

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ralph Sampson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Sampson, Ralph
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Sampson,
Dates:	July 14, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:56:26).
Abstract:	Basketball player Ralph Sampson (1960 -) was one of the most recruited college basketball players of all time. He won three Naismith Awards and an unprecedented two Wooden Awards in college, and was a four-time NBA All-Star with the Houston Rockets. Sampson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 14, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_073
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Basketball player Ralph Sampson was born on July 7, 1960 in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Standing at 7'4", he was born with a natural talent for basketball. Sampson attended Harrisonburg High School, where he led the basketball team to victory in two State AA Championships in 1978 and 1979. Sampson then went on to attend the University of Virginia, where he received his B.A. degree and played for the university's basketball team, the Cavaliers. During college, Sampson won three Naismith Awards for National Player of the Year and was only the second person to do so. He also received an unprecedented two Wooden Awards for

Player of the Year. In 1980, Sampson and the Cavaliers won the National Invitation Tournament. In 1981, the Cavaliers made it to the NCAA Final Four.

Referred to as the most recruited college basketball player of all time, Sampson was the first pick in the 1983 NBA draft. Drafted by the Houston Rockets, Sampson won the NBA Rookie of the Year Award and played in the NBA All-Star Game for the first of four times. In 1984, the Rockets drafted Hakeem Olajuwon and the two came to be known as the “Twin Towers,” an unstoppable basketball duo that played together in 1985’s NBA All-Star Game. Sampson was named MVP for that game, and earned a spot on the All-NBA Second Team. In 1986, Sampson injured his knee and was traded to the Golden State Warriors. He went on to play for the Sacramento Kings and the Washington Bullets. Unable to fully recover from several knee and back injuries, Sampson retired in 1992.

In 1996, Sampson was inducted into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame. In 2002, Sampson was named to the Atlantic Coast Conference 50th Anniversary Men’s Basketball Team, a position that honored him as one of the 50 best basketball players in the history of the ACC. Sampson founded The Sampson Group, a consulting group, in 2005. In 2006, he went on to found Winner’s Circle Community, an online community dedicated to providing a forum for open and informed communication. That same year, Sampson also founded the Winner’s Circle Foundation, an organization to help young athletes achieve success. In 2010, he published a book entitled *Winner’s Circle: The Ralph Sampson Game Plan; What Great Players Do Before, During and After the Game* to help young athletes mentally prepare for and achieve success.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ralph Sampson was conducted by Denise Gines on July 14, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Basketball player Ralph Sampson (1960 -) was one of the most recruited college basketball players of all time. He won three Naismith Awards and an unprecedented two Wooden Awards in college, and was a four-time NBA All-Star with the Houston Rockets.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Sampson, Ralph

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Sampson, Ralph--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Houston Rockets, Golden State Warriors

Occupations:

Basketball Player

HistoryMakers® Category:

SportsMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Sampson, July 14, 2010. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Sampson, Section
A2010_073_001_001, TRT: 0:29:00 2010/07/14

Ralph Sampson was born on July 7, 1960 in Harrisonburg, Virginia to Sarah Blakey Sampson and Ralph Sampson, Sr. During the 1920s, his maternal grandparents, Josephine Beasley Blakey and George Blakey, Sr., bought four hundred acres of farmland in Virginia for \$25,000. Sampson's mother was raised on the farm, and went on to become an accountant at the Metro Pants Company's denim factory in Virginia. Sampson's paternal grandfather, Hampton Sampson, worked at the Merck and Company pharmaceutical factory, and owned a well-appointed home in Harrisonburg's black community. He valued hard work, and delivered newspapers on a morning route until his elderly years. Sampson's father worked as an aluminum oxidizer at Harrisonburg's Kawneer factory, and later maintained a post in the city government. Sampson also remembers his paternal grandmother, Ruby Howard Sampson, who commissioned the local seamstresses to sew children's clothing that accommodated his tall stature.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Sampson, Section
A2010_073_001_002, TRT: 0:29:18 2010/07/14

Ralph Sampson was raised in all-black neighborhood in segregated Harrisonburg, Virginia. The neighborhood was very close-knit, and Sampson was well known in the community for his tall stature. He began his education at Harrisonburg's Waterman Elementary School; and, around that time, joined a Pony League baseball team. Sampson also studied piano, played in the school band and sang in the choir at his family's church. Eventually, his rapid

growth and lack of coordination led him to quit piano lessons and the baseball team. He participated in the band throughout his years at Harrisonburg's Thomas Harrison Junior High School, and switched instruments several times, until picking up the cymbals. Sampson continued to grow taller, and his parents, Sarah Blakey Sampson and Ralph Sampson I, and paternal grandmother, Ruby Howard Sampson, often worried that he was developing a medical condition. However, Sampson was always diagnosed as healthy, and continued to grow during high school and college.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Sampson, Section
A2010_073_001_003, TRT: 0:29:47 2010/07/14

Ralph Sampson began his basketball training under Coach James Kramer at Waterman Elementary School in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The local schools were recently desegregated, and Sampson played on integrated teams from the start of his career. After graduating from Harrisonburg's Thomas Harrison Junior High School, Sampson learned about basketball strategy from Coach Jack Smith. His abilities grew further under Harrisonburg High School's Coach Roger Bergey, who developed specialized training routines for Sampson, and sent him to summer basketball camps. By the end of his freshman year, Sampson was promoted from the junior varsity to the varsity basketball team. There was a rivalry between his team and Robert E. Lee High School in Staunton, Virginia, and their basketball games were held at college stadiums to accommodate the large crowds. At this time, Sampson was over seven feet tall; and, with Coach Bergey's guidance, he was heavily recruited by college teams during his junior and senior years.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Sampson, Section
A2010_073_001_004, TRT: 0:31:06 2010/07/14

Ralph Sampson graduated in 1979 from Harrisonburg High School in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Despite offers to join the NBA directly out of high school, Sampson prioritized his education; and, after visiting four college campuses, announced at a press conference that he planned to enroll at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia. While playing for the Virginia

Cavaliers, Sampson was invited several times to the National Invitation Tournament, the National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament and the NCAA Final Four tournament. He was also the first player to receive the Naismith Men's College Player of the Year Award for three years in a row. Sampson's success encouraged the university to construct a dedicated facility for the sports information department, with a larger staff to accommodate the growth. In 1983, Sampson completed his bachelor's degree, and was selected by the Houston Rockets as the first pick from the NBA draft.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Sampson, Section
A2010_073_001_005, TRT: 0:29:49 2010/07/14

Ralph Sampson was the first pick in the NBA draft of 1983. He was chosen by the Houston Rockets; and, despite the team's low grade, he learned a great deal from his senior teammates, like Elvin Hayes, Caldwell Jones, Tom Henderson and Major Jones. He describes the highlights of his career, including his buzzer-beating point against the Los Angeles Lakers in the Western Conference finals, as well as his participation in four NBA All-Star Weekends. Sampson met his wife, Aleize Dial Sampson, after losing the 1986 NBA Championship finals to the Boston Celtics. He was traded in 1987 to the Golden State Warriors, and traded again in 1989 to the Sacramento Kings. Sampson's ability to play was impeded by knee injuries, for which he underwent three surgeries. He played in the EuroLeague for six months, and then became a coach at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Sampson briefly returned to the NBA before his retirement in 1995.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Sampson, Section
A2010_073_001_006, TRT: 0:27:26 2010/07/14

Ralph Sampson played basketball in the EuroLeague for six months, and then moved back to the United States, where he became a coach at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He briefly returned to the NBA to play with the Phoenix Suns, before retiring permanently. At this point in the interview, Sampson remembers playing against Michael Jordan in the Atlantic Coast Conference, and again as a member of the Houston Rockets. Sampson

also played against Patrick Ewing in a National Collegiate Athletic Association game. After retiring from basketball, Sampson studied at the University of Virginia Darden School of Business in order to improve his management of Ralph Sampson Sportswear, Inc., which distributed licensed sports apparel. He also founded the Winner's Circle Foundation, a youth program based in Atlanta, Georgia that focused on achievement in academics and sports. Sampson also collaborated with Coach Koran Godwin to write a book called 'Winner's Circle, The Ralph Sampson Game Plan.'