

Theo Ratliff

UW Distinguished Alumnus



Theo Ratliff (Exp. '95) credits his mother for his coming to Wyoming. For as long as he could remember, she always told him and his siblings to not be afraid to explore new places, so when the recruiters came to convince him to come to the University of Wyoming from Alabama, he did. It also helped that he felt needed and wanted on the UW basketball team.

"I took the visit out there, and I fell in love with the environment and the

landscape—the mountains and the trees," Ratliff says. "It's really a culture shock when you've never seen that type of beauty before."

He attended classes and played basketball at UW from 1992 to 1995. He's still the university's leading shot blocker with 425 blocks, and he holds practically all of the school's blocked shot records. He was an All-WAC first team selection for two years in a row. He won the Gene Benson Agency MVP Award twice, and he was inducted into the UW Athletics Hall of Fame in 2005.

"I did a lot of growing up going there," Ratliff says. "I was on my own for the first time, so many thousands of miles away from home. I had to do a lot of maturing—taking care of myself and making sure I pushed myself to get my schoolwork done."

When his career at UW was over, he was among the top 15 in scoring and rebounding. In 1995, Ratliff was drafted by the Detroit Pistons and was the 18th pick in the first round. He was the first WAC player selected that year. He played for the Philadelphia 76ers, the Atlanta Hawks, the Portland Trailblazers, the Boston Celtics, the San Antonio Spurs, the Charlotte Bobcats and the Los Angeles Lakers. He retired

from basketball in 2011.

While playing in the NBA, he led the league in blocks per game three times. He ranked 18th in all-time career blocks and 13th in all-time career blocks per game as of 2011.

Ratliff has been a huge supporter of the University of Wyoming. He credits the skills and experiences he learned while going to school as preparing him for his career in the NBA. When he had the opportunity, he did what he could to give back to UW.

"I have a legacy as far as playing there, but I wanted to leave something there," Ratliff says. "Being able to go there for four years and also to develop my skills while I was there in order to go on to play in the NBA, I wanted to make sure I gave back to the younger generation that was coming up."

UW is not the only place Ratliff supports. He has been a generous contributor to numerous organizations, including the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta, UNICEF Tsunami Relief, NBA Read to Achieve and Hurricane Katrina Relief. He is also the founder of the Theo Ratliff Activity Center in his hometown of Demopolis, Ala., which serves over 6,000 individuals of all ages each month.

COWBOY ROAD SERIES

Wyoming Cowboys vs. Nebraska

Thursday, Sept. 8: Alumni & Friends Gathering - Omaha, Neb. - Upstream Brewing Company at Old Market from 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. @ 514 S. 11th St, Omaha, NE 68102

Wyoming Cowboys vs. Nebraska

Friday, Sept. 9: Alumni & Friends Gathering - Lincoln, Neb. - Buzzard Billy's - 3:00 p.m. until restaurant close @ 247 N. 8th St. Ste. 101, Lincoln, NE 68508