

# LEGENDS

## HONORING THE GREATS OF THE GAME

### SAM MITCHELL

#### **Mercer University Player (1981-85)**

Sam Mitchell is, arguably, the greatest player in the history of Mercer basketball. He is second on the school's career scoring list (finishing his collegiate career with 1,986 points) and was the 1985 Atlantic Sun Conference Player of the Year. He led Mercer to the 1985 A-Sun championship and a berth in the NCAA Tournament against nationally-ranked Georgia Tech.

When he left Mercer, Mitchell was the Bears' leader in scoring (career and season, 774), field goals (career, 768, and season, 294), free throws (season, 186), and free throw attempts (season, 248) and still holds all but the career scoring mark to this day.

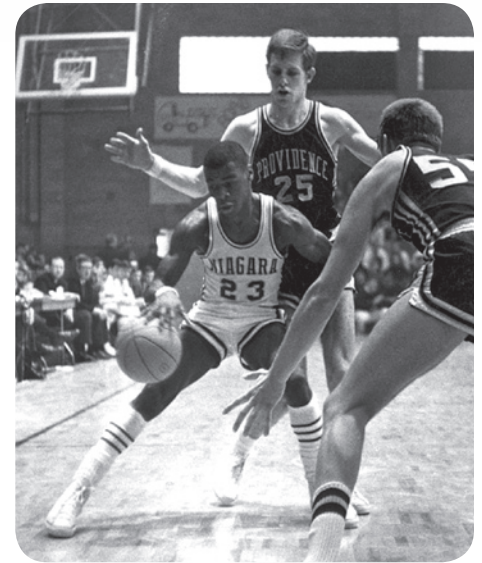
Mitchell was drafted in the third round (54th overall) by the Houston Rockets in the 1985 NBA Draft. He began his NBA career in 1989 as a free agent with the expansion Minnesota Timberwolves, but before entering the NBA, he paid his dues, playing three years in the CBA where he helped the Rapid City (S.D.) Thrillers to a championship, and overseas in France's top professional league for two seasons (1987-89).

Mitchell split his NBA playing career between the Minnesota Timberwolves and Indiana Pacers. He appeared in 994 regular season games and 59 postseason contests. He posted averages of 8.7 points, 3.7 rebounds, and 1.1 assists. He ranks second all-time in Timberwolves' history behind only Kevin Garnett in games played with 757 and second with 7,161 points, 1,773 free throws, 2,664 field goals, 3,030 rebounds, and 449 steals.

Following his playing career, Mitchell went into coaching as an assistant under George Karl with the Milwaukee Bucks and Charlotte Bobcats before being named the sixth head coach of the Toronto Raptors in 2005 (serving in that capacity until 2008). Mitchell was the 2006-07 NBA Coach of the Year after leading Toronto to its first-ever Atlantic Division title and a franchise-record tying 47 wins.

Early this year, Mitchell returned to the NBA when he joined new New Jersey Nets head coach Avery Johnson's staff as an assistant. In 2010, Mitchell was inducted in the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame.

As a junior, he set the national scoring mark against a Division I opponent with 68 points in a 118-110 win over Syracuse. The scoring effort still ranks third in NCAA history. He finished the year third in the nation in scoring at 32.4 points per game and had already set the Niagara career scoring mark. He earned first-team positions on 13 different All-America teams.



### CALVIN MURPHY

#### **Niagara University Player (1967-70)**

Calvin Murphy has become synonymous with Niagara basketball. The 5-9 guard from Norwalk, Conn., came to Niagara after a renowned high school career that included three all-state selections and two All-America honors. He averaged 49.8 points for the Niagara freshmen, playing before capacity crowds in the Student Center.

As a sophomore, he broke the Niagara single game scoring record in his first varsity game with 41 points against Long Island and went on to average 38.2 points per game, second in the nation and third-best in NCAA history to that point. The average still ranks eighth-best all-time. He was selected to the Associated Press second-team and the United Press International (UPI), U.S. Basketball Writers Association, and Converse Yearbook All-America first-teams.

His senior season, Murphy led Niagara to 20 wins and its first NCAA Tournament appearance and a first round upset of Pennsylvania. Murphy averaged 29.4 points per game in his final season and finished with 2,548 points in his three-year career, the fifth-highest total in major college history at that point. His career scoring average of 33.2 points per game still ranks fourth in NCAA history behind Pete Maravich (LSU), Austin Carr (Notre Dame), and Oscar Robertson (Cincinnati).

Murphy was a second round draft choice of the Houston Rockets, where he played for 13 seasons, setting the Houston career records for points (17,949), games played (1,002), assists (4,402), and steals (1,165). More than 20 years later, he still holds the franchise assists record and ranks second in the other three categories.

Niagara and the Rockets have retired his number 23. He was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1993 and the Niagara Athletics Hall of Fame in 1975.

