



ON THE Ball

“MOST QUOTED MAN
IN BASKETBALL”
DISCOVERED DENNIS
RODMAN AND
SCOTTIE PIPPEN

By Emily Vincent

MARTY BLAKE’S CAREER IN professional sports began at age 13, when the Wilkes-Barre Barons basketball team’s scorekeeper failed to show up for a game. Blake was pulled from the stands and paid \$1 to do the job that night.

Now 80, Blake ’50 still serves as the National Basketball Association’s director of scouting. Discovering such talents as Scottie Pippen, Dennis Rodman, Tim Hardaway and Ben Wallace, he is considered the number one authority on college and professional basketball in the world. He writes a weekly column on NBA.com called “Travels with Marty.”

Blake was the first NBA official to tap the international market for players. In 2005, Blake won the prestigious Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award from the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. He also received the Guardians of the Game Award from the National Association of Basketball Coaches, of which he’s been an associate member for 44 years.

After service in the Army and attending the University of Pennsylvania a year, he applied to Wilkes College under the GI Bill. While at Wilkes, Blake organized softball leagues, dances, picnics and other events. The journalism student worked on *The Beacon* and wrote columns for the *Wyoming Valley Sports Journal*. He also was a member of the theater club.

Blake spent summers working for the local professional baseball team, a Class A affiliate of the Cleveland Indians also called the Barons, where he ran programs and began scouting prospects. At 19, Blake received his matchmaker license and became the youngest licensed boxing promoter in the country, bringing

professional boxing and wrestling matches to Wilkes-Barre.

In 1954, Milwaukee Hawks owner Ben Kerner hired Blake as the organization’s only employee. Blake served as ticket salesman, traveling secretary, front office staff, advertising director, announcer and more. Blake cataloged players and scouted – just like he did for baseball.

Blake convinced Kerner to move the team to St. Louis in 1955. Kerner sold the team to an Atlanta group, and Blake moved with the team again.

Shortly after the 1970 draft, Blake became president of the Pittsburgh Condors of the American Basketball Association. A year later, he founded his scouting business in Alpharetta, Ga., where he lives with wife Marcia, an artist and photographer, and runs Marty Blake & Associates with son Ryan. The family also includes son Eliot, daughter Sarah and four grandkids.

Blake also enjoyed an acting career. He appeared in several stage productions and two movies. In the 1946 movie *They Were Expendable*, a war epic starring John Wayne, he was cast as an extra. “They were looking for soldiers to wear their fatigues,” Blake recalls. “I got \$12 to play a dead soldier.” He also appeared in the 1994 basketball movie *Blue Chips*, starring Nick Nolte and Shaquille O’Neal.

“Basketball has been the life’s work of trusted advisor and scout Marty Blake, who has been contributing to the game of basketball for over 50 years,” says John L. Doleva, Hall of Fame president and chief executive officer. “He has reserved his place in basketball history while he continues to seek out new talent for tomorrow.”

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Marty Blake
Alpharetta, Ga.

Journalism Major, 1950

Career: NBA Director of Scouting

Notable: Won the Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award from the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2005



SPALDING

OFFICIAL GAME BALL

Blake talks to former NBA player and Atlanta Hawks guard Jon Barry.

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