

Former Basketball Star Armen Gilliam Passes Away

Written by Mike Kelly

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Armen Gilliam, who played for the Runnin' Rebels of Nevada-Las Vegas and for several NBA teams, including the then Charlotte Hornets, passed away Tuesday night.

Gilliam, who was 47-years-old, died while playing basketball at LA Fitness gym in Bridgeville, Pa., a suburb of Pittsburgh. The cause of death is yet to be determined. Gilliam led UNLV to the Final Four in 1987; he was taken by the Phoenix Suns with the second pick in the first round of the NBA draft in June of that year. Gilliam, who was nicknamed "The Hammer", also played for the Philadelphia 76ers, New Jersey Nets, Milwaukee Bucks and the Utah Jazz. He retired in 2000.

He was the leading scorer on UNLV's Final Four team in 1987, which was coached by Jerry Tarkanian. That team went 37-2.

"In my ratings, I had Larry Johnson (who also played for the Hornets) No. 1 and Armen No. 2," Tarkanian said in a statement released by UNLV. "He was such a great person. Everybody loved him and he loved everybody," Tarkanian said. "He was such a gentle person and such a caring guy. I am all shook up over it. I think the world of him and am just really shocked."

Gilliam had his No. 35 jersey at UNLV retired in 2007; he played for the Pittsburgh Xplosion in the American Basketball Association in 2005 and 2006.