

Dean Smith

Have you ever walked on a basketball court with a smile on your face knowing the accomplishments that were made on that court? Have you ever walked on the basketball court remembering all the games you have won with your teammates? Coach Dean Smith did, every day that he has walked on the basketball court in the Dean dome he always walks with pride in his step and a smile on his face happy to be there. He came along way from when he first walked out onto the court many years ago. It didn't just come easy to him considering he was just an average young man from Kansas ready to face the hectic life as an assistant basketball coach for the UNC Tar Heels.

Dean Smith was born on February 28, 1931 in Emporia, Kansas, although he spent most of his childhood years in Topeka Kansas. During his high school and college years he was a very talented athlete. For his college years he attended the University of Kansas and then later got into the air force after graduating. After he got out of the air force he went back to the University of Kansas to be an assistant basketball coach under hall of famer Phog Allen. Then in 1958 he was hired as an assistant basketball coach for the University of North Carolina. Just three years later he became the head coach.

As the head coach of the University of North Carolina, Dean Smith had a lot of pressure put onto his shoulders. For one he had never been a head coach just as an assistant coach. And second he had players looking up to him for advice on how to play the sport. It simply wasn't easy for him, considering his first five years coaching at UNC the team didn't win any games. Everyone took him as a joke and wanted him fired. But he showed them just what he was capable of.

Even off the court he was dedicated in seeing his players succeed in academics. He thought that education was the most important thing for his player to receive even though most of them came just to play basketball. 97% of his player left UNC with a degree. He also believed that the players should have no contact with alcohol and that they should not have any facial hair. He always told his players that people would take them serious if they were not under the influence of alcohol and always looked presentable. Everyone thought he was strict in those areas but in ways he was just preparing his players for the real world.

Some of the many people that Dean Smith got to coach were Bobby Jones, Phil Ford, Kenny Smith, Bob McAdoo, Michael Jordan and many more. But they didn't just look at him as their

coach, for some of them he was like a second father to them. Michael Jordan always thought that Dean Smith as a second father, not just because he had that fatherly figure, but because Dean helped Michael Jordan through school and taught him how to be the man he is today. Dean would immediately drop anything for any of the boys that played on the court if they asked him too. On the court he may have looked like a strict cold hearted man, but off the court he was always laughing and playing around with his players.

Soon after fifteen years of coaching basketball, Dean Smith was bringing his all onto the court. Many other colleges started to look into this Dean Smith person to see why he was so great and all. They started to see that he wasn't a joke anymore that he was an actual threat to their basketball team because of how good UNC's basketball team was becoming. They started to hate him because of how humble he was on the court. He never talked trash to the other team's coaches to their face or behind their back. Before a game he always greeted them with a smile and a handshake and wished them good luck before going over to his side and taking a seat. People said that he was very humble on the court but had the face of "we are better than you", and that's why they were so furious is because maybe UNC basketball was better than their team.

During his 36 years of coaching at UNC, Dean Smith had accomplished to win with his players 13 Acc championships, 11 final fours, two national titles, 879 basketball games, an olympic gold medal and was represented for a Presidential Medal of Freedom. He was also put into the Basketball Hall of fame and called "The Coaching Legend". Also he was one of the first basketball coaches in the south to allow african americans to play basketball. Even after all those wins and accomplishments he still never wanted to be in the spotlight, he never cared about the fame or how big his salary was. He cared about basketball and being able to be out on the court doing what he loved, coaching basketball. Even more importantly he cared about his family. His Tar Heel family.

After retiring in 1997 he settled down with his wife Lenna and his five children in Chapel Hill. Even after settling down he could never stay away from the court. Usually once a week he would go back to the Dean dome, eat lunch in his office make phone calls, anything to keep him busy. Sometimes he would visit his old players like Michael Jordan to see if everything was doing good, or when he couldn't get out he would make phone calls. In his later life he was diagnosed with dementia later turning into Alzheimer's.

Those memories of him winning all those championships were slowly fading, it was like someone was closing the currents in Dean's mind. On February 7th, 2015 Dean Smith passed

away in his sleep because of complications of Alzheimer's. That day it felt like Chapel Hill went to sleep, it was silent in the Dean Dome. Everyone was upset of the passing of Dean Smith. He was truly a great man and left a legacy in UNC history. He was a true Tar Heel. I live you with one of his most famous quotes "What do you do with a mistake? Recognize it, Admit it, Learn from it, Forget it".