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Leaders & Success

David Robinson Stood Tall By Centering On Character

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David Robinson knew he couldn't coast on his athletic ability. Sure, he would become one of the most physically gifted centers to play in the NBA, flexing a muscular frame of 7 feet 1 inch and 250 pounds. And he would combine his strength with speed and leaping ability to become a Hall of Famer.

But well before those pro days, he had a light-bulb moment while with Team USA for a tournament in 1985. It came at practice, in a scramble for a loose ball between Robinson and a far less athletic player, Larry Krystkowiak.

Krystkowiak, now coach at the University of Utah, wound up with the ball, Robinson with a lesson.

It opened Robinson up to the realization that in high school, while not near his full height, he was still bigger and more talented than many. But in college, many players were his size and talented.

Robinson shot San Antonio to the top of the NBA in 1999 and 2003. AP [View Enlarged Image](#)

And still on the horizon was the National Basketball Association, a bastion of big and superb players.

To The Fore

"I felt I was going on my giftedness and not so much on my effort and intensity like (Krystkowiak) was," Robinson, 49, told IBD. "That changed my whole perspective on how to approach basketball. Just watching the way he played, like a madman out there. I learned to be the very best I can, not just off of my talent but off my intensity and my effort. That really helped me reach a new level in my basketball."

Robinson built on it to dominate college basketball.

Robinson's Keys

- NBA Rookie of the Year in 1990 and Most Valuable Player in 1995. Won gold medals with Team USA in the 1992 and '96 Olympics. Inducted into the Naismith Hall of Fame in 2009.
- Overcame: Being a late bloomer in high school.
- Lesson: Recognize and maximize your abilities.
- "Originally I kind of let the game come to me, but as I grew I was much more willing to put the time and energy into getting better. That's what changed everything, and I became a real factor on the court."

In 1986 he sparked Navy to a game shy of the Final Four.

And in his senior season, 1986-87, he averaged 28.2 points, 11.8 rebounds and 4.5 blocks, and won the Naismith and Wooden awards as the nation's best college player.

He graduated from the Naval Academy with a math degree, served two years as an officer and headed for San Antonio, where the Spurs waited after drafting him.

Robinson proved shipshape in all 14 seasons with the Spurs.

He averaged 21 points, 10.6 rebounds and three blocked shots per game. In 1994 he became only the fourth player in NBA history to score 70 or more points in a game.

He was the league's Rookie of the Year in 1990, Defensive Player of the Year in 1992 and Most Valuable Player for the 1994-95 season.

Robinson turned the Spurs into a perennial power that produced two NBA titles during his tenure, in 1999 and 2003. He also won at the Olympics, picking up golds in 1992 and 1996. Also in '96, he was named to the NBA's 50th Anniversary All-Time Team. Then in 2009, six years after his [retirement](#), he entered the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.