



Bob Houbregs

Legendary Bob Houbregs, the most decorated basketball player in University of Washington history, died Wednesday morning. He was 82. Houbregs starred at Washington from 1950 to 1953 and led the Huskies to a pair of NCAA tournaments, including their only Final Four appearance, in 1953. That season the 6-foot-7 forward was a consensus All-American and the NCAA player of the year — the only Husky player to achieve those honors. He guided UW to a 28-3 record, a 15-1 mark in the Pacific Coast Conference, and a spot in the 22-team NCAA tournament.

Behind Houbregs' 45-point performance, the Huskies crushed Seattle University 92-70 in the tournament opener March 13, 1953. They then toppled Santa Clara 74-62 to advance to the Final Four, but Houbregs fouled out early in the second half of the semifinal game against Kansas and the Huskies lost, 79-53. The next game, he finished his college career with a 42-point performance that propelled Washington to an 88-69 win over Louisiana State in the third-place game.

"He was a special player," Washington coach Lorenzo Romar said. "But the thing that most impressed me with him was his humility and the person that he was. Boy, he was a really solid man." Houbregs credited Washington coach Tippy Dye for teaching him his deadly hook shot, which earned him the nickname Hooks. He set the UW season scoring record that season while averaging 25.6 points. He also tallied 49 points on Jan. 10, 1953, which is still a school record. Sixty-one years after his final game, Houbregs still has the top three scoring games in UW history.

Houbregs accumulated 1,774 points during his UW career, a record that stood for 31 years. He ranks fifth on UW's all-time scoring list, which is even more impressive considering freshmen were not allowed to compete when he played. He led Washington to three consecutive PCC titles and was all-conference each season. As a sophomore, Houbregs averaged 13.6 points and led UW to a 24-6 overall record and the NCAA tournament. He averaged 18.6 points as a junior and Washington was 25-6.

Houbregs' No. 25 was the first jersey Washington ever retired. Former UW standout Brandon Roy is the only other men's basketball player whose number hangs in the rafters at Alaska Airlines Arena. "Bob was an icon in our community," Washington athletic director Scott Woodward said in a statement released by the school. "His efforts on the court helped put Washington basketball on the map, but what made him remarkable was his character beyond the game of basketball. "He had a way of connecting with people in a very genuine manner, and his presence will be truly missed here." Houbregs was the third overall pick in the 1953 NBA draft by the Milwaukee Hawks. He averaged 9.3 points and 5.5 rebounds during a five-year career (1953-58) with four teams, including the Baltimore Bullets, Boston Celtics and Fort Wayne/Detroit Pistons.

After retiring, Houbregs returned to Seattle and played a key role in helping establish the Sonics in the NBA franchise's early days, serving as general manager from 1970 to 1973. He drafted Sonics star Fred Brown in 1971. Born Robert John Houbregs on March 12, 1932 in Vancouver, B.C., he went to Queen Anne High School in Seattle, where he became a basketball star. Houbregs was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1987. He's also a member of the Husky Hall of Fame (1979) and the Canadian Basketball Hall of Fame (2000).

After leaving the Sonics, he worked for Converse and lived in Olympia.

In recent years, Houbregs had been a regular visitor to Washington basketball games until his health began to fade. He was also de facto historian of Husky basketball who recounted stories about the program's heyday. Houbregs is the second UW basketball icon to pass away in the past 10 months. Former UW basketball coach Marv Harshman died last August.

"You talk about Washington basketball, the legends and the history, and those are two that played big parts in the history," Romar said. "They were nationally respected by many people. In Bob Houbregs' case, he was done playing a long time ago, but you still respected him for who he was just as much as what he had accomplished. Marv was the same way."

Percy Allen, Seattle Times