

LOCAL LEGEND NORTON BARNHILL UNLEASHES

Local basketball legend Norton Barnhill is easily one of the greatest basketball players to come from Winston-Salem. It's easy to immediately name some of the younger guys to play in the city when discussing some of the best.

But it's hard to forget the serious skills that Barnhill played with in the early 70s. He's got to be one of the few athletes to letter in basketball at three different high schools (Anderson, Atkins and West Forsyth). In high school Barnhill averaged an amazing 33 points per game. He made all county, all-city, all-tournament and Frank Spencer award runner-up while in high school. He was also chosen as one of Street and Smith's Top 50 Blue Chip Players in the country coming out of high school.

He then went on to star at Washington State University, before a brief stint in the National Basketball Association. I enjoy talking with Barnhill because he's so intelligent. I like intelligent people, especially former and present athletes. He and I talked about a number of things during a very fun interview this week.

We talked about some of everything too. It's funny how this all started. I called Barnhill up to get his thoughts on something and ended up wanting to turn my recorder on. So, I asked him to do the interview with me. And, this is some of what we came up with on Tuesday evening.

Anthony: How are you doing today, Norton?

Norton: I'm doing well. I'm thankful to be alive.

Anthony: I hear you. (Smiles.) What did you think about that championship game on Monday night?

Norton: I think Kansas was, by far, the best team in the tournament. I picked Kansas to win. They have a complete team.

Anthony: Do you think the Memphis coach should've called a timeout down the stretch? I mean, his guys looked lost before Kansas hit that three to tie it up.

Norton: (Laughs.) I don't like criticizing my colleague, with me being a coach. But I would've called a timeout. Some coaches let their players play some situations out. But the coach wins the game during the last two minutes. There's certain things a coach sees that a player doesn't during that time. That's why you have a timeout.

Anthony: No doubt. Let me get your thoughts on the NBA MVP race. Do you believe they will give the MVP to Chris Paul this year?

Norton: Well, he would get my vote. He's gotten that team turned around. He's leading the league in assist. How was New Orleans doing before he got there?

Anthony: I don't think many people cared how they were doing before CP3.

Norton: Right. That's what I look at. I felt like Carmelo should've gotten Rookie of the Year over LeBron James. I like the way Carmelo plays. He brings energy. He can shoot. He can pass. He can run. He's definitely the future of the NBA. I've always liked his all-around game.

Anthony: OK. I released

the latest class of Winston-Salem high school hall of famers two weeks ago in an exclusive story. Some people have expressed their feelings on different people getting in before others. You're a hall of famer. What are your thoughts on the process?

Norton: If you excelled in high school, have been a role model and haven't done anything detrimental to your community then you should have a chance to be voted in. I'm not a part of the committee. But you have to read the criteria and see exactly what it says.

Anthony: That's the problem. So many people don't realize the criteria, or selection process. You have to fill out the application for consideration before anything can happen.

Norton: Right. When I first got back from Argentina, Walter Marshall wanted me to get in the hall of fame. I wasn't really up on it. He brought the application by my house. I never filled it out. You must fill it out. I don't care who you are.

Anthony: Would you admit that the coaching style of today is a lot easier than it used to be? Coaches have to be so nice nowadays. It's my way or the highway when I was in school.

Norton: Well, discipline is everything. A player can't play for me if he thinks he bigger than the team. I remember a lesson I learned back in the ninth grade. I was dunking two balls. I was reaching my hand over the square, so I thought I had arrived. Coach Williard Johnson was our ninth grade coach. Me and a friend of mine went to the bakery to get some buns. Somebody told coach. (Laughs.) He told us that we owe him 20 or 30 laps. I told him that I wasn't running any laps. He told me I wouldn't play. I told him that he needed me. We were undefeated, going for 10 games in a row. That was on a Monday. The game was on a Friday. I practiced all week, dressed on Friday and he didn't let me play. He taught me that no one is above the team.

Anthony: OK. I need to ask you for a Top 3 of Winston players of all time. Name three of the baddest ballers to come from Winston.

Norton: Hmm. Let me see. Herm Gilliam, Punch Scales. I can't say myself. I would have to say Edward Louis. I think his name was Edward Louis Hadom. Everybody will tell you he was phenomenal. He was unreal.

Anthony: (Smiles.) Who put up better numbers than Norton Barnhill, though?

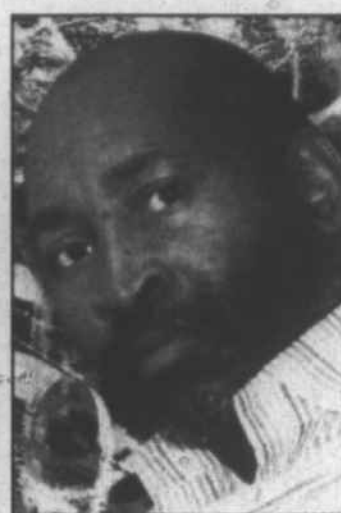
Norton: I mean, you don't pat yourself on the back. You let your peers do that. It's what the people say about you. If they think I was in the Top 5 or whatever then praise God. I don't know who else averaged 33 points per game in high school. If you want to look at it that way. I had a complete game.

Anthony: No doubt. Why aren't you a high school coach right now?

Norton: Maybe because I don't tolerate mess. What I say goes. Parents aren't allowed in my practice. I don't know. I really never applied for a high school job. You shouldn't have to apply for some things. You know a man who's from this town. I live here, coached here,



Photo courtesy of Norton Barnhill
Here, Norton Barnhill skies over a Washington State University player during his college days at WSU.



Barnhill

(Both laugh.) I really think some of the guys that have sons should ask me to help their kids get better.

Anthony: Do you want to be a personal basketball trainer?

Norton: I wouldn't mind having a school. Or, I'd love to have a gym where I can help kids refine their skills.

Anthony: Do you plan on playing in the 35-and-up tournament that you and Jug are putting on next month?

Norton: (Laughs.) No, no, no. Norton Barnhill doesn't run up and down the court anymore. I'm not running up and down that court. Norton Barnhill plays one-on-one. (Both laugh.) I'm taking all comers, one-on-one. I can beat anyone. The first one to 8.

Anthony: I hear that. Uh, what are you usually doing during the day? What are some of your hobbies?

Norton: I don't really have any hobbies. I'm always meditating on the all mighty God. I gave my life to God in 1988. I am always reading His word. I'm doing my art (www.nortonbarnhill.com). I'm waiting on an awesome purchase from my university. They

are rating my top three paintings they are going to put in the newly remodeled student union. I'm also waiting on a check from Miami. I love painting. I'm supposed to be doing a show downtown, during the later part of May and early part of June. Myself and Davida Galloway. We're going to call it the Color Collision. She's a wonderful artist. We always collaborate.

Anthony: What's your favorite thing to eat nowadays?

Norton: Gotta be my salmon. My wings. And, my three lettuce salad. Bake potato and some apple juice. I kind of like my cooking right now.

Anthony: I hear that. (Laughs.) Who's going to win the NBA coach of the year award?

Norton: Byron Scott.

Anthony: Who's going to win the NBA Finals?

Norton: Ooh, that's a toss up. It's not the National Basketball Association anymore. It's the NBA entertainment league. They may have someone they want to be the champion this year. I don't know. (Both laugh.) I like Boston, Detroit, Orlando and L.A., San Antonio, Utah Jazz or New Orleans. It's a toss up. They need to revamp the NBA a little bit.

Anthony: Yeah. They should put New Orleans in the East.

Norton: Definitely. You have six or eight teams on the West with basically the same record. Go on the East and see three or four teams with winning records. You hate to see Golden State or Denver not in the playoffs. Both of those teams are playing well. They're exciting. They definitely need to revamp this whole thing.

Anthony: Who's going to win the presidential election?

Norton: Ooh. My vote was going to be Gulliani. But he lost out.

Anthony: Why aren't you with Barack Obama?

Norton: Because he's black?

Anthony: No, just in general.

Norton: I mean, I kind of look at like this: Gulliani ran the state of New York as mayor. He

was the attorney general. I like his stance on terrorism. I know a lot of people don't like him, but that was my vote. I really don't know who's gonna win. We'll leave all of that in God's hands.

Anthony: What is your most memorable moment?

Norton: I actually have two. The best basketball game I've ever seen was Atkins against Parkland my junior year. We were down 23 points at halftime. Jessie Williams and Tyrone Baldwin put on a show. I think Jessie hit nine in a row after Tyrone scored eight in a row. We came back to beat Parkland. That was the best game I've ever seen in my life. We went on to lose to South Mecklenburg in the state finals. The other moment was when I played the University of Oregon when they were ranked 10th in the nation. They had just embarrassed UCLA. Then, they came in our gym. We were ranked 18th, and we crushed them.

Anthony: Oh, OK. Let's finish with free association.

Norton: OK.

Anthony: Norton Barnhill.

Norton: Uh, a lover of God.

Anthony: Avery Johnson (Dallas Maverick head coach).

Norton: How in the world did he not get drafted coming out of college?

Anthony: "Black Magic."

Norton: Awesome. Excellent. People need to know what the black man has been through in this country.

Anthony: Winston-Salem.

Norton: One of the best towns for basketball talent in the country.

Anthony: West Forsyth.

Norton: Where I finished my last year of high school.

Anthony: Josh Howard.

Norton: Great player. Could be an awesome player.

He needs to take my class during the summer.

Anthony: (Smiles.) One more for you. What would be a dream coaching job for you right now?

Norton: Atkins High on a high school level. And, Washington State University.

Anthony: That sounds good. I'll get with you later on.

Norton: OK, Anthony. I appreciate you.

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with Anthony Hill

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