Thomas, Isiah (1961-) Encyclopedia Article

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National Basketball Association (NBA) legend Isiah Thomas starred for two seasons at the University of Indiana, where he won All-American honors in 1981, led the Hoosiers to a national title, and was cited as the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletics Association) tournament's Most Valuable Player. Following that season, Thomas chose to leave school and turn pro. He was drafted in the first round by the Detroit Pistons, and went on to play 13 seasons in the NBA. The six-foot-one, 185-pound point guard became the Pistons' captain and star, leading the team to three successive appearances in the NBA finals (from 1988 through 1990). In the latter two years, the Pistons emerged as champs. In 1990, Thomas was cited as the MVP (Most Valuable Player) of the finals. Between 1982 and 1993 he started in 12 successive NBA All-Star games, and was the contest's MVP in 1984 and 1986.

In his time in the NBA, Thomas teamed with Joe Dumars to make up one of pro basketball's top backcourts. Upon his retirement after the 1993-1994 season, he was the Pistons' all-time scoring leader, with 18,822 points. He also was tops in assists with 9,061, steals with 1,861, and games played with 979. One of the keys to his success has been his mental approach to the game. "I've always believed no matter how many shots I miss," Thomas once said, "I'm going to make the next one."

Although he left college before graduation, Thomas continued his studies and in 1988 earned a degree in criminal justice. Since his retirement, he has transferred his intelligence and ambition to off-court endeavors. "If all I'm remembered for is being a good basketball player," he declared, "then I've done a bad job with the rest of my life." Thomas first became a part-owner and vice president of the NBA expansion Toronto Raptors. He hoped to take over the team, but the deal, involving majority owner Allan Slaight, fell apart, resulting in Thomas leaving the Raptors and joining NBC as a basketball analyst. He has also been involved in banking, land development, sports and amusement activities, and other business ventures in the Detroit area. Nonetheless, Isiah Thomas's greatest glory came on the basketball court. In 1996, he was named one of the 50 Greatest Players in NBA history.

Further Reading:

Challen, Paul C. *The Book of Isiah: The Rise of a Basketball Legend.* Chicago, Login Publishers Consortium, 1996.