

Chuck Daly Lifetime Achievement Award

Friday, October 2, 2020

David Fogel

Adam Silver

Rick Carlisle

Del Harris

Media Availability



Daly Lifetime Achievement Award: Bernie Bickerstaff, Billy Cunningham, Joe Dumars, Phil Jackson, Gregg Popovich, Pat Riley, Donnie Walsh and the great Lenny Wilkens. Also want to mention quickly our past recipients: Tom Heinsohn, Tex Winter, Jack Ramsay, Lenny Wilkens, Pat Riley, Bill Fitch, Bernie Bickerstaff, Dick Motta, K.C. Jones, Jerry Sloan, Al Attles, Hubie Brown, Doug Moe and last year's recipient, Frank Layden.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone. Thank you for joining us this afternoon for this special announcement. I will now introduce David Fogel, Executive Director of the NBA Coaches Association.

DAVID FOGEL: Thank you, Mark. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We hope everyone is staying safe and healthy during these challenging times. Normally we would all be in L.A. for Game 2 of the NBA Finals. But we are very excited to be in three separate places, New York, Dallas and Frisco, to present the 2020 Chuck Daly Lifetime Achievement Award.

My name is David Fogel and I'm the Executive Director of the NBA Coaches Association. On behalf of the NBA Coaches Association President, Coach Rick Carlisle, our executive committee and all of our head and assistant coach members, I'd like to thank Commissioner Adam Silver, Mark Tatum, Kathy Behrens, Byron [Spruell], Kiki [VanDeWeghe], Charlie [Rosenzweig] and all of the NBA for all of their support and assistance in providing this platform to honor the extraordinary achievements of our great NBA coaches.

We are especially proud of the Chuck Daly Lifetime Achievement Award, which honors the memory of Hall of Famer Chuck Daly, who over an outstanding career set the standard for integrity, competitive excellence and tireless promotion of NBA basketball.

Chuck was an incredible mentor to so many of our coaches and players in our league, including Coach Carlisle and Coach Del Harris. Without further ado, I'd like to turn it over to Coaches Association President Coach Rick Carlisle. Thank you.

RICK CARLISLE: David, thank you very much. First, I'd like to recognize our selection committee for the Chuck

As always, we really appreciate this platform at Game 2 of the Finals to present this very special award. I want to thank Adam and Kathy Behrens and Mark [Tatum] and everyone from the NBA for their continued support of this.

Today's recipient is a very special man and a trusted friend to the game of basketball. His coaching career spans over six decades, 61 years to be exact, 32 years in the NBA, 14 as a head coach. Del Harris has 556 wins as an NBA head coach. He was the 1995 NBA Coach of the Year as coach of the Los Angeles Lakers.

Del has also coached in over 400 FIBA games for five different countries: the USA, Canada, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and China. In 2004, he became the first-ever foreign-born head coach of the Chinese national team. With that national team, he had the distinction and I'm sure the great pleasure to coach Yao Ming, who's certainly the greatest player in Chinese basketball history.

Del is a member of six different Hall of Fames. He's had eight assistant coaches become NBA head coaches. He's had two assistant coaches become successful NBA general managers. Del Harris was the 2019 recipient of the John Bunn Award, presented by the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame for a lifetime of contributions to the game of basketball. Del has written six different books.

It is my great pleasure to introduce the 2020 recipient of the Chuck Daly Lifetime Achievement award, Del Harris. Del, if you could hold up the trophy for a photo op for 10 or 15 seconds, we would appreciate that.

Before we turn it over to you for a few words, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver is here. Adam, we, as always, appreciate your being with us. If you could say a few words, we would appreciate that.

ADAM SILVER: Absolutely. Thanks, Rick, and thank you,



David, for including me, as you always do. Del, congratulations on such a well-deserved honor. As Rick pointed out, more than 60 years in basketball and more than 30 years as an NBA coach. Quite a testament to what we all admire in you: immense dedication to the game. You continue to make your mark through all the players, coaches and executives you've developed over these many years. It's my privilege on behalf of everyone in the NBA to thank you for your immeasurable contributions to the game. Congratulations again.

DEL HARRIS: I'll tell you, in listening to all the things, Rick, that you have said, and Adam, it just makes it harder for me to know what to say. I had it all kind of planned out.

When you went over the list of those coaches that have gone on before and won this award, and knowing how great those coaches were -- I coached against just about every one of them in that kind of golden era of the late '70s, '80s, early '90s of NBA basketball when it really rose to become what it has continued now to grow to become. The names of the men on the committee, again, I either coached against them as coach or as a player, in the case of Joe Dumars and some of the rest. And I regard them to be friends.

It was a unique time. When I started NBA coaching, there were only 21 teams. The coaches tended to stay a little longer and kind of go from team to team. I coached three teams, but some guys were successful and coached four or five teams. So you got to know them and really respect them as people.

As I look back on my life, my goal when I started coaching was to be a small-college coach because I had played in a small college and I thought it was good. My coach from college just died a couple of months ago, Duard Walker at Milligan College. He was 95. That's the kind of coach I wanted to be.

At 27, I was coaching a small college, Earlham College. I did that for nine years there. That allowed me to go to Puerto Rico in summers. Having success there in the summers when none of us were making any money, so we did something in the summer to add to the incomes. I coached 15 years before I ever made more than \$10,000 at a job. But down there, I was coaching against ABA and NBA guys and was fortunate enough to win a lot of games and some championships.

Tom Nissalke asked me to come coach with him in the ABA. Unfortunately, it was the last year of the ABA. We only lasted one month because the new owners we had were underfunded, so November 29th we were out of business. Moses Malone had broken his foot in preseason

practice. Never played a game. So that kind of hurt our attendance a little.

Fortunately, Jerry Pimm picked me up as an assistant to him at the University of Utah the rest of that year. Then Tom got the head coaching job at the Rockets [in 1976]. That was the year of the expansion. We were fortunate enough to go to the final four [of the 1977 NBA Playoffs]. Tom became -- rest in peace, Tom -- Coach of the Year.

And then I've been working with the NBA in one capacity or another ever since.

Thank God for all that. And still with the Texas Legends in the G League. This will be our 11th season. I'm thankful for that and all that it has become.

Again, I just want to thank all of you. And the Association, goodness, how did I forget that. I was at the first meeting that we had when we voted to hire Michael Goldberg to be the executive director, and what a wonderful job he did. We were nobody. We were nothing. We had no representation and no pension, no squat. And now it's really become a terrific organization.

David, and of course now Rick has been the president for a long time. Lenny was strong back in the beginning. So I've just seen it all come along and grow.

Last thing, I want to say something really crazy. I've been following the NBA since 1946. Ironically enough, while I'm from southern Indiana originally, and proud of that, I grew up near Indianapolis at Plainfield High School, where I graduated. In the first-ever NBA game, No. 11 named Forest "Jake" Weber jumped center for the New York Knicks against the Toronto Huskies, November 2nd in Toronto in 1946. Jake Weber was a Plainfield High School graduate of 1936. He was also my employer when I was a freshman in high school because he was building homes. Jake Weber, No. 11, rest in peace. That's all I've got right now.

RICK CARLISLE: One thing that I'd like to add here is Del has been one of the real creative minds in NBA basketball. When he coached the Houston Rockets in 1981 to the NBA Finals, he was the first guy -- he was coaching Moses Malone at the time, and he developed a play where Moses actually blocked out his man under the offensive boards and then they threw a pass off the board and Moses got it and went up and dunked it. Plays like that and playing like that has really helped cultivate the creativity of all coaches from that point going forward, and it's really manifest in the beautiful game that we see today. Del, thank you for everything that you've done. Adam, we're excited to be here at the Finals for Game 2 this evening. Having been



down in Orlando for about 70 days with Dallas, we had an amazing experience down there, and once again, just want to echo what Del said. Just such a tremendous job of keeping everyone safe and keeping the environment really perfect for great competitive play. We'll look forward to a great remaining six games of the Finals.

I think at this point we'll open it up to questions for Del and whoever else they want to talk to.

Q. I'm curious, given your international experience and the work you've done with national teams and all that overseas basketball, did you ever get pursued by or pursue a regular coaching job overseas when you still wanted to be a head coach but the NBA didn't have that opportunity?

DEL HARRIS: No, I never did. I didn't pursue any of those jobs, as a matter of fact. All of them came to me. I didn't even pursue an NBA job. It just happened. There was no interview or whatever in any of those. No, I never did want to pull my family up and do that.

And by the way, I owe a great deal to my family. I didn't mention that. Seems like that's something we almost always forget, and yet without the family support and the wonderful family I have, with my wife, five kids that have all been tremendously supportive.

No, I didn't want to do that, but it would have been interesting. I don't blame anyone for wanting to do it, and I'm really happy that I got to do that.

Q. Just to follow up, I had read that in June of 2009 you announced your retirement, so I'm wondering how you explain the last 11 years.

DEL HARRIS: Oh, well, that's a long story. Sometimes we do that to kind of just end the conversation. Yeah, I think you all know that in sports, the first retirement doesn't count. Like, Nellie [Don Nelson] retired I think at least three or four times.

Q. How special is this moment, and where does this one stack up amongst all the different honors and successes you've had throughout your more than 60-year career?

DEL HARRIS: Well, as I was saying, I'm tremendously thankful for any of the honors that I've been getting. I'm hoping for more honors.

But this one has a special meaning simply because, as I was noting, the tremendous names that have gotten this award before. Knowing that there are many others out

there who have given their professional lives to the sport, which is -- I think coaching basketball is a special thing. It's a ministry, a service, depending on how you look at it. When you do it right, you're fitting into the lives of the players in a very special way, in a special relationship that can be developed.

Anyway, to be recognized by the people that you actually were competitive against and fought against and planned to beat and all that, but when it was over you had a mutual respect for one another, it just makes this one different from the rest.

Q. I want to ask you specifically about Coach Daly. Wherever you put this award, every time you look at it it's going to have you connected with Coach Daly. I wonder what you most remember about Coach Daly and what that means to you.

DEL HARRIS: Thanks a lot. That's a great question and one that I should have mentioned initially, as well. Chuck was a friend. Chuck was a master coach. As I say, he was a friend. We invested together in an oil business, and we lost money together. We still stayed friends. Just what a great example to follow. I quote him from time to time with people because he -- well, I paraphrase. I don't know exactly how he put it, but I know how he worked it, and that was that he would try to avoid confrontations whenever he could.

The old-school coaches, going way back, they actually looked for confrontations and accepted them as a challenge. Chuck didn't do that. You know, let's face it, Chuck coached the Bad Boys and got along with them. We had some battles with him, and I have great respect for Chuck Daly.

Q. Who's the best player you ever coached and why?

DEL HARRIS: Well, that's like who's my favorite child. It just doesn't work. I've been so fortunate to have coached with -- I'm not going to say coached; I just coached with them -- many players that are now in the Naismith Hall of Fame.

When I'm introduced to young kids today when I do clinics for 10-, 12-, 14-year-old kids, I get introduced as Kobe's first coach, Magic's last coach and in the movie "Space Jam." Now, that's all they care about. They don't care that I've coached with five out of the top 10 leading scorers in the history of the game. I've coached seven centers -- with seven centers. I didn't develop these great players, but I worked with them, seven centers who are in the Naismith Hall of Fame, and a lot of others who are not.

Guards like Sidney [Moncrief] and Calvin [Murphy] and Steve Nash and so on and so forth. Rick Barry -- goodness sakes, my first head coaching job with the Rockets, I have Hall of Famers on it, Rick Barry, Calvin Murphy, Moses Malone, Rudy Tomjanovich. And before I left I had Elvin Hayes.

With Nellie, just wonderful players that I was able to coach, help in one way or another. [Bob] Lanier. Just on and on. Love them all, I'll tell you. I'm just so thankful to have known them. If I helped any, well, I'm glad.

Q. When you coached China at the 2004 Athens Games, you beat the defending champions Serbia to make it into the knockout round. I want to ask you, what's your quintessential memory of the success you had with the Chinese national team at the Athens Olympics?

DEL HARRIS: It would be that moment. They actually at one time had gotten in the final eight. But they still to this day have only won one international -- either world championship, World Cup or Olympic -- against a top-rated international team. Serbia was the defending world champion. We went into the final day of prelims, and we had to win that game to go to the medal round. Well, so did Serbia. We were thrown in the toughest bracket that there was in the Olympics that year. We had the winner in it, Argentina. We had No. 2, silver, in it, Italy. We had the team that had the best overall record in the [indiscernible], Spain, at 7-1. We had New Zealand, which had finished fourth in the previous Worlds, 2002 in Indianapolis, where the USA finished sixth. Then we had Serbia, the defending world champion. And then there was China.

We weren't given much of a chance to win that game. But Yao Ming and Li Nan, Du Feng, all those guys pulled us through. All of those guys that played on that team are now either the head of basketball in China, like Yao Ming, or the national coach, like Li Nan, or the winners of the CBA championships, like Du Feng and Guo [Shiqiang] and all the rest of them are coaching at a high level, and I mean, doing really well in China. Those were all super guys.

I know we've got all kinds of trade issues or this or that with China. We don't care about the political aspects here. All I know is the people. That's one thing I learned, speaking on basketball in five different continents. I spoke last night to the only continent left that I hadn't been to, Australia. I was on with them for an hour last night.

But I've learned that we are all much more alike than we are different.

Q. In the media we're always tasked with defining a coach's career by maybe it's their system or their style, teams they were best known for coaching, whatever it may be. How would you define your own coaching career? What is the thing that stands out or that you would highlight on your own behalf?

DEL HARRIS: Oh, man, it's mainly a funny guy. I was flexible. If it called for slowing the game down, pounding it in, we did that. If it called for a moderate pace, as with the Bucks, we did that. And if it called for up tempo, with the Lakers, we did that.

With the Rockets, we were able to develop a very strong power game. And yet, we had some good shooters around. There are a lot of ways to win the game. I'm telling you that the big man is not dead.

There are two ways to get the defense to shrink in. One is off penetration, which they tend to do almost all of now. The other is to throw it inside, draw the double and then find open people. So those two ways still are very viable.

Once you find another big man who is able to draw a double inside -- don't tell me that if Shaq were to play today he wouldn't get in the game because he doesn't shoot the three-ball. He would get in the game. He would be the game.

So anyway, then with the Bucks, I had the great Jack Sikma, Hall of Famer. But we were flexible. As he got toward the end of his career, we realized that his strength was in his shooting, not just in the Sikma move inside. He became the first 7-footer to shoot the three-ball. He shot over 400 his last two years with me. He shot 38 percent, by the way, one of those seasons. It was way before Dirk, who started the real revolution of the stretch player. And again, just to have experienced time with Dirk and with Steve here and [Michael] Finley and [Jason] Terry and all the great players that we had here with the Mavericks.

Then with the Lakers, the last three years we scored the most points total in the league. We did that with Shaq missing 52 games those last two years, the only two years I had him -- 31 and 22 games he missed. But because we had a bunch of great players with him, we still were able to score and to win 56 and 61 games my last two years.

Then once the zone thing came in, I was the only one here at the Mavs that had had experience with the zone. My second book was on zone offense. My first book had to do mainly with zone defense, mobile defenses. The last book I wrote with Ken Shields, who was a great coach in Canada, in 2015 was another zone offense book. So we put together a zone defense with Nellie. I thought that

during that time we had the best -- along with Flip Saunders and Minnesota, that we had the best two zones in the league.

I know Rick has done a good job with zoning, as well. You can see now the flexibility of some of the coaches that are able to use changing defenses and multiple defenses. It's a tribute to having flexibility and to be able to adjust.

I think adjustability, flexibility. Maybe being jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none. I don't know. But that's kind of what I did best, I think.

THE MODERATOR: Del, congratulations. This concludes today's call. I'd also like to thank David Fogel, Rick Carlisle and Adam Silver for joining us today for this announcement.

DEL HARRIS: Thank you all. A wonderful time. Thank you, thank you.

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