

The Post and Courier

Former hoops coach recalls Citadel's first black player

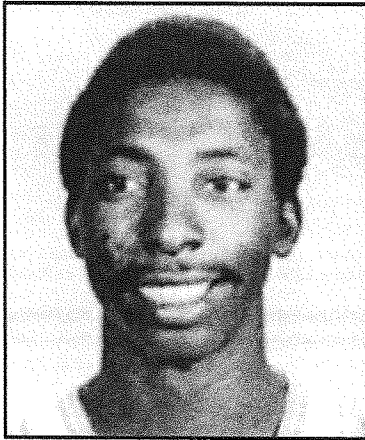
By [Jeff Hartsell](#)

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The photo in the newspaper dated June 17, 1971, shows a youthful coach Les Robinson with his left hand on the shoulder of Oscar Scott, who would become the first black varsity basketball player at The Citadel.

"I've been away from home for six years, and I just want the chance to play in front of people I've known all my life," the newspaper article quotes Scott as saying.



Oscar Scott

Scott, who played two seasons for the Bulldogs in 1972-73, died last Wednesday at the age of 63. But before Scott died, he and Robinson, an assistant coach for those Citadel teams, enjoyed a reunion at the hospice where Scott spent his final days.

"It was great to see him again," Robinson said Monday. "We talked about the old times, about his head coach, George Hill, who passed away last spring. We talked about basketball in general, and how the game has changed.

"Oscar knew he didn't have much time left, so it was a sad visit. But I was really happy I got to see him again."

Scott, who played football and basketball at the old C.A. Brown High School, had offers to play football at Maryland and Tennessee A&I out of high school, but decided to join the Army instead. He played basketball for the Third Army team in Germany, and after leaving the military attended Missouri Baptist College, where he averaged 13.1 points as a freshman and 18.1 as a sophomore.

In June 1971, a 24-year-old Scott chose his hometown school, The Citadel, from among more than 60 football and basketball scholarship offers.

"We are extremely pleased that Oscar Scott has joined our program," Hill told The News and Courier at the time. "Not only is he a high caliber individual and an accomplished athlete, but he is obviously a well-experienced basketball performer."

As a 6-4, 195-pound forward, Scott averaged 12.4 points as a junior and 11.2 points as a senior, playing on teams that went 12-13 in 1971-72 and 11-15 in 1972-73.

"Oscar was a great leaper with a nice medium range jump shot," said Robinson, who went on to become The Citadel's head coach and then athletic director.

"He was a quiet, unassuming guy. And as a military veteran, he wasn't that much younger than I was."

Scott's unassuming nature helped him deal with his status as The Citadel's first black basketball player, Robinson said.

"I don't remember a lot of fanfare about it, or a lot of problems," Robinson said. "There were black players on other teams we played and other places he went. He was just a solid guy and a solid player."

After leaving The Citadel, Scott went on to a career as a longshoreman. He also was a noted rhythm-and-blues drummer around Charleston, particularly in a long stint with local band The Abe White Affair.

After Scott became ill, he and Robinson were reconnected through Porter-Gaud girls basketball coach Kevin Ziman, who also works for the Lutheran Hospice of South Carolina.

"That visit brought some smiles to Mr. Scott at the end of his life," Ziman said.

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