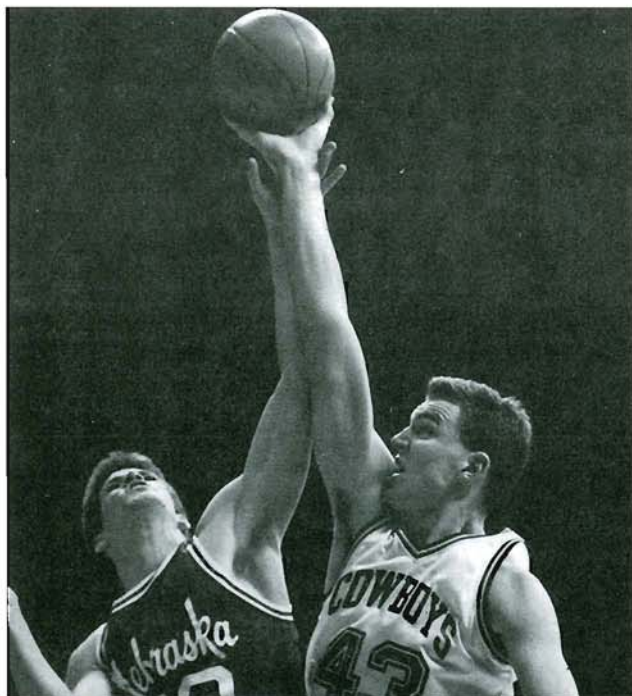


ERIC LECKNER

UTAH JAZZ No. 1 DRAFT PICK

By Greg Shepard

"For those who weren't stars, I'd say to really try to get better every day. I know I'm a blue-collar guy," said Utah Jazz number-one draft pick Eric Leckner. "I would have said it's crazy to think about NBA ball in high school, but you just keep working. My biggest thing is 'NO INTIMIDATION.' No one will ever intimidate me. Scared money doesn't win money. I learn from mistakes and make



Eric Leckner, a former star at the University of Wyoming, has a blue collar reputation of being a fierce competitor on the court. Now he's got the same rep in the weight room.



Eric's hand compared to coach Rick Anderson's Eric's is even bigger than 7-4 Utah Jazz Center Mark Eaton's hand.

adjustments. Nothing is ever free. A lot of so-called studs from my high school are now selling groceries. Work ethic is everything."

Eric's mother is six feet tall and his dad, who died one week before Eric's 16th birthday, was 6-4. Eric grew up in Manhattan Beach, California, and attended Maricosta High School (3,500 enrollment). He played youth basketball in junior high. Eric has always played center because of his size. As a ninth grader, he was 6-4 1/2 and 180 pounds. The next year he was 6-6 and 190 pounds. Eric did not start on the JV team in his Junior year even though he was 6-8 and 200 pounds. However, he began to shine as a 6-10, 210-pound Senior as Eric averaged 18 points per game.

Eric had a close relationship with his father and when he died it affected Eric deeply. "It screwed me up big time for awhile until I dealt with it. I figured my life was up to me but it wasn't until I got to the University of Wyoming that I totally dealt with my father's death. I thought—Hey, he could be watching me. He probably is and I've decided I'm going to give it my all every practice and every game."

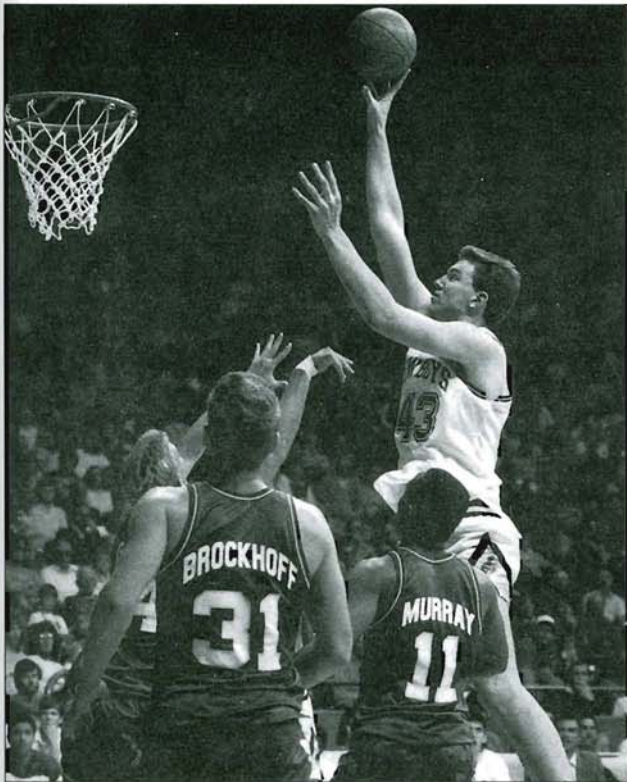
Eric worked hard in the summer with his high school coach, Jim Neilson, who played at Washington State. However, there was only a very small interest by colleges in Eric's ability. He took visits to Boise State, Wyoming, and Cal State Irvine. Eric smiled, "UCLA didn't recruit me so it felt really good to kick their butt my Junior year in the second round of the NCAA playoffs. I got 23 points and 14 boards. It was my biggest game ever."

Eric didn't lift weights in high school and when asked what he would do if he coached high school basketball. "My players would lift and lift hard. Not like bodybuilders but like athletes. We'd train like Bigger Faster Stronger."

Eric chose Wyoming because they provided the best opportunity academically and athletically, plus Coach Jim Brandenburg was a big man's coach. Eric started as a 6-11, 215 Freshman about half the time as Wyoming recorded a 13-14 season. He started every game as a 6-11, 225 Sophomore. Wyoming went to the National Invitational Tournament finals and won 20 games. In his Junior year, Eric started lifting hard, but mostly upper-body work. "It's not like I'm doing now," he affirmed. As a Junior, Eric was 7-0 and 245 with Wyoming going to the NCAA Sweet Sixteen and posting a 26-12 season. Eric increased his body weight by 20 pounds in his Senior year and Wyoming was nationally ranked as high as fourth.

The Utah Jazz made Eric their number-one draft pick and Eric was the 17th pick overall. "It was great for me to be able to go to a team and fit in and play," said Eric. He should fit in nicely as prominent back-up role to NBA shot-block champion Mark Eaton.

"I looked at Mark and knew that I could make progress like him. I plan to get two weight workouts per



Eric, a 6-11 center, will play a vital role in helping the Utah Jazz reach a 50-plus win season.

week all season long. Even with the short time on the BFS program, I've got more confidence. I've got a long way to go but I'll get there. I've already added a lot of strength to my legs and hips. I really feel the difference and can really bang in there for the boards."

Eric likes the slower pace in Salt Lake City and maintains that he can get more work in. But what about the night life? "Ha," Eric laughed, "You worry about sleep during two-a-days and so many games. The time to work is now!"

Eric has done anti-drug commercials for the NCAA and states, "Drugs are everywhere. I don't put up with it. I would not let it get in my way. It's not worth it. If they want to test me everyday—that's fine. It's good to go through life and not have to worry about that."

The beauty of the BFS program is that all sports can use it with upper-limit success. For example, a football player who also plays basketball and baseball can and should keep doing the same BFS in-season workout.

Many pro basketball players are now training. In our next issue, we will feature Craig Hodges, a two-time three-point shooting champ, now with the Phoenix Suns. His story will be told by his strength coach, Michael F. Jelich.

Baseball players are even getting their act together. We are working on an article on Jose Conseco of the Oakland A's. Johnny Bench commented on the A's power, "In my day you didn't do weights. So you would have a Mickey Mantle come along or a Stargell or McCovey, guys who were naturally strong. Now, everyone is doing weights."

We wish Eric our best. He deserves success. We will keep you posted on his training and playing progress.



Eric has a long way to go down to reach parallel.



Eric wants to have a powerful chest and arms for rebounding.



The Power Clean is Eric's best lift. This lift is designed to help explosiveness.