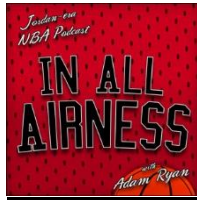


## **In all Airness – Jordan-era | NBA History podcast**



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Guest: Kendall Gill | Record date: Jan 28, 2014 | Key: A = Adam / K = Kendall

A: Kendall Gill, thanks for joining me.

K: No problem. It's a pleasure to be heard Down Under in Australia.

A: Have you ever been to Australia before?

K: Never been to Australia before – but someday, I plan on making it.

A: How do you compare the in-arena atmosphere of college basketball, to the support your Charlotte Hornets received in the NBA?

K: It was a little bit different, because an important thing to remember about the Illini players – each and every one of those players; even the walk-ons – was from the state of Illinois. All of us were home grown. It was special.

When I go to North Carolina and play for the Charlotte Hornets, it was great as well, because of the 22,000 fans they had there every night – they were basketball crazy. At that time, the Hornets were the only show in town. It seemed like a college atmosphere, but it was a little different playing pro basketball to college basketball, because players can get traded and you don't get to form the special relationships as a pro player, that you can as a college player. The fan support was awesome in Charlotte.

A: How was it, playing with a unique team mate like Muggsy Bogues?

K: Well, with Muggsy, it was great playing with him, because he was a point guard that could deliver the basketball to you. That was his first priority. In today's day and age, you have guys that shoot first. Muggsy was not at all like that - he pushed the basketball up the court. If you ran, he would give you the basketball. Defensively, people didn't want to dribble the basketball up against Muggsy Bogues.

If you remember Rod Strickland, who is one of the great point guards - most underrated point guards that has ever played in the NBA - bringing the ball up against Muggsy, he never wanted to do that. He always passed the ball off to the two-guard and let him bring it up. That lets you know that even though Muggsy was 5'3", he could change the game at any time.

A: True. Rod Strickland had great handle of the ball, so it's a testament to how good Muggsy was. It must have been quite jarring to see someone of his (Bogues) stature, compete and be so good at NBA level, where players are much taller. Can you talk about his competitiveness?

K: Absolutely. He's a big-time competitor and confident. Totally confident. Even though he was small, he used his speed to his advantage. He had a great ability to cause disruption on the defensive end. These are his strengths. We know he wasn't the greatest scorer - he was great at other things and that is what kept him in the league for so long.

A: Most listeners will know, as we record this chat, the Charlotte Bobcats will soon revert back to being named the Charlotte Hornets. As one of the Hornets' best players in their franchise history, what's your opinion of their name change?

K: I think it's great. I think the fans were so hurt when the franchise left for New Orleans, that when the NBA brought them back, it still wasn't the same - they were the Bobcats. I think the city identifies with the colors of purple and teal. They identify that with the Hornets name. Now, it seems like the real girlfriend is back (laughs) - so to speak.

I think the city will embrace it and with the name change, there will be more pride instilled in the franchise. Michael Jordan and Fred Whitfield and all those guys understand that. That's why they wanted to bring the name-change back. It is going to be great for the franchise.

A: [Mutombo's Nuggets defeated Gill's Sonics: 1994 NBA Playoffs] After losing Game 5 and returning to the locker room, what happened behind closed doors?

K: Well, it was like a morgue. It was completely silent and like a train hit us. We didn't know what happened. I don't know if you saw, but I'm a big boxing fan. Manny Pacquiao fought Juan Manuel Marquez; in a fight in which he got knocked out. Manny was winning the fight and then, all of sudden – boom – one punch...he's out. Exactly the feeling we had when we lost to the Denver Nuggets.

A: At what point in your career, did you increase your physical conditioning, with boxing and aerobic-type exercises?

K: About my 10<sup>th</sup> year in the league, I started to do mixed-martial arts - things you'd see on the UFC. I did that for extra conditioning in the summer time – being a 10<sup>th</sup> year player, you need something else to take it to another level, to keep you ahead of the younger players and that's why I did it. My first love was always boxing. I used to box when I was a kid. I went back to my first love. I had four professional fights - I may have another one - I'm not sure right now. I'm trying to work out the details. However, that is my passion and I do it every day.

A: I know that recently you set a goal to get back to your ideal NBA game-shape. The physical conditioning that you're talking about - is this one of the driving forces behind that decision?

K: It is. My brothers actually bet me that I couldn't get into that type of shape again. At Christmas, at my parents' house, my brothers actually bet me that I couldn't do it. I said, 'OK'. It's a challenge – I always look for challenges - I'm going to do it. I've already been in a month of training and I've got about a month and a half to go. We'll see. I'm half way there (laughs).

A: Who did you get amped up for and look forward to playing, when you read your NBA schedule?

K: Well, I'll tell you what. I used to get amped up to play against Drazen Petrovic. He always brought the best out in me. He and I had some terrific battles. I loved playing against Michael, because...one thing, Michael had the Mike Tyson effect. He had the other guys beat before they even got to the arena. They were afraid of him, you know.

That never worked on me. I was never afraid and I relished playing against him - even though he was the greatest to ever play the game. I'm not going to stop him; but, I'm going to make it hard for him. I made it very hard for him to score, but, he still scored. He also had the best offense - the Triangle.

You know, we can go back to Kobe Bryant and how great he was. Shaquille O'Neal. Scottie Pippen. Another guy I loved playing against, even though I didn't guard him - Hakeem Olajuwon. I think he was the second best player I've ever played against. Players like that...you know, Glen Rice and I had a lot battles. Also, Grant Hill. A lot of people don't know; had Grant Hill never been injured, we'd be talking about one of the greatest players to ever play this game. He was one of the most difficult guys to cover as well.

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