

Legends of the Game

PERRY WALLACE ★ VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY ★ PLAYER (1968-70)

Perry Wallace made history by becoming the first African-American scholarship basketball player in Southeastern Conference history before advancing to a successful career in law.

Wallace attended Nashville's Pearl High School and was a star on its undefeated state championship basketball team, the first year Tennessee integrated its high school tournament. He was recruited by approximately 80 universities, mostly located in the north, but Vanderbilt head coach Roy Skinner was able to convince Wallace that both the timing and the Commodores were right for him.

Wallace arrived on Vanderbilt's campus in the fall of 1966 and overcame the adversity associated with social trailblazers to become one of the Commodores' finest student-athletes and, later, one of its most distinguished alumni.

Forty-one years later, he still is the school's second leading rebounder with 894 career caroms and ranks 39th in scoring with 1,010 points despite playing just three varsity seasons from 1968-70. Freshmen were not eligible to play with the varsity during that era.



He led Vanderbilt in rebounding all three of his varsity seasons, hauling down 10.4 rebounds a game in 1968, 10.5 rpg in 1969, and 13.5 rpg in 1970. Only Clyde Lee, who preceded Wallace by two years at Vanderbilt, has more career rebounds.

After netting 9.7 points a game as a sophomore, Wallace averaged a double-double as a junior and senior. The Nashville native posted scoring averages of 11.4 ppg and 17.7 ppg his final two seasons as a Commodore.



As a senior, Perry Wallace served as Vanderbilt's team captain. He was also voted Vanderbilt's most popular student.

Wallace was named All-Southeastern Conference his senior year and went on to a law career in the Washington D.C. area. After graduating from Vanderbilt with a Bachelor of Engineering degree in Electrical Engineering and Engineering Mathematics, he earned his J.D. degree in 1975 from the School of Law at Columbia University.

Wallace has served as a professor of law at The American University in Washington, D.C. since 1991. He was on the faculty of the University of Baltimore and was an attorney with the United States Department of Justice. Wallace also served as a legislative analyst for Mayor Walter Washington of the District of Columbia and was a field representative for the National Urban League.

Wallace won the SEC Sportsmanship Trophy after a vote by the league players in 1970 and has been honored many times since leaving Vanderbilt. In 1996, the National Association of Basketball Coaches named Perry to its five-man Silver Anniversary All-America team.

Wallace returned to the sports headlines in 2003 as an inductee into the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame and represented Vanderbilt as an "SEC Living Legend" at the 2004 SEC Tournament.

In 2004 he became just the third Vanderbilt student-athlete to have his game jersey retired. His No. 25 will never be worn again in Nashville.

