

# 'Wilt the Stilt' dead at 63

By Ken Peters

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Wilt Chamberlain, a center so big, agile and dominant that he forced basketball to change its rules and the only player to score 100 points in an NBA game, died Tuesday at 63.

Chamberlain's body was found by authorities who were called to his Bel-Air home shortly after noon PDT, said John Black, a Los Angeles Lakers spokesman.

There were signs that Chamberlain might have had a heart attack, fire department spokesman Jim Wells said. Chamberlain was hospitalized with an irregular heartbeat in 1992, and his agent, Sy Goldberg, said the Hall of Famer was on medication.

Known as "Wilt the Stilt" and "The Big Dipper," the 7-foot-1 Chamberlain starred in the NBA from 1959 through 1973, when he played for the Philadelphia (later the San Francisco) Warriors, 76ers and Lakers. He later stirred controversy with boasts of his sexual exploits.

Chamberlain scored 31,419 points during his career, a record until Kareem Abdul-Jabbar broke it in 1984. Chamberlain, who never fouled out in 1,205 regular-season and playoff games, holds the record for career rebounding with 23,924.

"Wilt was one of the greatest ever, and we will never see another one like him," Abdul-Jabbar said.

Chamberlain, who began his professional career with the Harlem Globetrotters in 1958, was one of only two men to win the MVP and rookie of the year awards in the same season (1959-60). He was also MVP in 1966 through 1968. He led the NBA in scoring seven straight seasons, 1960-66, and led the league in rebounding 11 of his 14 seasons.

He was such a force that the NBA changed some of its rules, including widening the lane to try to keep him farther from the basket.

One of his most famous records is the 100 points he scored in the Philadelphia Warriors' 169-147 defeat of the New York Knicks on March 2, 1962, in Hershey, Pa.

"I spent 12 years in his armpits, and I always carried that 100-point game on my shoulders," Darrall Imhoff, the former Knicks center, said Tuesday.

"After I got my third foul, I said to one of the officials, Willy Smith, 'Why don't you just give him 100 points and we'll all go home?' Well, we did."

Chamberlain also holds the single-game record for rebounds, 55, against Boston in 1960.

He averaged 30.1 points a game in his career, including a record 50.4 in the 1961-62 season with Philadelphia. He also was one of the most versatile big men ever, leading the league in assists with 702 in 1967-68.

He led his team into the playoffs 13 times, winning two world championships. The first came in 1966-67 with the Philadelphia 76ers, the second in 1971-72 with the Lakers, which won a record 33 straight games.

His teams lost in the finals four other times and were beaten in the conference final six times.

Bill Russell and the Boston Celtics almost always seemed to be the nemesis of Chamberlain-led teams, beating them twice in the championship series and five times in the conference finals. Three times, a series was decided by a seventh game that Boston won by either one or two points.

"Wilt Chamberlain had a great deal to do with the success of the NBA," said Red Auerbach, coach of those great Celtics. "His dominance, power, demeanor and the rivalry with Bill Russell says it all."

Long after his career ended, Chamberlain made news by claiming in an autobiography that he had had sex with 20,000 women.

"The women who I have been the most attracted to, the most in love with, I've pushed away the strongest," the lifelong bachelor said in a 1991 interview with The Associated Press. "There are about five women I can think of I could have married. I cared for them a lot, but not enough to make a commitment."

Before his death from AIDS in 1993, Arthur Ashe was critical of sexually promiscuous athletes like Chamberlain, saying the behavior reinforced racist stereotypes.

Ashe added that he didn't believe Chamberlain's claim, concluding, "I felt more pity than sorrow for Wilt as his macho accounting backfired on him in the form of a wave of public criticism."

Wilton Norman Chamberlain was born on Aug. 21, 1936, in Philadelphia. He didn't begin playing basketball until he was in the seventh grade. He grew 4 inches in three months when he was 15, and was 6-11 when he entered Philadelphia's Overbrook High School.

After leading Overbrook to

three public school championships and two all-city titles, Chamberlain became one of the most recruited players ever with over 200 colleges interested.

He chose the University of Kansas and Hall of Fame coach Phog Allen. In his first game against the Kansas varsity — freshmen weren't allowed to compete against other teams then — he scored 50 points before a packed Allen Fieldhouse crowd of more than 15,000.

The next year, Chamberlain scored 52 points against Northwestern in his first game, a total he never surpassed in college, partly because of zone defenses designed to keep him from getting the ball.

As a sophomore, he led the 1957 Jayhawks to the NCAA tournament finals, where Kansas lost to unbeaten North Carolina in triple overtime.

Disgusted by being smothered by the zone defenses, Chamberlain left Kansas after his junior year and joined the Globetrotters.

Chamberlain, extremely agile for his size, ran cross-country in high school and was an outstanding high jumper and shot-putter at Kansas.

He remained active after his NBA career and was considered an outstanding volleyball player. He also ran in the Honolulu marathon recently and competed in a 50-mile race in Canada.

"We've lost a giant of a man in every sense of the word," NBA commissioner David Stern said. "The shadow of accomplishment he cast over our game is unlikely ever to be matched."

In January 1998, Chamberlain made his first official visit to Kansas since his college career ended. His jersey was raised to the rafters of Allen Fieldhouse.

"I've learned in life that you have to take the bitter with the sweet, and how sweet this is," Chamberlain said at the ceremony.

He seemed genuinely surprised at how much he was loved by the rabid Kansas fans, especially after staying away for 40 years.

"Forty years ago I lost a heart-breaking battle, losing to North Carolina by one point in triple overtime," he told the crowd. "It was a devastating thing for me because I felt like I let the university down, I let KU down."

The crowd interrupted, yelling, "No, no," before resuming another standing ovation. His huge hand brushed his cheek as he paused again, drowned out by more applause.

## Hartmann

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The connection between both of those schools is Oregon head coach Martin Smith, who coached at Wisconsin from 1983-1998. Smith's up-front approach was a main factor in determining Hartmann's choice.

"Coach Smith was blunt with me and didn't do any B.S.-ing," Hartmann said. "He came right out and told me that Oregon would be a good fit for me. Plus, the Wisconsin coach learned from Coach Smith, so you might as well learn from the teacher."

Smith knew that he was dealing with a hot item and was just hoping for a chance to attract Hartmann toward Eugene.

"Jason appreciates and respects you if you can shoot straight with him," Smith said. "I simply shared with him the strengths and weaknesses that Oregon had for him, and he responded positively."

Hartmann's first visit to Eugene convinced him to join Oregon's rich running history.

"I knew right away that this was a place where I could excel both academically and athletically," Hartmann said. "I'm still in awe of everything as I walk around. It hasn't really hit me yet that I'm here."

Hartmann is no stranger to the spotlight as he exploded onto the cross country scene as a sophomore at talent-rich Rockford High School. As a sophomore, he placed sixth at the state harrier meet (15 minutes, 56.45 seconds). He followed that with his first state individual title (16:17.10) during his junior year, which guided his team to a runner-up finish.

Both of those races set up his senior finale, when he smoked the rest of the field by 19 seconds in his 14:52 course-record time in the three-mile race, the fastest-ever state-winning time in Michigan.

Looking back, Hartmann is quick to thank his father, Tim Hartmann, for his success.

"In the ninth grade, I was all about playing basketball," Hartmann said. "I had dreams of the NBA. My dad was looking out for me, and he knew that basketball couldn't take me as far as running."

Hartmann's legs have taken him

across the nation to Eugene, and he does go through the usual homesickness from time to time. Helping, though, is sophomore pole vault hopeful Jared Hegar, who was Hartmann's high school track teammate.

"It's hard now being away from Michigan and being all by myself," Hartmann said. "But it's awesome having someone from Rockford here and having that connection to home."

Hartmann has already propelled himself into the top seven on the team with his 23rd-place finish (25:08) at the Roy Griak Invitational on Sept. 25. His practice habits are a big contributor to his

*"When you have big-time coaches from all over calling for you, you don't really know what to think."*

Jason Hartmann  
Cross country runner

success.

"Jason enjoys the process of practicing and the challenge of competition," Smith said. "It's evident in practice that this is where he wants to be, and his great attitude is contagious. Anytime you have an athlete like that, it creates a much more productive environment."

Hartmann, a keen observer, pays close attention to senior co-captain Steve Fein.

"Steve is a great guy, and he leads by example," Hartmann said. "I try to watch him and see how he carries himself."

With the Pre-NCAAs taking place Saturday in Bloomington, Ind., Hartmann knows his nerves will be at full-throttle.

"I could barely sleep before my first race, and I'm sure it will be the same thing this weekend," Hartmann said. "I still have doubts about whether I can run at this level, but once that race starts, those doubts go away."

Eugene is a long way from Rockford, but Hartmann's genuine enthusiasm and respect for Oregon running convinces him that this is where he belongs.

"The history that is here is amazing," Hartmann said. "When I put on that Oregon uniform, I get chills, man. It's awesome."

## Thomas owns up to CBA role

FORT WAYNE, Ind. — Isiah Thomas isn't going to change the 54-year-old Continental Basketball Association much in his first year as owner. But he is going to dress it up a little.

Thomas, speaking in Fort Wayne on Tuesday on his first of nine stops in a league tour, said he plans to transform the National Basketball Association's official development league from one that's just been surviving year-to-year to one that has a long-term plan for success.

"We don't plan to change too much of anything on a league-wide standpoint," Thomas said. "We want to enhance the game. We want to enhance the flavor of the fan experience and what he or she feels when they come into the building."

The former Detroit Pistons and Indiana Hoosiers star officially became majority owner of the nine-team league last week after league owners approved the sale. Washington state has one CBA team, the Yakima Sun Kings.

Thomas, who also is negotiating to buy the nine-team International Basketball Association, plans to reorganize the CBA from an association with 40 owners into a single entity league.

He's also talked about instituting a dress code and about eliminating the double-team defense in CBA

play to speed up games.

"We want to give you quality and really service you. Those are the things that you'll probably notice, a big difference in the type of service and quality that we provide you on a night-in and night-out basis," he said.

Fort Wayne Fury coach Keith Smart, who also played on one of Bob Knight's national championship squads, said he expects the new owner to bring in a sense of professionalism and class, something he said both of them learned at IU.

"One of the things he's going to bring and what he's brought every place he's gone is a championship attitude, and trying to make the league or teams or what have you look more corporate," Smart said. "He just wants to bring that to a new level."

Thomas also said making Indiana the first stop of his tour was a natural starting point after his career at IU.

"I grew up here," he said. "I came here as a young kid and had I not gone to Indiana, there was no way I would've had the type of success that I've enjoyed and there's no way I would have become the type of person that I've become. Thank God I didn't go to Purdue."

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