



GET THE TROPHY AND ADVANCE.

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.

“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.”

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.



ERACISM

ESPN+

ERACISM4EVER.COM