

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive

Gardner-Webb Publications

2-9-2012

GWU Alumnus Artis Gilmore Eclipses Basketball's Highest Peak

Office of University Communications

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gardner-webb-newscenter-archive>

GWU Alumnus Artis Gilmore Eclipses Basketball's Highest Peak

 webpublish.gardner-webb.edu/newscenter/final-stop-for-the-a-train-the-hall-of-fame/

Office of University Communications

February 9, 2012

What a moment, when a giant of a man in stature and accomplishments—and a Gardner-Webb alum—strode past his friend and introducer Julius “Dr. J” Irving to the microphone on that hallowed stage and, to the guests in attendance, including GWU President Dr. Frank Bonner, said, “My name is Artis Gilmore, and I am a member of the Basketball Hall of Fame.” Gilmore was one of 10 individuals to be named to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Class of 2011, in August’s induction ceremony in Springfield, Mass.

The seven-foot-two Gilmore, who was nicknamed “A Train” for his dominance on the court, enjoyed a 17-year professional career in basketball after shredding the nets as a Runnin’ Bulldog. Gilmore played 12 seasons in the NBA (National Basketball Association) and before that, five years in the now non-existent ABA (American Basketball Association) with the ABA Kentucky Colonels (1971-76), the Chicago Bulls (’76-’82 and ’87), San Antonio Spurs (’82-’87), and the Boston Celtics (’88).

He won awards at every level he played the sport. He was the ABA Rookie of the Year and MVP in 1972, an ABA first teamer five times and first all-defensive teamer four times, and an NBA All Star on six occasions. Gilmore finished his pro career with nearly 25,000 points, over 16,000 rebounds, and well over 3,000 blocks.

In his hall of fame speech, Gilmore remembered playing basketball as a youngster in Chipley, Fla., with tied up balls that didn’t bounce and clothes that didn’t fit. “I idolized players like Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, and Jerry West. I never dreamed that my name would join theirs in the Basketball Hall of Fame,” said Gilmore.

Prior to the ceremony, Gilmore recalled how he reacted after receiving the long awaited news that he was being inducted. “It was surreal. I immediately called my wife, Enola Gay, and later shared the information with my closet friends and relatives. To reach the pinnacle of one’s career, and to be honored for it, is truly a blessing. I am indeed thankful.” After graduating high school in 1967, Gilmore came to Boiling Springs, N.C., and helped lead Gardner-Webb College to back to back national tournament appearances in ’67-’68 and ’68-’69, and to stunning victories like the team’s home win over a North Carolina team led by current UNC Head Coach Roy Williams. Gilmore dominated the paint like no other post player in school history, averaging a double-double during his tenure and finishing his career at Gardner-Webb with 1,530 points (22.5 points per game) and 1,150 rebounds (16.9 rebounds per game).

“When I think of the name Gardner-Webb, I think about the beginning years of my college career. It was my first time being in an integrated setting. Up until then, I had attended all black schools,” said Gilmore. Gardner-Webb also gave Gilmore one of the greatest gifts of his life. “I am immediately reminded of meeting my wife of 39 years, Enola Gay.” Gilmore gave his wife credit in his induction speech for being a Hall of Famer at home, taking care of the family while he was on the road. Gilmore and his wife have five children (3 daughters and 2 sons) and two twin grandchildren.

After two years at Gardner-Webb, Gilmore took his talents to Jacksonville (Fla.) University, where he led the Dolphins to the NCAA Title game in 1970, falling 80-69 to John Wooden’s UCLA squad. Today, Gilmore serves as special assistant to the president at Jacksonville, a position he has held for the past three years.

Gilmore will be remembered as a great basketball player and an even better man, but most of all, Gilmore is a strong Christian. “Without a doubt, I would not be where I am today without my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He has ordered my steps from the very beginning of my life, and continues to lead me every single day.” What a ride, “A Train” – what a ride.