

Scott Hastings

Arkansas basketball star center of attraction

by Frank L. Christlieb
Sports Editor

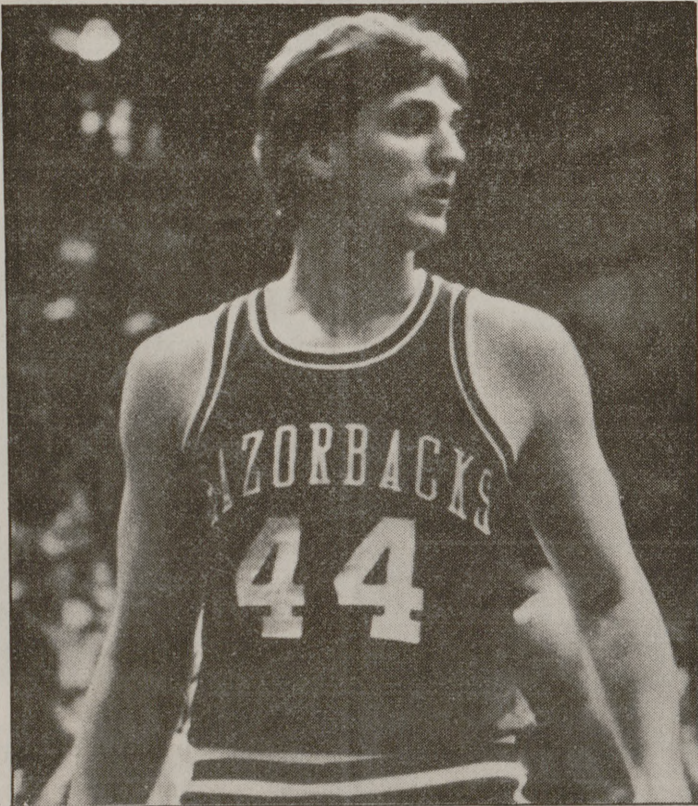


Photo by Todd Woodard

Arkansas Razorback center Scott Hastings walks down court during his team's 64-63 victory Tuesday night over Texas A&M. Hastings has had a brilliant career since starting college four years ago, leading the team in scoring for each of the past three seasons.

able as any he's had. Playing against Indiana State's Larry Bird, now with the Boston Celtics, stands out in his mind as one of the most memorable events. Hastings and his Arkansas teammates lost to Bird and the Sycamores in the NCAA regionals during his freshman year.

Hastings also recalled last year's half-court shot by U.S. Reed to defeat the Louisville Cardinals in the NCAA tournament.

Although many basketball followers classify him as a "dirty" player, Hastings doesn't agree with their assessments. It was Hastings whom most people blamed for an outbreak of fists and tempers during last season's Arkansas 65-61 win over Texas A&M in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

"The two games I really got a lot of puff about were the Texas A&M game last year and one of the Texas games," Hastings said. "I don't know why people have said that about me. I always play hard, but I never felt like I'd given anyone an unjust elbow or anything. I mean, I'm the one who never weighed much, and I'm the guy who would get the broken bones if I hit the floor."

Hastings said he has confidence that the Razorbacks are still in the thick of the Southwest Conference race.

"We feel that if we can win some on the road, we're going to have a real good chance," Hastings said. "People were saying that we never had been tested in going down to the wire — they really didn't think that we could."

After the Razorback's last-second wins over Houston and Texas A&M during the past four days, no one should say that anymore.

Many college basketball players dream of someday playing on the professional level. But Scott Hastings, the University of Arkansas' 6-10 senior center, has a jump on his fellow athletes.

"I can always remember playing basketball in the back yard with all my friends when I was in fifth and sixth grade," Hastings said Tuesday. "I had real close friend named Craig Null, and we used to play all the time. We used to call our league the NBA — the Null Basketball Association."

That might not be the jump needed to move successfully into the pro ranks, but with the credentials Hastings has accumulated since beginning his Razorback career, he might not need a head start. Since his entrance into Arkansas basketball four years ago during superstar Sidney Moncrief's senior year, Hastings has noticed a big difference in himself.

"We were watching some films the other day from my freshman year, and they were really kind of funny," Hastings said. "I was really skinny back then."

At the start of his first year at Arkansas, Hastings was 6-9 and weighed only 185 pounds. Since that time, the public relations major has added one inch and 50 pounds to his frame, making him a formidable obstacle in the path of any opponent meeting him on the basketball court.

"I like competition," Hastings said. "I feel like I'm a competitive guy, especially with the (winning) situation at the University of Arkansas."

"When you get letters from little kids who say 'hey, we think you're great,' it really motivates you."

Hastings, the Razorback scoring leader each of the past three years, said that basketball was once a nearly unknown sport in the football-oriented state of Arkansas. However, he said, when Coach Eddie Sutton arrived at UA eight seasons ago, the sport began to gain recognition.

"When Coach Sutton came, people became more aware of college and high school basketball, and became more in-

terested in it," Hastings said.

Hastings said he'd like to play in the NBA, but he stresses that he's concentrating only on the Razorbacks' season now.

"Anytime anyone gets serious about basketball, he wants to go as far as he can," Hastings said. "People say 'you're great and you're going to play in the pros,' but you really have to keep everything in perspective and do what's best for you and your team."

He added that the luck dominates in the world of professional basketball.

"It's really a luck thing," Hastings said. "You can be a very good player and get drafted by a team that doesn't really need

you. You just have to get lucky."

Hastings said Moncrief was a great inspiration to him, and that the NBA star "typifies everything you would want out of a basketball player."

Hastings said his experiences at Arkansas have been as valu-

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