

Kernersville native shifts basketball career to scouting

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After years of playing and coaching professional basketball Kernersville's Darrell Hairston is moving on to the next stage of his career in the sport as an NCAA scout for Pro Skills Sports Management (PSSM) in Los Angeles, California.

For Hairston, becoming a basketball scout was a natural progression and is something he has always wanted to do.

"This is a dream come true for me, It is something I wanted to pursue. Scouting has always been a passion of mine. I enjoy analyzing players strengths and weaknesses and watching players skills develop, Getting paid to be a scout is a dream come true," said Hairston.

His background as a player and as a coach and his basketball knowledge will help Hairston as a scout. Hairston was an assistant coach with former Georgia tech and Orlando Magic star Dennis Scott and was an assistant coach for the Continental Basketball Association's Atlanta Krunk. Hairston was the assistant coach for former Georgia Tech and NBA star Kenny Anderson. Hairston played collegiately at Temple College and played professionally for Leone, France in 1984 through 1990.

Fortunately for Hairston, the area he will be covering as a scout includes four of the top six conferences in college basketball.

"I will be scouting players in the ACC, SEC, PAC 10 and Big East. I will be evaluating seniors and underclassmen in those four conferences and minor league professional players. The season does not start until November but practices start Oct. 15. I'll be going to practices at Georgia Tech, the University of Georgia and Georgia State. Then I will go to practices at Kentucky, Louisville and Florida. I will also be going to four practices at UCLA. There will be three to four months of travel for the job and I'll be going to the ACC Tournament in March and then the PAC 10 Tournament."

As a scout, Hairston will be paid by commission. However, while signing players to pro contracts is crucial for the business, Hairston stated that for his boss, PSSM CEO Lauren Watkins, the character of the players is just as important as their basketball skills.

"We want kids that have upside and potential for the company. But we are also looking for kids with character; kids that will make the right decisions and kids that are student-athletes," Hairston said. "Lauren is not about just signing players to make money. He wants players with character. He (Watkins) is one of the best basketball trainers in the world and he played at San Diego State and played professionally as well. He knows the game inside and out and I have learned a lot from him in the last two months."

Currently, Pro Skills Sports Management represents a number of players in the NBA, various European professional leagues and the WNBA. Some of the more notable players represented by PSSM include NBA standouts Ben Gordon, Chris Duhon, Kevin Love, Antonio McDyess and Michael Westbrook.

Another player that could be represented in the future by PSSM is Wake Forest standout Al-Farouq Aminu. Aminu was projected to be a first round pick in the last NBA draft if he had declared himself eligible. According to Hairston, Aminu is an example of a player who will help himself in the long run by not going pro right away.

"I have been working with Aminu in Atlanta in the skills academy since the eighth grade. After last season he asked me if he should go into the draft. I told him to stay in school, work on your game and work on your education. Right now he is projected to be a top 10 lottery pick in the 2010 NBA draft," Hairston said.

Another perk to the scouting job for Hairston is that will allow him to continue to keep working with youth basketball players in the Atlanta area through his DH Hoops program. Roughly 90 youth players age five to 15 participate in the DH Hoops program.

"I love working with the kids and helping them with life itself. People like my father (William Hairston) and my brother (William Hairston Jr.) were role models in my life and they were there for me. They showed me the right way of doing things and this (the DH Hoops program) is my way of giving back," Hairston said. "I don't want them to fall into the same traps I did. The little kids are great. You just have to put a little more time and effort into teaching them the fundamentals."