



18th June, 2009

FORMER SYDNEY PLAYER JASON SMITH RETIRES

Jason Smith, a former Captain of Australia's men's basketball team, and well known to Sydney basketball fans as a former Sydney King and Sydney Spirit representative, has announced his retirement from basketball after fourteen years at the top level.

The 413-game National Basketball League veteran informed Basketball Australia yesterday of his decision to retire and stated a lack of motivation as the reason for his announcement.

Smith represented Australia at the Sydney and Athens Olympic Games as well as the 2006 Commonwealth Games and Captained the Boomers at the 2006 FIBA World Championship in Japan.

Despite being a Victorian, BNSW would like to acknowledge the significant basketball career of Smith and his contribution to New South Wales basketball, and in particular basketball in Sydney over the last 5 years.

Sydney Kings fans will no doubt reminisce today, particularly given Smith, captain at the Kings for his entire Kings contract, played a crucial role in the Kings third straight NBL Championship title in 2005. Smith was named NBL Grand Final MVP.

Smith went on to play two further seasons with the Kings between 2006 and 2008, after a brief spell for a season playing for KK Cibona in Croatia.

Smith completed his Sydney basketball experience by playing with the Sydney Spirit last NBL Season.

Renowned for his deadly long range shot, an unbridled competitive spirit, and an off-court persona that resulted in him being the face of the NBL in recent years, he registered 105 games for Australia and won three NBL Championships.

He also endured seven knee operations throughout his career and one shoulder reconstruction, the latter forcing him out of the Boomers team headed to Beijing in 2008.

But his body didn't push him to retirement. It was the nagging reality of the cliché that says when a sportsman knows it's time, it's time.

"I'm in reasonable shape and I believe I still have the ability to contribute to a team in the upcoming season, but on an emotional level I have nothing more to give," Smith told Basketball Australia.

"There's a demand for experienced leaders in the NBL and I think I qualify as that, but you have to be motivated to succeed and that desire just isn't what it used to be, so I'd rather go out with my integrity intact."

Integrity is a value that Jason Smith never lacked in a career that came close to ending before it really began.

After three years riding the pine on the South East Melbourne Magic bench for meagre salaries of five, seven and nine thousand dollars, Smith sat down with Magic Head Coach Brian Goorjian to announce that he would no longer continue with professional basketball.

But Goorjian convinced Smith to "stick with it" and after a breakout season in 1998 where Smith's production almost doubled in all categories the pair moved on to the newly formed Victoria Titans.

"What can I say in a few sentences to sum up Jason Smith the man?" Brian Goorjian asked from China yesterday.

"I could talk about his strong values, his unrelenting work ethic, his leadership qualities and his fighting spirit. I could say that no task was ever too big for Jason to attempt.

"I could say that a lot of the success I have enjoyed in Australian basketball was the result of having Jason Smith on my team. I could say that I have a genuine respect and admiration for him and that without doubt he was one of my all time favourite players.

"I could, honestly, go on for quite some time about Jason, so just say this: I regard him as a very dear friend."

Basketball Australia Chief Executive Larry Sengstock, a four-time Olympian and BA and NBL Hall of Famer, had more kind words to say about Smith.

"I remember he used to train with us when he was just an up and comer and he was a spectacular athlete but if I had to sum up his career in one word it would be 'determination'," Sengstock said.

"He really worked hard at his game, he forged himself a great career and he Captained Australia, but more than that he was an outstanding ambassador for the sport.

"I look forward to having him involved in the future."

That involvement will stem directly from Smith's position as Vice-President of the NBL Players Association, a role he has held since 2002, and as a player mentor to athletes at the elite level.

"He always led by example with his effort and his leadership," dual Olympian Glen Saville said.

"I played alongside him for a lot of years with the Boomers but I really saw what he was about when we were with the Kings.

"He set a standard at training and in the weight room and on court just with the way he carried himself and that rubbed off on a lot of players, including me, and he did that every day.

"His leadership qualities were based on leading from the front and whatever he said to the team, he'd back that up with his actions and his effort.

"He's everything you want in a team mate."

Despite feeling somewhat anxious about what the future holds, Smith has worked on a part time basis at Macquarie Bank for the last three years, gaining valuable business experience while he completes a Masters in International Business at the University of Sydney.

"I'm genuinely excited about the challenges that lie ahead," Smith said.

PLAYING CAREER:

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL TEAM (BOOMERS) 1999 - 2009

Sydney Olympics	2000
Athens Olympics	2004
Melbourne Commonwealth Games (Gold Medal)	2006
Japan World Championships (Captain)	2006

PROFESSIONAL CAREER 1995 - 2009

South East Melbourne Magic	1995 – 1999
Victoria Titans	2000 – 2002
Rida Scafati (Italy)	2002
Scavolini Pesaro (Italy)	2002 – 2003
Sydney Kings (Captain)	2004 – 2005
KK Cibona (Croatia)	2005
Sydney Kings (Captain)	2006 – 2008
Sydney Spirit (Captain)	2008 - 2009

NATIONAL BASKETBALL LEAGUE PLAYERS ASSOCIATION (NBLPA)

Vice President	2002 - Current
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