

Willie Banks III is a basketball legend whose influence spans decades and continents. He is celebrated not only as a standout athlete in his home state of New Mexico but also as a professional player, coach, and community leader in New Zealand.

A Star in New Mexico

Willie Banks III's athletic journey began at **Albuquerque High School**, where he quickly became one of the program's most decorated players. As one of only three freshmen to ever play on the varsity team for Coach Jim Hulsman, Banks was a four-year starter who led his teams to the AAAA Final Four twice. He earned prestigious honors, including being named the **Gatorade and Naismith New Mexico Player of the Year** in 1988, and finished his high school career as one of the few Bulldogs to score over 1,000 points.

His success continued at the **University of New Mexico**, where he was a four-year starter and team captain. Banks's name is etched in the Lobo record books, ranking in the top 10 for career steals and assists. He was a **two-time WAC All-Defensive Team** selection and a **1992 WAC All-Conference First Team** honoree.

Building a Legacy Abroad

After college, Banks took his talents to New Zealand's National Basketball League (NBL), where he built a remarkable professional career. He was named to the **NBL All-Star Five** in 2004 and earned a rare invitation for an American-born player to the New Zealand Tall Blacks Olympic training squad.

Following his playing career, Banks transitioned into coaching and mentoring, leaving an even deeper impact on the basketball community. He coached multiple boys' and girls' teams, including leading **Stratford High School to a New Zealand National Secondary Schools Championship** in 2019. Banks also founded **Bankshot Academy**, a youth development program dedicated to growing the sport and mentoring young athletes across the Taranaki region.

Willie Banks III's career is a testament to his character and leadership, values he embodies through his continued community involvement in both New Mexico and New Zealand. His story is not just one of athletic success, but of using a sport to build a life of purpose and positively impact countless lives.