



EVERETT SHELTON

– FATHER OF COWBOY BASKETBALL

The tradition and history of University of Wyoming Cowboy Basketball has its roots in its greatest coach — Everett Shelton.

Shelton coached the Wyoming Cowboys for 19 seasons from the 1939-40 season through the 1958-59 campaign. He led the Cowboys through their most successful period, highlighted by Wyoming's 1943 NCAA Championship. Coach Shelton ended his UW coaching career having won more games, 328, than any other Poke basketball coach. His all-time coaching record at UW stands at 328-201 (.620).

During his tenure at Wyoming, Shelton captured eight conference championships in: 1941, '43, '46, '47, '49, '52, '53 and '58. He also led the Cowboys to eight NCAA appearances in 1941, '43, '47, '48, '49, '52, '53 and '58.

He arrived in the Rockies in 1936 when William N. Haraway lured Shelton to Denver to coach the Denver Safeway AAU team. Haraway had attempted to hire another college-coaching legend, Henry Iba of Oklahoma A&M (now Oklahoma State). When Iba turned down the offer, he suggested Haraway hire Shelton.

"You couldn't obtain a better coach, including myself," said Iba. At the time, Shelton was coaching his alma mater, Phillips University in Enid, Okla.

In only his second season, Shelton led the Denver Safeway team to its first AAU National Championship in the 1937-38 season. He coached the Colorado Springs Antlers Hotel AAU team in 1938-39 prior to taking the head job at Wyoming.

A great teacher of the game, Shelton is credited with developing the five-man weave offense in 1932. Three of his former players followed him as head coach of the Cowboy Basketball program — Bill Strannigan (1959-60 to 1972-73), who succeeded his mentor; Moe Radovich (1973-74 to 1975-76); and Benny Dees (1987-88 to 1992-93).

Dees was a member of Shelton's final conference championship team at Wyoming and the final Shelton-coached team at Wyoming to make the NCAA Tournament in 1958. Dees has fond memories of Coach Shelton.

"He was one of the greatest disciplinarians I've ever been around, and his self-discipline was extremely strong," said Dees. "He was an immaculate dresser. He did everything by the numbers. He was a very, very strong personality, and was a tremendous influence on helping me decide what I wanted to do in my life. I thought the world of him.

"His teams were very structured, in the Hank Iba mold. He ran what he called a box-weave offense, and you better have the right foot in the right place at the right time if you wanted to play for him. He was way ahead of his time as a basketball coach.

"When I came here, I was one of those unstructured junior-college players who aggravate me now. I can remember the first practice I played in here. One of my teammates got the rebound and kicked the ball out to me. I took off down the court, and I could hear Coach Shelton hollering, 'Somebody stop him, gear him down.' My two years playing under him were up and down. But as time went by and after I left, I found out how special I was to him and how much he meant to me. When I graduated, I could have stayed here at Wyoming as freshmen coach. Probably the biggest mistake I ever made was not staying with him as freshmen coach. He also offered me a job later, after he left Wyoming and was at Sacramento State.

"When I came, he was winding down his career here. We were very aware, as players, of the respect he had from the Wyoming fans. And when you would travel with him and would see the great respect he had from other coaches, you knew you were playing for someone special. He was such a good man."

Shelton's involvement in college athletics also included serving as President of the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) and as Commissioner of the Far Western Conference. He was also instrumental as a fundraiser for the construction of Wyoming's War Memorial Fieldhouse and Stadium. In addition to coaching basketball, Shelton served as UW's baseball coach for several seasons.

Shelton, who died on April 16, 1974, was posthumously honored with the highest honor in basketball in 1980 when he was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass. A former player of his, the legendary Curt Gowdy, was inducted as a broadcaster and has an annual Media Award named after him. University of Wyoming graduate and former Los Angeles Lakers owner Jerry Buss is also in the Naismith Hall of Fame.



SHELTON