

# Rex Chapman

## Kentucky Mr. Basketball

By Jerry Long  
c.2025



**Daviess County, Kentucky Celebrating Our Heritage, 1815-2015**  
(Evansville, IN, M. T. Publishing Company, Inc., 2015),  
“**Daviess County Bicentennial Chronology – 200 Historical Events,**”  
by Jerry Long in celebration of Daviess County’s Bicentennial, p.17:

1988, June 28: Rex Chapman, Owensboro native, was selected by the Charlotte Hornets in the National Basketball Association draft; he was the 8th overall pick. He was named Mr. Kentucky Basketball as a senior at Apollo High School in 1986 and was a star on the UK basketball team for two seasons. He played 12 seasons in the NBA.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 14 March 1976, p.1A:**



Little cut-up – Rex Chapman, the eight-year-old son of Apollo Coach Wayne Chapman, sits on his fathers' shoulders and cuts down the final loops of the net. The ceremony was the result of a 69-59 Apollo victory over Ohio County Saturday night at the Sportscenter. Apollo will represent the 3rd Region in the state tournament in Louisville beginning on March 24. (Staff photo by Bill Kyle)



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 23 July 1980, p.1B:**

1984 ... Future stars show off in Dust Bowl tourney

By Rich Suwanski, Messenger-Inquirer

In about four or five years, the names Rex Chapman, Avery Taylor, David Hogg and Scott Douglas may be as well known to Owensboroans as the names Dwight Higgs, Danny Griffith and Rod Drake are now.

Chapman, Taylor, Hogg, Douglas and others like them are currently stacking their athletic building blocks, learning to dribble, pass, shoot and play defense so that when the time comes they, too, may add noteworthy chapters to their high school's sports history.

These stars of the 1980s had an opportunity to show their stuff Tuesday night in the Dust Bowl Basketball Tournament. Officially, they are in what is known as the Biddy Division, or teams whose players are 12 years old and under....

[In Owensboro's Dust Bowl in 1981 the biddy MVP award went to Rex Chapman of the Druthers team. Played for Apollo High School 1982-1986.]



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 26 July 1983, p.7A:**



Coach Byron Owen has the attention of the Owensboro AAU basketball team as he makes a point. Players are: (back row, left to right) Scott Douglas, Rex Chapman, Marcus Robinson, David Hogg, Avery Taylor, Jay Woodard; (front) Anthony Leachman, Brent Acton, Scott Kelly, Orlando Stewart, Scott Johnson.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 8 April 1984, p.4B:**

**Apollo honors athletes**

Apollo High School named dual most valuable players for its boys A and Thursday girls night. basketball teams at its winter sports athletic banquet Rex Chapman and Kevin Hamilton were named the MVPs of the boys team .....



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 14 December 1984, p.1B:**



Madisonville's Shane Belcher, right, tries to block a shot by Apollo's Rex Chapman during Thursday night's game at the Sportscenter. [Madisonville won over Apollo, 63-61]



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 8 February 1985, p.1B:**

Apollo's Chapman is top prep score in state

By Steve Vied, Messenger-Inquirer

A call from Bob Watkins, Sports Editor of the Elizabethtown News Enterprise, revealed a bit of interesting news Thursday concerning Apollo junior guard Rex Chapman.

Watkins, one of the state's most knowledgeable when it comes to high school sports, did a mini-survey this week and discovered that Chapman is the leading prep scorer in Kentucky.

As of Thursday Chapman was averaging 27.4 points game. He is also averaging 7.7 per rebounds and 3.8 assists per game for the ninth-ranked Eagles, 16-5.

According to Watkins' research, Chapman is outscoring Louisville Seneca's Tony Kimbro by nearly three points a game and Marshall County's Barry Goheen by a little more than three a game. Felton Spencer, Louisville Eastern's seven-footer, is also averaging about 24 points per game.

Watkins said he checked with sportswriters from Ashland to Paducah to Hopkinsville for any male player with a scoring average higher than Chapman's and didn't find one.

When told he was the state's top scorer, Chapman reacted with typical modesty.

"I guess it's nice to be recognized for something like that, but I wouldn't be able to average that many points without my teammates," he said. "I have very unselfish teammates."

Twice this season Chapman has scored 42 points. Saturday night he scored 31 points against Miami Killian and then came back on Tuesday night to score 30 against Owensboro Catholic.

Apollo coach John Whitmer probably wouldn't be very surprised if Chapman scored 50 points in a game.

"The good thing about Rex is that he gets his points a lot of different ways – outside jumpers, followups, tip ins, dunks, against zones and against man to man," Whitmer said. "And he's not just taking advantage of teams that can't defend against him. He's scored against teams like Seneca, Eastern, Owensboro and Madisonville."

Chapman, who sprouted from six-feet to 6-4 from last season to this, said he worked hard on game over the summer.

"Most of the time last year I got my points from the outside," Chapman said. "Over the summer I realized I had to go to the basket to free up my jump shot. I knew from last season that I had some things to work on."

Whitmer delights in Chapman's unselfishness.

"Against Marshall County, he got the ball to the people with the really easy shots and it didn't bother him a bit. I really feel that the kid thinks when he's shooting he's doing the best for the team. He has a good shot and he needs to use it. But the other kids know that when they're open he'll get it to them."

The numbers prove that Chapman is no ball hog. Two other players on the team – Greg Baughn (13.4 ppg) and Jeff Sanford (11.7) average in double figures while center Kevin Hamilton's average has only recently fallen into single digits. Hamilton has seen limited action in Apollo's last three games because of an injured ankle. [Note: A follow up article reported that Rex Chapman was then the state's second leading scorer.]



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 14 November 1985, p.1B:**



Greg Baughn, second from left, announced he will attend Kentucky Wesleyan at a press conference at his home Wednesday afternoon. From left to right, Keith Vanderpool, Rex Chapman and Kevin Vanderpool surround their teammate.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 17 November 1985, pp.1B & 10B:**

## **A new hero emerges for the Wildcats**

**Eddie Sutton's not the only person happy  
with Rex Chapman's decision to attend UK**

By Gene Abell, Messenger-Inquirer

Next to Eddie Sutton, perhaps the happiest person to hear Rex Chapman's announcement he is going to UK was Jenny, Rex's younger sister. "Jenny gets custody of the phone now," Laura Chapman said. "Tuesday, there were tears in her eyes after she had to go next door for the third time to use the phone. She said, 'Mom, is this going to go on all year?'"

No, Jenny, it won't. These haven't been the best of times for UK fans, and Saturday they were handed a new hero.

"I speak for all Kentuckians and I'm mighty proud," said Owensboro's Bill Thompson, a Murray grad and avid UK fan whose curiosity beckoned him to the news conference. "He (Rex) made a lot of Kentucky people happy today."

None more so than Sutton, the UK coach who must have been wondering if he was bitten by a Kentucky rattlesnake until he got the news Chapman was headed to Lexington.

"To get him was more important to our program than any kid I've recruited at any program I've coached in," Sutton said Saturday. "And he could be the best player I've ever coached."

"The Kentucky program needed a shot in the arm, and he's the best dose of medicine I know of."

Rex called Sutton around 7:30 a.m. Saturday. UK was practicing. Sutton told his team the news.

"Our squad was excited when I told them," Sutton said. "You'd have thought we had a victory celebration."

Those same players are a big reason why Chapman chose UK.

"I didn't know how James Blackmon, Paul Andrews and Ed Davender would be, if they were 100 percent for me going to Kentucky," Chapman said of his visit to UK. "They all encouraged me and called me after my visit and said they wanted me to play with them."

Then there was Winston Bennett. While at Male High School, Bennett attended Kentucky Wesleyan's summer camp. Chapman admired Bennett and the two became pen pals. When Bennett graduated from Male, he sent Chapman some old jerseys and warmups, which Chapman wore until he outgrew them.

The relationship grew as UK started recruiting Chapman.

"I talked to Winston a couple of times a week," Chapman said. "He is like a big brother to me. He gives me advice. He's been through it. He's a great person and he played a big part in my decision."

While the final decision may not been made until Friday, the process of elimination lasted months.



Louisville recruited too hard, trying to pressure an answer out of Rex in mid-October. Western had everything going for it but recent success on the court. Carolina and Georgia Tech were too far away.

"And none of those schools have the following 1 Kentucky does," Rex said.

Sutton used some wise strategy. In the last week of the mid-October contact period, coaches poured into Owensboro. Some came every day. There was always one around, sometimes four. Kentucky took a gamble. It canceled two visits to Owensboro.

"We don't try to bother a young man when he is tired of us calling," UK assistant James Dickey said. "We didn't want to disrupt them. We felt we had been in the house twice, we had watched him play at the school, we had told him about our program and we figured the only thing we could do by coming in was hurt ourselves."

**AT A GLANCE:  
REX CHAPMAN**

- **AGE:** 18
- **FAMILY:** Son of Laura and Wayne Chapman. One sister, Jenny, age 16.
- **HIGH SCHOOL:** Apollo.
- **POSITION:** Guard.
- **HEIGHT:** 6-foot-5.
- **CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:** Freshman year — best free throw shooter and voted super sub. Sophomore year — team captain, named to three all tournament teams. Junior year — team captain, voted most outstanding player after averaging 27.9 points, 7.4 rebounds and four assists per game, and was named to six all-tournament teams, including first team All-State. Following his junior year, Chapman attended the Five-Star Camp in Pittsburgh, where he was chosen the Most Valuable Player of the all-star game. He also toured Europe as a member of the Kentucky Junior All Star team. Two respected basketball publications currently rate him as the third best high school player in the nation.

While other schools kept making the same pitch, UK offered its best fastball and hoped Rex would take a swing. It may have been that mid-October week, when some schools asked for answers and UK held back, that turned the process in Kentucky's favor.

"That was a big week," Chapman said. "It proved to me that Kentucky had confidence in themselves. They showed respect for my time and left me alone."

Dean Smith once gave Rex a chart to fill out, ranking the pluses and minuses of each school on a scale of 1-5. Rex did and UK scored best.

"We didn't have a lot of skull sessions or arguing," Laura Chapman said. "It was pretty clear cut after we went over everything."

UK fans are beaming proudly again. Owensboroans should be also, not because Rex Chapman is the nation's best guard, but because he showed unusual class and poise through an intense recruitment.

He showed that before his news conference began. He had to start the day calling the four coaches who had lost him. Sutton suggested to Rex that his dad make the call, that it was Rex's day to be in the spotlight.

Rex said no. He made the calls.

"I worried all along about having to tell them no," he said.

"Everything was handled so professionally. We appreciated it and I'm sure all the others (schools) did," Sutton said. "I wish all recruiting situations were handled this well and his coach (John Whitmer) also deserves some credit. They tried to be fair to everyone."

Everyone got a chance. UK won.

The phone's ringing, Jenny.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 26 November 1985, p.1C;**



Apollo's Rex Chapman and Catholic's Kris Miller are leading candidates for Kentucky Mr. and Miss Basketball honors. [on 12 April 1986 Rex Chapman was named Kentucky's Mr. Basketball]



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 18 June 1986, p.1B:**

**Chapman  
chosen  
Athlete  
of Year**





Rex Chapman was voted Kentucky Associated Press High School Athlete of the Year by sports editors and broadcasters around the state.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 20 November 1987, p.8:**



Rex Chapman may have to become more of a leader and playmaker than a scorer to help get the Wildcats to an NCAA . Final Four tournament berth – championship.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 14 May 1988, pp.1A & 10A:**

## NBA draft is 'best decision,' Chapman says

By Rich Suwanski, Messenger-Inquirer

After two years as the darling of the bluegrass, University of Kentucky star Rex Chapman of Owensboro announced Friday he was leaving that school for the green pastures of the National Basketball Association.

Chapman, who had two years left to play college ball, had until midnight tonight to declare himself eligible for the NBA draft June 28. He made his decision known with a telephone call to the Associated Press Friday morning and then went out to play basketball with friends.

"It was a very difficult decision," Chapman said. "My heart was telling me one thing, my head another.

"It's definitely the most difficult one I've ever had to make and I know it won't be popular with everybody, but it will be the best decision for me.

"There's nothing I was unhappy with at UK – it's just me thinking that this would be the best time as far as going into the NBA draft. I'll miss a lot of things – the college life, my friends, my teammates, but in the long run, I think it's going to be better for me."

University of Kentucky coach Eddie Sutton met with Chapman and his parents Monday and tried to talk him out of his decision Friday but was unsuccessful.

"I tried to point out the pros and cons but told him I didn't want to be part of the decision-making process," the coach said. "I told him, 'Ultimately, you and your parents will have to make the decision, but it's mostly going to be you.'

"Obviously, we had hoped he would have opted to stay here at the University of Kentucky. He has had a tremendous two years with our program, and he will be a hard man to replace. We wish him the best. He has the talent and the ability to be a great NBA player."

That readiness to play pro ball weighed heavily in Chapman's decision-making process and not the controversy concerning possible UK recruiting violations that has surfaced recently, he said. The 6-foot-5 guard led Kentucky in scoring his first two years and was named honorable mention All-America this season.

"There is only reason to enter the NBA draft early and that reason is because I feel I have the talent and the ability to utilize that talent, and the maturity that is needed," Chapman said. "It's strictly a business decision.'

Kentucky became the subject of an NCAA investigation after an overnight mail envelope sent by assistant coach Dwane Casey to UK recruit Chris Mills' father popped open in transit in Los Angeles, allegedly revealing \$1,000. Both Casey and Mills' father, Claud, have denied the money existed.

"This decision is in no way based on, or influenced by, the current basketball investigation," Chapman said. "I have the highest regard for coach Dwane Casey, who I have known and admired since I was in grade school.

"I have complete faith in the University of Kentucky and its coaching staff."

Chapman said his immediate goal was to make the U.S. basketball team that will compete in the Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea.

"There's nothing I'd rather do at this particular time than to help the U.S. win a gold medal in Seoul, South Korea," he said.

Donnie Walsh, the executive vice president and general manager of the NBA Indiana Pacers said, "I think he's in the top 10 (draft picks). Maybe even a lottery pick. There's going to be a lot of opportunity now."

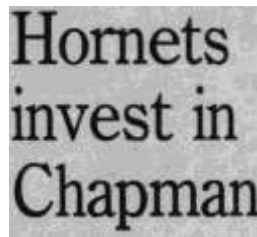
Chapman said although he's leaving school, he isn't quitting his education and wants to get a degree as soon as possible.

"Hopefully, I'll take some summer school courses the next few years," he said. "I definitely want to get my degree because I know how important it is."

Editor's note: The Associated Press contributed to this report.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 29 June 1988, pp.1B & 5B:**



By Rich Suwanski, Messenger-Inquirer

The NBA expansion Charlotte Hornets are a team of the future and they hoped to ensure that future by selecting Owensboro's Rex Chapman in Tuesday's draft of college players.

"We went for Chapman because this kid has a chance to be a great player, not right now, but we feel, down the road, if we help him and work with him that he could be a real fine player," said Gene Littles, the Hornets' director of player personnel and assistant coach.

Chapman left the University of Kentucky after last season, his sophomore year. Some people questioned that move, saying he wasn't ready for the rigors of the pro game. Littles said he couldn't be happier with Chapman's decision, and the Hornets' decision to draft him.

"We went into the draft with the idea that we were going to take the best player available, whoever that guy was – big or small," Littles said. "He was my No. 1 all along. There were no ifs, ands or buts. We told the guy at the table in New York (the draft site) to sit back and relax. Rex is our guy, write it down."

"I asked our guy how long it would take to get up there (to announce the selection) and he said about five seconds. There were about 50 seconds left and I told him to start going now because he might trip and I didn't want any accidents."

The only time Charlotte held its breath was when Philadelphia selected in the third spot.

"There was that fear that he might go to Philly because we felt they'd take a guard," Littles said. "When that didn't happen, we felt Rex would drop all the way down (to Charlotte)."

Littles said the Hornets liked Chapman because "he can shoot with range, he can put it on the floor well enough that he can play point guard a little bit, he can really run the floor, he's a good passer and he's a good defender."

"Kelly Tripucka is a scorer, we know that's his strength," Littles said. "But Rex is only 20 years old and he hasn't honed in on one aspect of his game, which is good. He tries to play the total game. When he's not scoring, he can help you defensively and get in the flow of the game."

Chapman's subpar play in the Olympic Trials didn't affect Charlotte's opinion of him. He could've been with the "wrong group of guys, chemistry-wise," Littles said.

Charlotte is stocked with guards. Ten of the 14 Hornets players are guards, including Chapman. In some respects, the situation is similar to that of Kentucky's in Chapman's freshman year. The Wildcats used a three-guard offense because of a lean inside game. Littles said the Hornets may make a deal or two or test the free agent market to try to bolster the frontline but that Chapman would not be part of any deal.

In building the franchise, Charlotte intended to go with young players and the expansion draft left few good big men.

"We didn't go into the expansion thinking we'd get two guards, two forwards and two centers," Littles said. "We went into it with a list of priority players, not positions, and took the best player available at that pick.

"We're pretty happy with who we've got. We know these guys aren't going to take us to the final round of the division championship. We're going to take it step by step. We've got a lot of good young guys."

Unlike Kentucky two seasons ago when people looked to Chapman as a savior, , Charlotte will not thrust him into that role.

"We're not going to pressure ! him to come in here as a first-round pick and be a superstar," Littles said. "Because even if he's a superstar, we're only going to win 15-20 games, maybe. If he's not a superstar, we'd destroy him because we'd expect too much and he'd get down and lose his confidence and that would be the worst thing that could happen.

"We're going to be real patient. We'll let him play at his own pace. When he's ready, he'll know it and we'll know it. We're going to have fun and allow him to grow into one of the best players in the NBA."

Littles said his only expectations for Chapman will be that the rookie "play hard and give us the opportunity to teach him how to play the NBA." Littles did say he thought Chapman could be a starter next year.

"We're not going to rush him, but if he bangs it up in camp and he goes through the exhibition season and he's the best guy, we've got to play him," Littles said. "But if he plays up and down, then we need to be patient."

Patience appears to be the key word in Charlotte these days. However, Littles said his first concern is making sure that everyone knows there's a difference between patience and passivity.

"As expansion teams go," Littles said, "we hope we don't set a new record for losses."

## CHAPMAN HIGHLIGHTS

### High School

- Consensus prep AllAmerica 1985-86.
- Mr. Basketball in Kentucky 1985-86.
- Three-time All-State.
- Holds Apollo career scoring mark: 2,286.
- Named AP Athlete of the Year in 1985-86.
- Played in 1986 U.S. Olympic Festival Games.
- Won Las Vegas Invitational Slam Dunk Contest.

### College

- Named SEC Freshman of the Year.
- Named to several pre-season All-America teams.
- Named to numerous national All-Freshman teams.
- Became first freshman to lead Kentucky in scoring, 16 points per game.
- Led Kentucky in scoring as a sophomore, 18.7 points per game.
- Named All-SEC two years.
- Played on silver medal U.S. Pan Am team.
- SEC tourney MVP in 1988.
- Invited to U.S. Olympic Trials.



## Big Blue History



**Rex Chapman – #3**

Hometown: Owensboro, KY (Apollo)

Position: G Playing Height: 6-5 Playing Weight: 185

Date of Birth: October 5, 1967

Nickname: "King" Rex Chapman (More)

### Prep Notes:

- Mr. Basketball State of Kentucky 1986
- Gatorade State Player of Year
- Parade All-American
- Scholastic Coach All-American
- McDonalds All-American
- USA Today All-American

### Kentucky Career Notes:

- Declared Early for NBA Draft after Sophomore Season
- Left for Professional Basketball after Sophomore Season for NBA

Season Notes:

- 1986-87: All-SEC [First Team (Coaches) Second Team (AP & UPI)]; All-SEC Freshman Team
- 1987-88: All-American [NABC (3rd), Basketball Times (3rd)]; All-SEC [First Team (AP, UPI & Coaches)]; SEC Tournament MVP; Academic All-SEC

Post-UK Career Notes:

- State of Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame
- University of Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame
- Drafted #8 Overall in the 1st Round of the 1988 NBA Draft by Charlotte



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 21 November 2000, pp.1A & 2A:**



**Injuries force ex-Apollo standout to sideline**

Associated Press



PHOENIX – Rex Chapman, one of the top shooters in the NBA when he was at his best, announced his retirement Monday because of a series of injuries.



Chapman, 33, underwent surgery on his right wrist before training camp and began the season on the injured list. He is to have ankle surgery soon.

"My body just has gotten to the point where it's not allowing me to do the things I want to do," said Chapman, a former Apollo High School star who also has been sidelined by knee and toe injuries. "I've had six surgeries in the last five years, and I need a couple of more."

Phoenix Suns owner Jerry Colangelo Rex Chapman said Chapman will receive the \$10 million he's due on the remaining four years of his contract.

Chapman burst on the Kentucky scene as a high-leaping teen-ager in the mid-1980s. As a junior, he led Apollo to the state tournament, and as a senior was named Kentucky's Mr. Basketball and a first-team prep All-American.

Chapman's retirement will clear a roster spot but won't create any more salary cap room for the Suns for another two years.

After two standout collegiate seasons at Kentucky, Chapman was Charlotte's first-ever draft pick, the eighth choice overall, in 1988.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed it. I came into the league when I was 20 years old, and I think at that time I was the youngest player, and Kareem (Abdul-Jabbar) was the oldest player at 41, and my father actually played against Kareem," Chapman said.

Chapman was traded to Washington in 1992 and averaged a career-best 18.2 points with the Bullets in 1993-94.

He played with Miami in 1995-96, then signed with the Suns as a free agent for the league minimum. He averaged 14.6 points a game over his 12-year career.

Colangelo said the six-year deal Chapman signed in January 1999 was a reward for his performance in earlier seasons.

Chapman, who lives year-round in the Phoenix area, said he has known for some time that he was unable to play anymore.

His last game was at Vancouver on March 17. The next day, he underwent an emergency appendectomy.

"I remember going into the hospital thinking 'I made my last shot,' " he said. "I made my first one, and I missed a bunch in between. But something told me that might have been it."

Chapman was joined at his retirement news conference by Colangelo and agent David Falk.

"It's been a difficult year for me," Falk said. "I had a week where we had a press conference in Miami to announce that Alonzo Mourning had a very serious kidney disease. The next day Dikembe Mutombo had malaria, and the third day Keith Van Horn broke his leg. The fourth day, I went away for the weekend because I couldn't handle it anymore."

Chapman said he plans to spend more time with his wife and children before making any decisions about his future.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 31 January 2010, p.1B:**

**`King Rex' Apollo's Chapman voted area's best in last 50 years**

By Jim Pickens, Messenger-Inquirer

The word "superstar" is one of the most overused in sports. There are, in truth, relatively few athletes with the combination of stupendous skill, irrepressible desire and uncommon flair.

Apollo's Rex Chapman, however, was one such high school athlete - a genuine basketball icon.

Blessed with good size (6-foot-4), great genes, quality ballhandling ability, deep shooting range, extraordinary leaping ability and the innate knowledge that comes with being a coach's son, Chapman leapt into the consciousness of Owensboro and the entire state of Kentucky in the mid-1980s.

Though long removed from both the city and state, the legend of "King Rex" burns brightly still.

"He was one of the greatest high school players I ever saw," said Randy Embry, who coached against Chapman at Owensboro High School. "We had some great teams then, too, and there were some terrific battles on the court.

"His coach at Apollo, (the late) John Whitmer, really did Rex a favor by playing him at guard. That decision made Rex ready for the college game at Kentucky, and later the NBA, because he developed his game facing the basket."

Chapman, the son of former Daviess County High School and Western Kentucky University star Wayne Chapman, grew up as a "gym rat" - honing his skills hour after hour on sideline goals as his father coached at Hancock County and Apollo high schools, and later Kentucky Wesleyan College.

"Rex loved playing basketball right from the start," Wayne Chapman said. "He was around the game all the time, and he really developed a passion to be the best player he could be."

Chapman showed flashes of his immense skill in his freshmen and sophomore seasons at Apollo, but it was in 1985, as a junior, that the acrobatic dunker became the hottest commodity in the commonwealth.

Averaging 27 points per game, Chapman led the Eagles to their first Sweet 16 appearance in seven years - setting the stage for a Herculean recruiting battle between standard-bearer Kentucky and freewheeling Louisville, which won the second of its two NCAA championships under Denny Crum the following year. Entering the fray late was North Carolina.

Chapman's senior season was equally spectacular, as he averaged 26 points per game, but it ended in disappointment when Owensboro sophomore Orlando Stewart hit a shot to defeat Apollo in the 3rd Region championship game before a sellout crowd at the Sportscenter.

Chapman was a runaway choice for Kentucky's Mr. Basketball award and was a consensus first-team All-American. He closed out his high school career as Apollo's all-time scoring leader with 2,286 points.

UK won the fierce recruiting war for Chapman, but his days in Lexington proved bittersweet.

Despite averaging 17.6 points per game for two highly productive seasons (scoring 1,073 points), Chapman sometimes clashed with coach Eddie Sutton. The Wildcats failed to live up to expectations, going 18-11 his freshman season and losing to Villanova in the NCAA Tournament round of 16 his sophomore year (despite a 30-point effort by Chapman).

Chapman was the No. 1 draft pick of the NBA expansion Charlotte Hornets in 1988 (eighth overall), where he flourished for three seasons. He later played for the Washington Bullets, Miami Heat and Phoenix Suns, finishing with an average of 14.6 points per game for 12 pro seasons.

He is currently vice president of player personnel for the Denver Nuggets.

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Note: Author picked and ranked the 10 best basketball

players in the area and his fifth pick was:

5- WAYNE CHAPMAN, Daviess County

More than two decades before Rex Chapman burst upon the high school basketball scene in the Bluegrass, his father, Wayne, was one of the state's best - and one of the best-ever out of the Owensboro area.

"The thing I always liked about Wayne was his versatility," said the late Wallace "Buck" Sydnor, who coached Chapman his freshman, sophomore and junior seasons at Daviess County High School, before joining the coaching staff at Western Kentucky.

"Wayne was a great talent, but he was even greater as a team player. He made everyone around him better, and his unselfishness made our teams better."

Chapman, spring-legged 6-5, enjoyed an outstanding senior season in 1963, averaging 18 points and 11 rebounds per game as the Panthers went 23-5. Led by first-year coach Woodie Crum, Daviess County was one of only two teams to defeat Owensboro in the regular season, but the Red Devils went on to win the 3rd Region Tournament.

Chapman was an All-State selection and a member of the Kentucky All-Stars, which split their series with Indiana.

Signing out of high school with Kentucky, he was on an undefeated Wildcat freshman team that included future All-Americans Pat Riley and Louie Dampier. Each of the three players averaged better than 20 points over a 16-game schedule.

Chapman became homesick, however, and transferred to Western Kentucky, where he was reunited with Sydnor. At Western, he played on two NCAA Tournament teams, made All-NCAA Midwest Regional as a sophomore in 1966, and was Ohio Valley Conference Player of the Year in 1968.

"Wayne was an outstanding all-around player," said Clem Haskins, his teammate on the 1963 Kentucky All-Stars, and later at WKU. "You could put him anywhere on the court and he would produce for you.

"Wayne played to win. That's what mattered to him most."

Chapman played three seasons in the American Basketball Association with the Kentucky Colonels, Indiana Pacers and Denver Nuggets, averaging seven points per game. He later coached Apollo to a pair of Sweet 16 appearances and Kentucky Wesleyan to NCAA Division II national titles in 1987 and '90.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 15 November 2018, pp.1A & 2A:**

## **Chapman talks basketball, opiates**

Apollo, UK star addresses KTIA conference

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

Rex Chapman is a basketball legend in Kentucky.

But when the 1986 graduate of Apollo High School delivered the keynote address Wednesday morning to the Kentucky Travel Industry Association conference at the Owensboro Convention Center, Chapman's emphasis was on the opioid addiction crisis.

He told the roughly 350 travel professionals from across the state that by age 32, his body was worn out and he was ready to retire from the NBA after 12 years.

"I had had seven orthopedic surgeries in three years," Chapman said. "I never took pain medication for them. But I had an emergency appendectomy and was prescribed Oxycontin. Within two or three days, I was in love. I've always felt odd and Oxy made me more sociable and more kind."

At first.

By the time he crashed in 2014 and was arrested for shoplifting, Chapman was up to 40 Vicodins and seven to 10 Oxycontin a day.

"I was just chewing them," he told the crowd. "They taste like chalk and they stay on your teeth."

He had gained 30 pounds in a year.

"But I never put a needle in my arm," Chapman said. "That's much harder to overcome."

Recovery isn't easy, he said.

"I'm a three-rehab guy," Chapman told them.

He wears a faded blue band on his left wrist.

It was handed out at the funeral of one his son's friends, who died of a heroin overdose.

Chapman wears it to remind himself of what could happen.

"It keeps me honest," he said,

The opioid crisis is important to the travel industry, Hank Phillips, KTIA president, said, because the industry struggles to find enough workers who can pass drug tests.

Chapman said that recently in Pikeville a company was looking for 100 workers.

Seventy-one of the first 100 screened failed the drug test, he said.

'It's too powerful'

Chapman said he's gone to the coroner's office in Lexington six times in the last six months to identify the children of out-of-town friends, children who died from opiate overdoses.

"Big Pharma has a big role in it," he said. "They haven't even admitted that it's highly addictive. It's too powerful and it (the crisis) is accelerating. We haven't even hit the brakes."

Asked if opiates was a problem in sports, Chapman said not in basketball.

"You can't play on opiates," he said. "Football may be more of an issue. It's a crazy sport."

"Basketball has been great to me," Chapman, 51, said. "But I haven't always been a shining example of a hometown hero."

As a high school student, he said, he wanted to play for Louisville.

But he decided instead to play for the University of Kentucky.

After two years, Chapman decided to enter the NBA draft and was on his way to the Charlotte Hornets.

"The whole state was mad at me," he said.

One of his teammates in Charlotte, he said, had a baby who would go with them when several members of the team traveled together.

"The baby and I would ride in the back seat," Chapman said. "His name was Steph Curry. And he turned out to be better than all of us. I changed his diapers many times."

His father, Wayne Chapman, who coached at Apollo and Kentucky Wesleyan College, was hard to live with, he said.

Chapman told of a game where he got 45 points and seven rebounds -- and his father was mad because he didn't take a charge.

"I quit the team after that," he said. "He was never pleased. But I went over and apologized and was suspended for one game. I've always been volatile."

In closing, Chapman joked, "How do you address the question -- Old Hickory or Moonlite? I get asked that all the time."

Phillips told Chapman that he was once a basketball hero, but he said, "You're more than a hero today."

KTIA presented Chapman with a portrait of himself in a UK uniform, a painting done by Aaron Kizer, a local artist.



Rex Chapman, Owensboro native and former University of Kentucky and NBA basketball player, talks about his battle fighting opioid addiction after his playing days in the NBA during a keynote address to the Kentucky Travel Industry Association Annual Conference on Wednesday at the Owensboro Convention Center.



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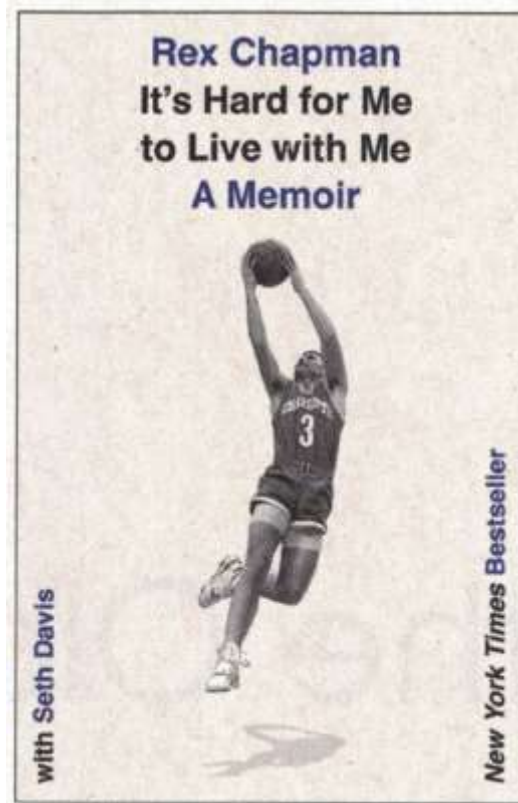
### Chapman Shares Struggles, Triumphs

By Ted Sloan

Rex Chapman takes readers on the rollercoaster ride of his life.

He shares stories about his youth as a basketball prodigy, his University of Kentucky stardom, and his successful but injury-riddled pro basketball career.

He writes in unsparing detail about his opioid and gambling addictions, which cost him his fortune, his health and his marriage. He fondly recalls the family members and friends who helped him turn his life around. And he celebrates his post-rehab success as a basketball analyst and consultant and surprise social media star.



Chapman's unvarnished observations about race and politics will rankle some Kentuckians. His memoir suggests that he is less concerned today about pleasing people and more concerned about speaking truth, reaching out to people suffering from addiction and, most of all, being worthy of the love of his four children. "That," he concludes, "is my championship right there."

*It's Hard for Me to Live With Me*, by Rex Chapman with Seth Davis Simon & Schuster, \$27.99 (Hardback)

