



GET THE TROPHY AND ADVANCE.

The **Cleo Hill Game** is one of five games to be participated in the first round of The Basketball Classic presented by Eracism, with the winner receiving a trophy and advancing to the second round of the tournament.

“These five games are one of the unique aspects of our tournament,” said Gary Stewart, President of Eracism. “Student-athletes have an opportunity to raise a trophy and advance to the second round. It also gives players, fans, and the media an opportunity to learn more about some of the legends of our game like Zelmo Beaty, Travis Grant, Marques Haynes, Cleo Hill and Willis Reed. These men were giants in the history of the game.”

Elite athleticism, a deadly jump shot and crafty hooks with either hand enabled Cleo Hill to be the eighth overall pick in the 1961 NBA Draft. He was the fifth black player ever chosen in the first round.

In four seasons at Winston Salem Teachers College (1957-61), the native of Newark, N.J. averaged an impressive 25.4 points per game, making him the second-highest scorer in program history at the school known today as Winston Salem State. Playing for the legendary Clarence “Big House” Gaines, Hill helped the Rams to consecutive Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association titles in his final two seasons.

Gaines described Hill as “the most complete player he ever coached.” The longtime Final Four broadcaster Billy Packer called Hill the “forerunner to David Thompson and Michael Jordan.” Packer is qualified to make the claim because he played at neighboring Wake Forest during the same era and they frequently played pickup games against the players from Winston Salem Teachers College.

"What Billy and his teammates and Cleo and his teammates did was unofficially integrate Winston-Salem," Gaines said in his book, 'They Call Me Big House.' "I don't think a single one of them was ever supervised or even witnessed by a coach."

Black players were prohibited from competing in the Atlantic Coast Conference at the time however Packer had no doubt Hill would've been a star in the league.

Hill poured in 26 points in his NBA debut in a game against Oscar Robertson and the Cincinnati Royals. But his career in the league ended after one year because of the segregated culture within the St. Louis Hawks franchise.

"It wasn't racial," Hill told The Newark Star-Ledger in 2008. "It was points. They never said anything to me. But they knew they were getting paid for the points they scored. And here I was, taking their points."

After toiling for six years in two basketball minor leagues, he returned home and coached 24 seasons at Essex County College, winning 489 games.

Hill, a two-time All-CIAA selection and first-team NAIA All-American as a senior in 1961, ranks second on the school's career scoring list behind Earl "The Pearl" Monroe.

The Cleo Hill Award is presented annually to the college basketball player with the highest per-game assist average.



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The **Willis Reed Game** is one of five games to be participated in the first round of The Basketball Classic presented by Eracism, with the winner receiving a trophy and advancing to the second round of the tournament.

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Basketball fans of a certain era recall Willis Reed as the captain and interior force of the New York Knicks. The iconic image of Reed hobbling down the tunnel from the locker room to the court in game 7 of the 1970 NBA finals, leading the franchise to a world championship.

During that series, Reed averaged 31 points per game in the first four games against the Los Angeles Lakers but tore a thigh muscle in the fourth quarter of game five. Led by one of the strongest triumvirates in NBA history - Wilt Chamberlain, Jerry West and Elgin Baylor - the Lakers capitalized on Reed's absence and rolled in game six.

In the decisive game seven in New York, the Knicks departed the locker room pregame unsure if their center would join them on the court. Reed appeared, rousing the Madison Square Garden crowd, scored the Knicks second basket and the team cruised to the championship.

A smooth, strong lefthander, Reed was the first player to be named MVP of the All-Star Game, regular season and NBA Finals, accomplishing the feat during the magical 1970 season. Chronic knee injuries forced Reed to retire in 1974.

Before he arrived in the NBA, however, Reed dominated in college during an era when black players were prohibited from competing in the Southeastern or Atlantic Coast Conference.

During four seasons at Grambling State University (1960–1964), Willis Reed helped the Tigers to three Southwestern Athletic Conference championships and an NAIA National Championship in 1961. Known for his inside presence, the two-time All-American also had a lethal jump shot. In his senior season he averaged 26.6 points and 21.3 rebounds per game.

In January, Grambling State retired the 79-year-old Reed's No. 50 uniform and also named its homecourt inside the Frank C. Hobdy Assembly Center in his honor.

The Willis Reed Award is given annually to the best rebounder in college basketball on a per-game average basis.

Reed, a 6-10 center, was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1982. He was selected as one of the 50 Greatest Players in NBA History in 1986 and named to the league's 75th Anniversary Team in 2021.



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The **Travis Grant Game** is one of five games to be participated in the first round of The Basketball Classic presented by Eracism, with the winner receiving a trophy and advancing to the second round of the tournament.

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Known as the “Machine Gun,” Travis Grant starred on three consecutive NAIA National Championship teams in four seasons at Kentucky State University (1968-72).

He earned his nickname in the opening game of his college career. After sitting out the first half against Campbell College, Grant made 10 consecutive shots in the second half. As a sophomore he set a school single-game record with 75 points and averaged 35.4 per game while shooting a ridiculous 70% from the field.

Grant set, and still holds, numerous NAIA tournament records, including: most career points (518); highest points-per-game average (34.5); most points in a single tournament (213, in 1972); and most points in a single game (60, against Minot State (N.D.) in 1972).

"Back in that era, the NAIA tournament was very well-respected," Grant told ESPN.com in 2008. "It would sell out every year and there were always top NBA draft choices playing for the title. It wasn't like it is now. It was recognized as some of the best competition going."

Grant and his teammates were the best basketball team in the state of Kentucky in the early 1970s. "Sometimes, on Sundays, we'd make the trip over to Lexington to play some pickup games there (against the University of Kentucky team) in their rec center. There was no question that we were the better team," he said.

He never shot less than 60 percent in any of his four seasons. As a senior he averaged 39.5 points per game and became the first small college player to win the Lapchick Trophy for College Basketball Player of the Year award. He graduated as the all-time and all-division scoring leader in college basketball history with 4,045 points.

The Los Angeles Lakers drafted Grant in the first round of the NBA Draft in 1972. He played alongside Wilt Chamberlain, Gail Goodrich, Pat Riley and Jerry West. From 1973-76, Grant played for several franchises in the American Basketball Association.

After retiring from pro basketball, Grant earned his undergraduate and master's degree from West Georgia University and spent 30 years as a teacher, coach and administrator.

The Travis Grant Award will be presented annually to the player with the highest per-game scoring average.



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The **Zelmo Beaty Game** is one of five games to be participated in the first round of The Basketball Classic presented by Eracism, with the winner receiving a trophy and advancing to the second round of the tournament.

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Zelmo Beaty was a relentless force at both ends of the floor during his career at Prairie View A&M University (1958–1962), averaging 25 points and 20 rebounds per game in four seasons.

Big Z” was a two-time first team NAIA All-American and led the Panthers to an NAIA National Championship in 1962, earning MVP honors in the tournament and setting the record for rebounds with 96.

The third overall pick in that year’s NBA Draft, Beaty played 12 seasons of professional ball in the NBA and ABA, averaging at least 20 points per game in five seasons. The 6-9 center scored more than 15,000 points and grabbed nearly 10,000 rebounds in his pro career. He and Willis Reed (Grambling) are the only former Southwestern Athletic Conference players in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

During his time in the fledgling ABA, he served as the players union president and played in three All-Star games, helping the Utah Stars to the championship in 1971. He also coached the Virginia Squires for 42 games in the 1975-76 season.

"He was a banger," former Indiana Pacers coach Bob "Slick" Leonard said. "He was not only physically tough, but mentally tough, too. At the same time, he played the game with dignity and grace. His play demanded respect."

A bruiser around the basket, Beaty played in perhaps the greatest era for professional centers, battling against Wilt Chamberlain, Bill Russell, Artis Gilmore and others who towered four or five inches over him. He used a mid-range jump shot, toughness and leaping ability to offset the height disadvantage and average a double-double.

"From the waist up, he was about as strong as you could get," teammate John Bailey said. "Nobody was going to push him around."

"Zelmo was big and strong and nasty," according to former Utah Jazz coach Jerry Sloan. "The kind of guy you wanted on your team."

Beaty was named to the NAIA's 50th & 75th Anniversary Teams and has also been inducted into the NAIA Hall of Fame and the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame.

He died of cancer in 2013 at the age of 73.

The Zelmo Beaty Award is given annually to the nation's leader in total blocked shots.



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The **Marques Haynes Game** is one of five games to be participated in the first round of The Basketball Classic presented by Eracism, with the winner receiving a trophy and advancing to the second round of the tournament.

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A wizard with the basketball, Marques Haynes enjoyed an outstanding career at Langston University (1942–1946). During his four seasons, the Lions recorded an incredible 112-3 record, which included a 59-game winning streak.

The 6-foot point guard from Oklahoma led Langston in scoring all four years and was a four-time All-Conference selection. He attended the school initially on a \$25 church scholarship.

In 1946 Haynes and Langston upset the Harlem Globetrotters in an exhibition game. One year later Haynes was part of the famed Globetrotters.

Playing for the Globetrotters, Meadowlark Lemon's Bucketees and the barnstorming team he founded, the Harlem Magicians, Haynes played in more than 12,000 basketball games in 100 countries, traveling more than four million miles. He could dribble a basketball three times per second and no more than two inches off the floor.

Despite never playing in the NBA, in 1998 Haynes became the first Harlem Globetrotter inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

“A guy asked me a long time ago if I ever thought I’d get into the NBA Hall of Fame,” Haynes told a reporter in 2007. “You know what my answer was at that time? This was just four or five years before I retired. My answer was: ‘The world is my Hall of Fame.’”

He also was enshrined in five other Halls of Fame and the court at Langston is named in his honor.

“The game of basketball has lost one of its most iconic figures,” Globetrotters CEO Kurt Schneider said in 2015 when Haynes passed away at the age of 89. “Marques was a pioneer, helping pave the way for people of all races to have opportunities to play basketball and for the sport to explode on a global scale. His unique and groundbreaking style of play set the tone for modern basketball as we know it; anyone involved with basketball worldwide is indebted to Marques. He was the consummate Globetrotter.”

The Marques Haynes Award will be presented annually to the player with the most total steals in college basketball.



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