

Chauncey Billups

Chauncey Billups (1976–) is a retired National Basketball Association (NBA) player who played for seven teams, including the **Denver Nuggets**, before he retired in 2014. A Colorado native, Billups was a star player at the **University of Colorado–Boulder** before he was drafted into the NBA, where he went on to win the 2004 NBA Finals with the Detroit Pistons and was named Finals MVP. In 2013 he entered the National High School Sports Hall of Fame, and in 2015 Billups was inducted into the **Colorado Sports Hall of Fame**.

Early Life

Born in **Denver** on September 25, 1976, Chauncey Ray Billups grew up in the nearby suburb of **Park Hill**. His parents, Ray and Faye, raised three children: Chauncey, Rodney, and Maria. By the time Billups entered fifth grade, he had earned the nickname “The King of Park Hill” because he excelled at both basketball and football in local leagues.

While attending **George Washington High School** in 1991–95, the kid the coaches nicknamed “Smooth” earned First-Team All-State honors all four years and Colorado Player of the Year twice during his sophomore and junior seasons. Billups was named Mr. Colorado Basketball as a sophomore, junior, and senior, becoming the only player to win the award three times. He led his high school team to the Class 5A State Title during his 1993–94 junior season and earned a selection to the 1995 McDonalds All-American game his senior year.

College Career

After high school, Billups decided to continue his basketball career in Colorado, attending the University of Colorado at Boulder. Billups joined a team that was coming off a losing season and a program that had not been to the NCAA Tournament since the late 1960s. In the 1995–96 season, Billups set the school’s freshman records for total points, assists, and per-game-scoring average. He became the second-fastest player in history to score 500 points in a college career, doing so in just twenty-eight games.

During his sophomore season in 1996–97, Billups was voted First-Team All-American and unanimous First-Team All-Big 12. After leading the Buffaloes to a 22-10 record, he climbed to fourth in the Big 12 in points-per-game and third in assists. Billups brought the university a second-place Big 12 finish in their inaugural season in conference, and at one point had the team ranked eighteenth in the nation with a record of 14-3. That season, Colorado went to their first NCAA Tournament appearance in twenty-eight years. Billups led the 9-seed Buffaloes in an upset win against the 8-seed Indiana Hoosiers, 80–62, although they lost in the next round to North Carolina.

During his two years at the University of Colorado, Billups averaged 18.5 points, 5.6 rebounds, and 5.1 assists in 55 games. He made 120 three-point field goals and a league-leading 85.7 percent of his foul shots. Billups became one of only two players in Buffalo history to score

1,000 points in two seasons. Billups entered the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame in 2015, and the university retired his number 4 jersey.

NBA Career

Billups became the highest-drafted Colorado Buffalo in the NBA when the Boston Celtics selected him third overall in the 1997 NBA Draft. Billups played seventeen seasons with seven different teams, including the Boston Celtics, Denver Nuggets, Detroit Pistons, and Los Angeles Clippers. After bouncing around the league in his first few years, including a stint with his hometown Denver Nuggets in 1999–2000, Billups finally found his stardom with the Detroit Pistons. There, he earned the nickname “Mr. Big Shot” for his game-winning shots in both the regular season and playoffs. He led the Pistons to the 2004 NBA Finals, where they defeated the Los Angeles Lakers in five games and Billups was named the series’ Most Valuable Player. In 2008, during Billups’s last year with Detroit, he received the J. Walter Kennedy Citizenship Award, an annual NBA award given to a player, coach, or staff member who provides outstanding service and dedication to the community.

In 2009 Billups returned to the Denver Nuggets. In his second tour with team, he helped the Nuggets reach the Western Conference Finals for just the third time in franchise history and won the 2009 NBA Sportsmanship Award in the process. In 2013 he was traded to the Los Angeles Clippers, where he won the 2013 NBA Teammate of the Year award. Billups then returned to the Pistons, retiring prior to the 2014–15 season.

Chauncey Billups finished his career as an NBA Champion, NBA Finals MVP, five-time All-Star, and two-time NBA All-Defensive Second Team. He scored 15,802 points and averaged 15.2 points, 5.4 assists, and 2.9 rebounds over 1,043 games. His 89.4 free-throw percentage remains the fifth-best in NBA history among retired players. In 2016 the Detroit Pistons retired his number 1 jersey.

Postretirement

In 2010 Billups, along with former professional athlete Ronnie DeGray and Colorado businessmen Ronald Sally and Vince Buckmelter, launched the Chauncey Billups Elite Basketball Academy (CBEBA). The CBEBA is a nonprofit basketball program located in Denver and focuses on developing the skills of Colorado youth. Comprised of top players from the Colorado and Rocky Mountain region, this academy provides development amidst a competitive basketball environment.

In 2013, Billups entered the National High School Sports Hall of Fame. In 2015 he moved back home to Colorado with his wife, Piper, and their three daughters: Cydney, Ciara, and Cenaiya. During the 2014–15 NBA season, ESPN hired Billups to be a part-time analyst on SportsCenter along with other programs on the network. During the 2015–16 season, the network gave Billups a full-time job as an analyst on “NBA Countdown” alongside host Michelle Beadle and fellow analyst / former NBA player Jalen Rose.

In 2016 Billups became co-owner of the Panorama Wellness and Sports Institute in **Highlands Ranch**. The institute is a performance facility established by Panorama Orthopedics and Spine

Center that aims to optimize physical performance and help athletes recover from injury. Whether getting a workout in or making sure everything is running smoothly, Billups continues to stay involved with both the facility and its basketball programs.

In addition to the CBEBA, and in partnership with the Panorama Wellness and Sports Institute, the Chauncey Billups Big Shot Basketball Academy started in the summer of 2018. This program is held at the PWSI facilities and designed for kids ages four to fourteen. The academy helps youth players advance in both written and skill-based testing.

Author

Matthew S. Mungai

References

Michele Bergh, "[Chauncey Billups' Big Shot Basketball Academy](#)," Panorama Wellness & Sports Institute, January 31, 2018.

"[Chauncey Billups](#)," Panorama Wellness & Sports Institute, September 13, 2016.

Christopher Dempsey, "[#TheGoldenAge: Chauncey Billups](#)," Denver Nuggets, August 18, 2017.

Nick Kosmider, "[Chauncey Billups Signs New Multiyear Deal to Remain as NBA Analyst With ESPN](#)," *The Denver Post*, May 12, 2017.

Les Shapiro, "[Chauncey Billups](#)," Colorado Sports Hall of Fame, 2015.

University of Colorado Athletics, "[Chauncey Billups, Colorado Athletic Hall of Fame](#)," June 22, 2016.

Neill Woelk, "[Mr. Big Shot](#)," *Coloradan Magazine*, University of Colorado Alumni Association, July 31, 2017.

Additional Information

Neil H. Devlin, "[Homegrown Basketball Star Chauncey Billups Says His Family Tops Fame](#)," *The Denver Post*, April 30, 2016.