

BY STEVEN LEVENTHAL

Fond Memories

NOW 16 YEARS REMOVED FROM HIS COLLEGE CAREER, ANTAWN JAMISON'S TAR HEEL ROOTS REMAIN STRONG.

Antawn Jamison is willing to do whatever it takes, after 16 years in the National Basketball Association. Even if that means sitting on the bench for the first 14 games of the 2013 NBA season. That's just what he did for the Los Angeles Clippers, the sixth team Jamison has played for in a productive career in which he's averaged nearly 19 points per game.

The 37-year-old native of Louisiana, who attended high school in Charlotte, has also logged court time with Golden State, Dallas, Washington, Cleveland, and the other residents of the Staples Center, the LA Lakers.

His current coach, Doc Rivers, is quick to note Jamison's value to his new club. "He's been great for us," says Rivers. "Just his voice on the bench. Watching, coming to us, and seeing things. Not just for me, but for everybody."

Jamison has also taken a UNC rookie player under his tutelage. Reggie Bullock offers these thoughts. "He's always somebody that I can call and ask him about anything. We joke and laugh together, so it's always good to have somebody like that, who's played in the league a lot of years."

Jamison is now a vital part of the Clippers' second unit, giving star Blake Griffin valuable rest time, while clocking a solid 16 minutes a game. Although his pro career has not been as superlative as his college days, Jamison can take pride in two All-Star game selections, a Sixth Man award, and being named to the All-Rookie second team on his resume.

Recently, Jamison talked at length about his professional longevity, and reflected on his days at UNC, where he was the national player of the year in 1998, and one of only seven Tar Heels to have their number retired by Carolina Basketball.

How have you been able to stay in the NBA for 16 years?

I've always remained positive. I still love it. I do a great job as far as taking care of my body. The man up above has blessed me with 16 great years, and he still sees it fit for me to go out there and run up and down the court with these young guys. It's just a testament to me being positive and me just working on my craft,

and always never taking anything for granted. Just enjoying the moment.

Were there other schools recruiting you?

My biggest thing is that I wanted to stay close to home. My parents were in Charlotte. So I wanted them to also have the opportunity to come and see a lot of games. The ACC kind of worked out. Carolina, Duke, NC State, South Carolina, and Georgia Tech were some of the few [schools] that really piqued my interest. But once I met Coach [Dean] Smith and Coach [Bill] Guthridge, and saw the campus at Carolina, it was a no-brainer after that.

What was it like playing for Dean Smith?

It was unbelievable. It's been 16 years for me. Definitely, the best coach I ever played for. If it wasn't for him, I probably wouldn't be where I am now. He taught me a lot, especially at that stage of my life, where I was a young man, and trying to become a man. He just emphasized a lot of the characteristics that I have now, and some of the things that I involve my family with as well. Away from basketball, unbelievable, as far as the knowledge that I gained from him. On the court, just having the trust, and making me believe that I can be a special player on and off the court. Definitely, one of my favorite persons of all time. Like I said, without him I definitely wouldn't have accomplished a lot of things I've accomplished.

How difficult is it to hear about Smith's current health issues?

It is tough. If anybody knows Coach Smith, this guy can remember faces, things that happened 20 years or 30 ago like it was yesterday. It's unfortunate the things that have taken place, but he still gets all the love from his players, from family and friends. We all wish him the best. It's been tough the last couple of years not being able to see him and having Coach Smith around like that.

Tell me about your friendship with Vince Carter.



beat you. Just the tradition and the history that I was representing, I couldn't ask for anything more. The things you want to be a part of in college, camaraderie and friendship. I'm still great friends with just about everybody on that team. Those are the things that you want to accomplish in college, and those are the things that I did accomplish, but that first time putting the uniform on and representing North Carolina. It's an unbelievable feeling.

What about the last time you had to put on the uniform?

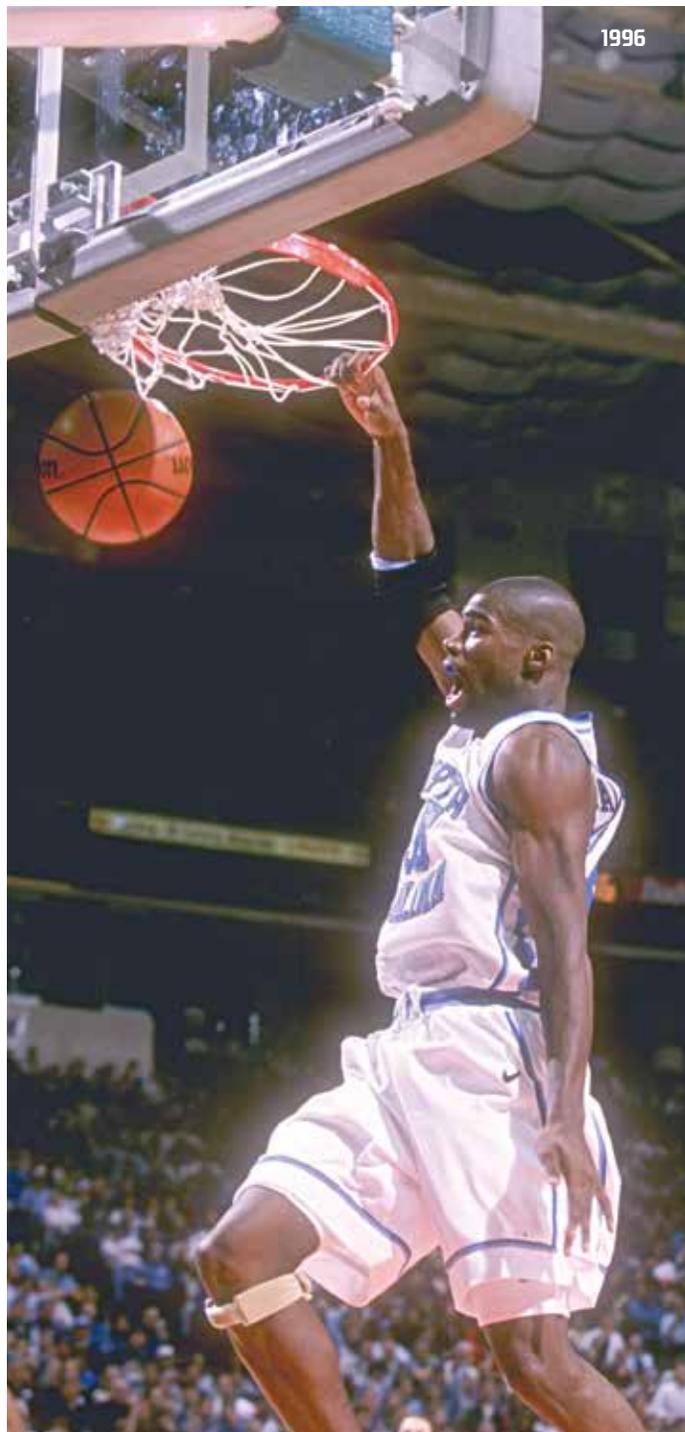
I remember that too. It was the Final Four in San Antonio. We lost to Utah. I didn't know if it was going to be my last time. But I remember after we lost, kissing the floor and just saying, "If this is the last time, then college basketball has been great to me," and I had an unbelievable year that year. Just everything about my college experience, I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. To see the smile I put on my mom and dad's face every time I wore that uniform. And then, to go back and get my degree. I've been truly blessed. Carolina had a lot to do with that. Helping me become the type of man that I wanted to become, and the type of individual that I wanted to be on the court and off the court as well.

Speaking of uniforms, there are a lot of jerseys hanging in the rafters at the Dean Dome. But there aren't that many retired jerseys. What was it like to have your number retired?

It's almost like a dream. When you think of all the guys that have come through Carolina, I mean, James Worthy and George Lynch. Just every individual that has come through Carolina, and to have my number in that front row, as far as being retired. I remember two years ago, during the NBA lockout, I was able to take my older son to a basketball game, and he's sitting there and looking at the Jamison retired jersey. You can't write it any better than that. No matter how many years down the road, no matter what. To see that the jersey will be up there forever. It's a testament to my hard work and dedication I put into my time there. It's unbelievable, to know that those three years were what molded me into where I'm at right now. Whenever I forget something I always can look up into the rafters and see that jersey and all the memories will come back. Just the good times we had at Carolina.

What's a good memory that took place off the court?

The relationship I had with my teammates. My freshman year, me, Ademola, and Vince coming in together with Shammond Williams. Dante Calabria and Jeff McInnis were already there. Again, making the transition with Brendan Haywood and Ed Cota. I'm still good friends with all of those guys. Nothing has changed. Those are the fondest memories. Going to the Smith Center at three o'clock at night and playing basketball. Always traveling with those guys. I remember going to the Great Alaska Shootout and taking a dog sled ride. Those are the memories you cherish. And those are the memories off the court. It wasn't the parties or anything like that. It was spending time with my teammates and knowing that we had that one common bond, wearing the uniform and trying to represent the university the right way, and trying to win games.



What was the adjustment like going to the NBA?

It was tough. It was a lockout year. I remember that. It was tough for me because I didn't get to play much. It was tough to see Vince have all his success, while I struggled. It was the first time that I ever doubted that I had what it took to be successful, and that I had what it took to be a professional athlete. I went back to Carolina and worked out with Coach Smith with the staff. Working on my craft gave me that confidence that I can become the same kind of player I was in college.

No matter if you play four years or one year, it's a big adjust-

