

NEW MEXICO SPORTS HALL OF FAME

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

SAM LACEY



Sam Lacey: The first New Mexico State University basketball player to be inducted into the New Mexico Sports Hall of Fame, Sam Lacey was one of the best centers in the NBA in the 1970s. He was often overlooked because he played for lackluster teams. He was recruited for New Mexico State by Ed Murphy, an assistant to head coach Lou Henson.

Lacey averaged nearly 18 points and 16 rebounds as a senior for the Aggies, leading them to the only Final Four appearance in their history, a 1970 matchup with UCLA. He injured an ankle early and scored only 8 points as the Bruins -- led by Henry Bibby, Curtis Rowe, John Vallely and Sidney Wicks -- defeated the Aggies 93-77 and went on to win the championship.

Lacey was a rugged rebounder, at 6-10 and 235 pounds, and an outstanding shot-blocker. He also hit timely baskets and was a fine playmaker.

Seeking to rebuild after trading Oscar Robertson to the Milwaukee Bucks, the Royals selected Lacey in the first round of the 1970 NBA draft after he led NMSU to the NCAA tournament's Final Four. In KC, he teamed with guard Nate Archibald to provide some spark for a losing Royals team.

Lacey averaged in double figures in points and rebounds in his first six professional seasons, and he averaged 5.3 assists in 1974-75, when he was an all-star. Lacey averaged 10.3 points and 9.7 rebounds in his NBA career, which concluded with a season apiece with the New Jersey Nets and the Cleveland Cavaliers. He is one of only five NBA players (along with Hakeem Olajuwon, Julius Erving, David Robinson and Ben Wallace) to have registered 100 blocks and 100 steals in six consecutive seasons.

The Sacramento Kings, whose roots go back to the Rochester Royals and the teams that played in Cincinnati, Omaha and then Kansas City, have paid tribute to Lacey. His No. 44 is displayed aloft at the Sacramento Kings arena.

