bob Wiesenhahn, and Carl Bouldin gained from that game helped them during the following two seasons when they were led by a new coach. Cincinnati finally did win national championships, without me on the floor, and won them back-to-back.

I graduated in June 1960, along with the rest of my class. Although I made the dean's list a few times, I didn't quite get to graduate with honors. Even though I'd had some difficult times at the University of Cincinnati, I also received a good education. My conduct in the classroom and performance on the basketball court helped to wear down some of the resistance to black students. While a student at the University of Cincinnati, I met people who would remain friends and advisors throughout my adult life.

Perhaps my experiences would have been different if I had been a white athlete. Maybe people would have treated me better or there would have been fewer controversies. But when I was just a freshman, sitting in Austin Tillotson's house while he told me that black people did not come to the University of Cincinnati for a reason, I decided that I was glad they chose me, because I could handle that responsibility. And I know that whatever problems I had during my four years there, I did handle myself

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that real war was going to break out on the floor, they called all kinds of fouls: even the slightest contact drew a whistle. We still were in control and led by eighteen at halftime. But foul trouble hurt us in the second half, and Russia drew to within ten.

Coach Newell called time-out. In the huddle he told us to press, pick them up full court, and get right into them.

Well, we went out there again and just destroyed them. Their guards simply couldn't handle our quickness, and we jumped and trapped them and caused one turnover after another, outscoring them 25–1 in what I am proud to call one of the greatest displays of pressure defense of all time.

The final score was 81–57. Two days later we destroyed Brazil in the gold medal game. Jerry West and I stood on the top rung of that podium representing our team and our nation. Jerry was so nervous that he felt his pants shaking. I remember standing there and looking out into the crowd, searching for my wife. During the game I hadn't thought about anything but winning, and afterwards I was happy because we did. But when the first notes of the "Star-Spangled Banner" played over the loudspeaker, I really felt it. I remember wishing that some of the guys I'd played ball with in high school could have been up there, all the people that pushed me, who I played against, who helped me get to this point. I remember thinking about all the sacrifices I'd made and all the hell I'd been through. And now I was on the podium, representing my country, accepting an Olympic gold medal. It was overwhelming.

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