

The Screaming Eagle

Talks to Eagle's Coach and NBL Legend Cecil Exum



Screaming Eagle

There was some big excitement just a couple of years ago around Diamond Valley when it was announced that one of the NBL legends in Cecil Exum was coming to town to take up the role of Boy's Coaching Co-ordinator. Anyone who has been around basketball in Australia knows the name and The Screaming Eagle was lucky enough to catch up with him recently.

Hi Cecil, thanks for talking to me, let's jump straight into it. Let's face it, you're big, you're tall, you're African American, you play basketball and you're from the USA. That will always grab the attention of kids. But for you it wasn't always like that. I read you were a shy, quiet kid from a small place called Dudley in North Carolina which has a main street called Sleepy Creek Road. That tells me that this isn't a big place. Tell me about your early life growing up in Dudley.

Cecil Exum

My early years growing up in Dudley were very fond memories, we have a very close knit family and everyone knew each other in the community. Those were the days that you could go to sleep at night with your front door open with no fears of someone breaking in. Dudley is a very small country town and at that time with little to no crime.

Screaming Eagle

Aren't times different today!! You were born at a time when racial discrimination and civil rights were a huge issue in the United States. Did you ever see or experience those sorts of problems and if so how did it effect you?

Cecil Exum

My parents told me stories of the things that they had to deal with and I used their experiences to navigate my way through a time and place that had huge racial problems. I remember certain things that happened, but one that stood out for me was: when travelling from the city of Goldsboro to Dudley and crossing the Neuse River Bridge there were always crosses burning and people used to say that they were having their KKK meetings there. I pretty much avoided areas and places that were deemed unsafe.

Screaming Eagle

Wow, that's something that we're lucky enough in Australia to not see in such a brazen way. Basketball clearly has dominated your life, there's no doubt about that, did you get started in school? Do you remember your first game?

Cecil Exum

I started playing basketball for the local community centre which was across the street from where we lived and it acted as a child care service for my brother and I. We were always there from the time we got home from school, until the time that one of our parents arrived home from work.

So, I grew up around the game of basketball and other sporting activities as well. My first game was an organized club game at the community centre and of course my team won. My early childhood experiences at the local community centre entrenched in me a passion for basketball. I can still remember my first coaches' name.

Screaming Eagle

Tell me about your high school basketball, don't forget to brag it up, the guys you played with probably won't read this!!

Cecil Exum

My High School basketball days were a great period during my life. I played three years at Southern Wayne Senior High School and in my Senior year, we won the 4-A State Basketball Championship. We played in one of the best conferences in the state, which included the team Wilmington Laney – the home of Michael Jordan. I was a senior and Michael was a junior. We played Laney and the eventual winner would advance further into the tournament playoffs. We held Michael Jordan to seven points, an all-time low for him.

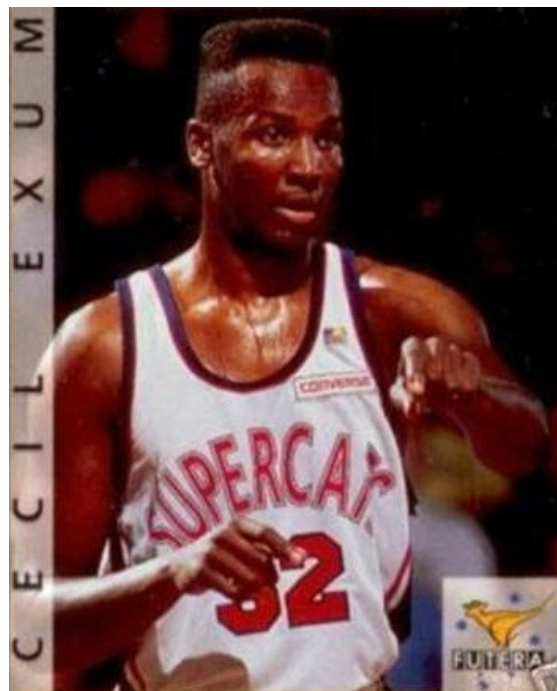
My high school team knocked out his high school to advance to the State Championships held in Greensboro, North Carolina. We won the championship and I was named the Most Valuable Player. Also in my senior year: I led the area in scoring and in rebounds and had my singlet retired at the high school level.

Screaming Eagle

That's some honour to have your singlet retired. You were fortunate to get a basketball scholarship just up the road from Dudley at the University of North Carolina. How did that come about, what did you study and what was it like to attend a university with such a history as UNC?

Cecil Exum

Yes, I was very fortunate to receive a four-year scholarship to attend the University of North Carolina. The UNC coaching staff used to come down and watch games at my high school, but they were there watching a guard, named Lynwood Robinson. It wasn't until my senior year that I caught their eye,



when we won the State Championship, it solidified my stock and I was offered a scholarship. The amazing thing for me was that we won the Championship without our starting point guard, Lynwood Robinson, who also eventually went to UNC as well. I became the first ever in Wayne County to be offered a basketball scholarship to attend a Division 1 school.

I attended the University of North Carolina in 1980 in September. I majored in Recreation Administration with a minor in Physical Education. Attending UNC was like a dream come true. I was able to go to a prominent university and play basketball, that was the ultimate goal for me. UNC is full of tradition and history and I was able to be coached by the legendary Dean Smith and play with some of the best players in the world.

Screaming Eagle

You could have been any kid at any time getting a scholarship to any university in the United States and you lucked in the period of great success for the Tar Heels, who in your time were NCAA conference champions twice in 81 and 82, NCAA tournament runners up in 81 and champions in 82. This is every kid's dream, what was it like to be there and live it?

Cecil Exum

It was a very amazing time in my life. I was a freshmen and playing with guys who I admired and followed. Al Wood was a Senior my freshmen year and was a great leader and friend. That year we played Indiana in the Championship game in Philadelphia and lost to Isaiah Thomas' team by 13 points. I remember saying to the guys before our pre-game meal that we were not sitting in our usual seats and that I think that we should sit in our normal seats, because I am a little superstitious and they laughed at me and called me a silly freshmen. We lost by 13 points and the very next year, my teammates listen to all I had to say! Jimmy Black was the captain and by the way one of my all-time favourite players/team mates.

We had a mantra for that year and it was simply: "April 1st" – the meaning behind it was that we will be number 1 on that date. JB as we called him was a New Yorker and spoke his mind and I used to say I wanted to be just like that, speak my mind. That year we won the 1982 NCAA Championship which was held in New Orleans – 63 to 62 – (UNC vs. Georgetown).

Cecil Exum

The crazy thing about winning that Championship was the fluke thing that happened just near the end of the game. Freddy Brown, a player for Georgetown had the ball and couldn't pass to one side of the floor because that player was being guarded by my team mate James Worthy. When Freddy couldn't pass, Freddy panicked and tried another option but when that didn't work he tried to pass to the other side again. Problem was that James Worthy and the guarded Georgetown player had switched positions so Freddy threw the ball directly to James and off he went dribbling down the court only to be fouled by Georgetown. Coach Smith calls a timeout and drew up the last second shot, which was for Michael Jordan. Coach Smith's thinking was Georgetown would not suspect that a freshman would take a last second shot, but MJ hits the shot, and the rest is history. Game over and we are NCAA Champs! That was Coach Smith's first championship as a Head Coach

Screaming Eagle

Unbelievable, you couldn't write up a script any better!! We hear stories about high profile college teams being treated like rock stars, any rock star treatment for Cecil Exum?

Cecil Exum

Carolina did everything first class and when we were on the road, the players were indeed treated like rock stars; with the fans that don't often get a chance to see the players up close and get autographs were the craziest. We would have to be escorted by police with roped off access to get to the bus from the stadiums. There were cameras flashing and people yelling just to get your photo or an autograph. We stayed in the best accommodation and travelled first class. I remember when we arrived back to Raleigh Durham International Airport, after winning the National Championship we were mobbed by fans and then we were rushed off to the University to be greeted on the football field by thousands of students. After addressing the student body, we were taken by bus down Franklin Street to our dorms. We were on top of the bus, soaking in the crowd's joy and adulation. Campus life would never be the same that year. Everywhere you went you got the royal treatment, from free meals to discounted offers in stores. And parties, we party like it was 1999! Girls! Girls! Girls!

Screaming Eagle

Ease up, this is a family show haha. At college you already mentioned you played under legendary coach Dean Smith who coached there for 36 years and when he left, he had the most wins of any NCAA division 1 coach. What was it like to play under him and what was he like as a coach?

Cecil Exum

Coach Smith was one of the all-time greats! He was known for his intellectual attack on the game. Coach Smith was a great coach, who you eventually admired even more when you are a senior player. There was always that player-coach relationship and we respected him very much. As a Senior player, he opened up the friendship/relationship door and encouraged leadership and delegated more responsibility. He is by far one of the greatest coaches of all-time. He has had a lasting impression on my life and I will always be forever grateful for the opportunity to have played at the University of North Carolina.

Screaming Eagle

Mention your name around Diamond Valley and the kids will tell you "he roomed with Michael Jordan he roomed with Michael Jordan". As you said, Michael Jordan was part of the Tar Heels team you played in at UNC, so let's get rid of the elephant in the room, did you room with Michael Jordan and if so how did that come about? I hope you don't get sick of being asked?

Cecil Exum

UNC coaching staff would make sure that all players got to room with one another on the road when we travelled to create bonds. I did room with Michael on the road several times, but his college roommate was Buzz Peterson. Sam Perkins was my roommate for most of my years at Carolina. We lived in Granville Towers on the ground level and at one end of the hall. Only Carolina players and team managers lived in that part of Granville Towers. I also got the chance to room with Timo Makkonen. He was an international student from Finland.

Screaming Eagle

Do you still keep in touch with these guys?

Cecil Exum

I do keep in contact with my former teammates. The last time I spoke to Michael was in April, when I was in the US for the Nike Hoop Summit. Michael was supposed to come to Australia for the Presidents' Cup golf tournament, but because of the NBA lockout, he had to stay in the States. I also visited with Jimmy Black, who lives in the Raleigh/Durham area. I spoke with several former teammates and coaches. Roy Williams, who is the head coach of UNC – was an assistant coach in my day. Roy (UNC – head coach) is actually recruiting my son Dante. Some of my former team managers and secretaries organised a dinner for me and I got a chance to see some of my former teammates. We all have aged, but we have a bond that transcends time.

Screaming Eagle

Any chance you can call in a marker and get Michael to run a clinic at Diamond Valley someday?

Cecil Exum

Sure, I can do that, but I don't think that it is feasible with his commitments and schedule. He is not only a NBA owner, but has a new wife and about to have another baby. I had always hoped that I could have had the Championship Team visit for a Reunion to play in Australia, before we all got too old, but with some of the players playing in the NBA, it was always too difficult to organize with everyone's schedule.

Screaming Eagle

Apart from Michael, there were some other guys in your college team who could seriously play, a couple that you have already mentioned, guys like James Worthy and Sam Perkins. Tell me about some of the other guys in the team.

Cecil Exum

When I first met James Worthy he was playing in a High School Tournament in North Carolina. He was a man playing with boys. James was a great player and friend who left school earlier to go and play in the NBA for the Los Angeles Lakers. I have been a Lakers fan since I could remember and today those that know me, I am still a loyal fan. James is now retired of course and is a commentator for ESPN. Sam Perkins, big smooth as we call him was my roommate and boy was he a ladies man. He was a New Yorker with long arms and could play. He used to go home with me occasionally and we had some crazy times. Sam and James was a great post players' combination. Sam stayed four years and went on to play for Dallas, Seattle and eventually the Lakers.

Screaming Eagle

So you finished college in 1984 and find yourself in the NBA draft getting picked up by the Denver Nuggets in round 9. What was it like to be in that sort of position, knowing that you have just been selected to play for a team in the best basketball competition in the world?

Cecil Exum

That was one of the proudest moments in my life... I was drafted by an NBA team! I went to Portsmouth Invitational Tournament, where players play in hopes of getting seen and improving their stock. My roommate at PIT (Portsmouth Invitational Tournament) was John Stockton and we all know he went on to be an All-Star, who played for Utah. As a matter of fact, I first met Tim Dillon at PIT and we played together here in Australia on the North Melbourne Giants Championship team in 1989.

Screaming Eagle

Tell me about being drafted into the NBA? It didn't all go to plan, you had some injury worries that cut you from the NBA, what happened?

Cecil Exum

I made it to Veteran's camp at Denver and re-injured my knee and I never got to play a game. I was crushed, but I knew that I still wanted to play basketball. So my next option was over-seas.

No, it didn't go to plan....My dream, was gone. In 1984, players that were graduating or leaving UNC participated in some games around the state of North Carolina...We had the big 4 schools – UNC, Duke, NC-State, and Wake Forest that had graduates who played in these barnstorming games. I was doing really well and I was very fit. I had my initial injury playing in a game and shortly afterwards I had to be at NBA camp. I was travelling well, but I re-injured my knee and my NBA career was short lived.

Screaming Eagle

You played a short while in Europe, tell me about that?

Cecil Exum

After my injury, I stayed at UNC to use the facilities to rehab. I then got an offer to play in Sweden. I played in Northern Sweden where the days were short and the nights were long. It would get dark around 2:00pm and believe me it was cold, very cold, but I was playing basketball. It was known as "The Land of the Midnight Sun". As an import, I was known as "the American". My girlfriend, now wife, travelled to Sweden with me and when we went to anything in the town, people knew.

I would get to training and team mates would say: "you guys were at the post office today", we couldn't go anywhere without being noticed. It was so cold that you would have to plug your car into an electric outlet, so that the car would start the next time you went to get in. The Swedes were really nice people and we made some great friendships. People used to invite us to come to their houses for snacks. What I remember most was the reindeer meat...very nice. The reindeer was owned by the Laps (Natives of the Land) and you would have to buy reindeer from them. We even tried to learn the language! The competition I played in would take us from Northern Lulea to Stockholm for games. The basketball was ordinary and the imports were the stars, most averaging double-doubles.

Screaming Eagle

Eventually you found yourself in Australia as an import, how did that come about?

Cecil Exum

After my time in Sweden, we went back to America. While working out at UNC, my base, I got an offer from Japan and Australia. I choose to come to Australia simply because it was an English-speaking country. I was recruited by Billy Tomlinson to come over, Billy is a die-hard Carolina fan.

Screaming Eagle

Before you came here, what did you know, if anything, about Australia?

Cecil Exum

Before I arrived in Australia, the only thing that I knew was Sydney. I had never heard of Melbourne.

Screaming Eagle

Must have been a bit of a culture shock?

Cecil Exum

It wasn't too bad. I just remember being pleasantly surprised that Melbourne was modern and had skyscrapers. My thoughts of what Australia was like: Everyone drove around in jeeps and had rifles hanging inside the jeep haha, that Australians wore big hats and were dressed in shorts with long socks, but to my surprise the airport was reasonably nice and Melbourne was a city and not the outback. I was first greeted by my assistant coach at the time, David Masoch and the other import, Robert "The Turk" Williams. I also remember that I thought that the drivers here were crazy, because of the way that they drove with the trams (in and out) on Sydney Road.

Screaming Eagle

You started with the North Melbourne Giants in 1989, a team with the likes of Ray Borner, Wayne Carroll and Mark Wright amongst others, what were your first thoughts of the NBL, comparing it if you like to the NBA?

Cecil Exum

Playing with North Melbourne in those days was very special. We were able to win a NBL title in my first year. The standard of basketball was pretty good with lots of potential. I don't think that the NBL could even be compared to the NBA, because it was somewhere in between professional and amateur. The Players were great and we are all still in touch and see each other often.

Screaming Eagle

Your second season you're over with the Melbourne Tigers, then back in 91 with the Giants, what happened there?

Cecil Exum

I had played for and won a Championship with North Melbourne and I also worked for the club. I created my job at the Giants and the General Manager went out to find me a sponsor for the position. Rage Without Alcohol got on board and sponsored my idea. There were no school clinics being done at the club and I am from a background of camps and clinics. I visited over 200 schools that year, which resulted into bums on seats. It was so successful that RWA put in an additional \$100,000 to do the job the following year. Other clubs tried to duplicate what I achieved at the Giants with little success. I did my own negotiations (as always) and they broke down with the Giants, which forced me to have talks with Brisbane and Melbourne as well. So, eventually Melbourne's offer was too good to knock back.

Screaming Eagle

There were plenty of familiar names to Diamond Valley folk in that 1990 Tiger's team, Andrew Gaze, Brad Pinneau, father of Australian player Dane, Dave Simmons, father of Australian player Ben and

Nigel Purchase, yet another father of Australian player Jack, and you the father of Australian player Dante. Was there something in the water in the showers in that team? Haha, seems that between all of you, there was some spawning of some reasonable talent there!

Cecil Exum

I guess you can say that there are some genetics at play there and also we have some knowledge to help and develop our sons in the game we love so much.

Screaming Eagle

In 1992 you found a long term home at the Geelong Supercats and played there for the rest of your NBL career, tell me about those years?

Cecil Exum

In 1991, I went down to Geelong to try and secure a contract; I had only signed a one-year deal with the Tigers for the 1990 season. I had a friend at the time that was interested in investing in a NBL team and he had a serious look at Geelong, but pulled out. Now, that meant that Geelong did not have enough money to secure my services. I remember telling Barry Barnes (the coach at the time), good luck for the season but you guys are 1 player short of winning a championship and I am that player. Well, I went back to the Giants that year and Geelong had the better team on paper, but we beat them at Geelong to knock them out of the playoffs. I had made one simple suggestion to Bruce Palmer (the Giant's Coach) and that was to take their end of the court to start the game. I figure that would upset them enough to give us an opportunity to win the game. We won and went on to play Southeast Melbourne, who eventually won the championship that year. After Geelong lost to the Giants and not winning the championship in 1991, they had an exodus of players which created another opportunity for me to play in Geelong. Now, I was able to negotiate another contract (a three-year deal) at Geelong. I got the deal that I wanted, structured in a car and, because of my successful history with clinics at North Melbourne; I was able to secure work as well for the club. At the end of my three-year deal, I re-negotiated an additional two years and retired in 1996. Ironically, I became Geelong's longest serving player in the club's NBL history. I played on some good teams at Geelong and have had some individual success, averaging a double-double during most of my career there. I played with some great players at Geelong, such as Joey Wright who is now coaching the Adelaide 36ers in the NBL. I also had some interesting coaches at Geelong: Steve Brehney (one of my favourite coaches), Jim Calvin (an interesting personality) and Ian Stacker (the AIS Coach who also coached my son, Dante).

Screaming Eagle

Let's be honest, you could play a bit and with some impressive stats to say the least, one of which was a field goal percentage of over 50%. You certainly knew how to knock one down at 10.7 points per game. What would you say was your greatest asset in a game?

Cecil Exum

I am a "thinker" of the game and I have always tried to out-smart my opponents. Over the years, I have lost some athletic ability, due to my knee injuries and have had to learn to alter my game, if I wanted to continue to play in the NBL. My greatest asset in a game was my quick first step, my array of low post moves and the ability to read a shot and get on the offensive boards.

Screaming Eagle

Now I have to ask you one question about your NBL career that you may possibly not be too thrilled about but here goes anyway. There was a story floating around that you took a bit of offence to, a suggestion that Andrew Gaze dunked on you, much to the delight of the people who found out you weren't too happy with it? Before you biff me, I know it didn't happen, but what was that all about?

Cecil Exum

There was nothing in it at all. It was simply a case of mistaken identity that needed to be rectified. But there are always some haters that are going to try to blow things out of proportion. I know that everyone is not going to like me or things that I say, but I have an opinion too. I will say what I feel and if you don't like it, talk to me about it and don't hide behind a computer and make stupid remarks.

Screaming Eagle

Wow, I got out of that one well! The NBL is no doubt struggling a bit, what is the main difference between the time you played and now, and what would you change to make it better and get crowds up?

Cecil Exum

The NBL is still a very good league. The most notable change is the level of imports. In my day, it was the imports (who were brought in to entertain) and the teams that were lucky enough to have Olympians as well were usually the successful NBL teams. I think that when football went nationally, it hurt the momentum that basketball was gaining. Basketball in Australia also was riding off the worldwide success of Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls. Basketball had thought that it had arrived and made moves into bigger arenas, which has proven that the NBL teams needed to own their stadiums. The wheel did not need to be reinvented, it just needed to be kept turning. Junior participation in Basketball is still at an all high, but doesn't translate into Senior Basketball. I think that the NBL league needs to align itself with community basketball and get involved with junior basketball, because they are ready made potential supporters. Australia is making a vast resurgence with its junior talent and the NBL have an opportunity to capitalize on the junior talent that is emerging. I also think that the Perth Wildcats Organization is one of the frontrunners in its operational day to day business and off court promotion, which has translated into memberships and bums on seats. One thing that the league could re-consider is to align the grass root sport with the National competition to ensure ready made fans and supporters. And there is always a need to stay in the schools (clinics, clinics) to attract the new kids to the game.

Screaming Eagle

A common theme throughout this interview has been clinics for kids, seems a pretty simple theory really. What did you do after you finished your NBL career because you seem to have dropped off the radar for a while?

Cecil Exum

If Geelong was still in the NBL, I would have been involved with Geelong at the NBL level. That was one of the first mistakes the NBL made and that was to get rid of Geelong, Hobart and the Gold Coast. So, now the NBL is not a true national league; especially with a Tasmanian team not involved. I then made a conscious effort to get involved in junior basketball, because I had kids that were about to play the game and I wanted to make sure that they got the expertise that was needed to succeed. The

coaching resources in junior basketball haven't changed much over the years, and we are always struggling to find knowledgeable coaching resources.

Screaming Eagle

You took the family as kids to play at Keilor, any reason you picked Keilor, or was it just because it was near where you lived?

Cecil Exum

I was actually the Coaching coordinator at Werribee, previously before taking the boys to Keilor. I was involved in Werribee Basketball for 15 years, both at the Junior and Senior level. I coached their Senior team for three years and coordinated the junior program as well. Werribee has never had the success that they saw during my tenure there and I suspect they will never get there again. I also ran camps and clinics that were very popular and had a hand in the development of a lot of surrounding players as well (players that played at the state, national and Olympic level). I took the boys to Keilor when I decided to resign for personal reasons and wanted a new platform for the boys to continue to pursue their basketball.



Screaming Eagle

In the early days of your kid's playing career, they would have been known as 'Cecil's kids'. Now with Dante getting his own NBA attention, what's it like with the tables turned to be known as 'Dante's dad'? Does it feel a bit strange?

Cecil Exum

No, it does not feel strange one bit. Dante is the player and I am the father, so it's not strange at all.

Screaming Eagle

Great answer!! Seriously, with Dante receiving significant attention, when he plays and you see something you don't like in his game or he makes a mistake, do you say "hey son, I saw you do this or that and maybe you need to have a look at", or do you keep quiet and leave that up to the coaches?

Cecil Exum

I will always have my opinions on what I see and I have been around basketball long enough to know that whatever I say to my son is to improve him both as a player and as a person. The coaches that have coached Dante can verify that I don't overstep my involvement, unless I feel that they are not doing their job.

Screaming Eagle

You turned up at Diamond Valley in 2011 as a coaching co-ordinator. How did that come about and what are you actually doing in the program?

Cecil Exum

A close friend of mine, Roy Mossuto who was involved with the Diamond Valley Junior Basketball Association put me in contact with the right people at DV and I was hired to coordinate the Under 12's and 14's (boys and girls). I help with the development of both players and coaches and also implement common offensive structures and defensive strategies to help coaches coach their immediate representative team. I help with try-outs at the beginning of each season and act as backfill for coaches if they can't make it to training or games.

Screaming Eagle

You've been around Diamond Valley for a couple of years now, what keeps you here, what do you really think about the program (you can be honest, I won't tell anyone)?

Cecil Exum

I have been involved in junior sport for over 20 years and this is what I love doing - development. I feel that I am a good developer of skills and the people at Diamond Valley have been great. The Coaching Staff have been very supportive and I love what I do.

Screaming Eagle

Now for some tough questions. Without overstating it, with a resume such as yours these are going to be pretty tough. Who are the three best players you have ever played with and why?

Cecil Exum

Michael Jordan – The greatest player of All-Time in the World, so that is easy.

James Worthy – I love his game and he is one of the all-time greats and a true All-Star.

Sam Perkins – Big and Smooth and has all the tools to make my list.

Screaming Eagle

Who is the best coach you have ever had and why?

Cecil Exum

Coach Dean Smith is by far one of the best coaches that I have had. He is more than a coach, he is a mentor, a teacher, a guardian, an advisor, a critic and above someone you could count on.

Screaming Eagle

If you could have your playing career all over again, and get the opportunity fix 'that' mistake, whatever 'that' may be, what one thing would you change?

Cecil Exum

Not playing in the barnstorming game in 1984, when I got my first knee injury.

Screaming Eagle

Which team did you enjoy playing with the most and why?

Cecil Exum

Of course my university years (UNC – 1980 - 84), we won the NCAA championship and I played with great players and created great memories.

Screaming Eagle

What's the number one game that sticks in your mind over every single other game you ever played, was it a school game, college game or what, the one game above all others and why, you can name a couple of you like?

Cecil Exum

- 1 In 1980, my high school team won the North Carolina 4-A State Championship and I was named MVP – which led to my 4 year scholarship at UNC.
- 2 In 1984, I had a brilliant shooting game with super stars (local graduating seniors from the area universities), I scored 41 points in the Pizza Hut Invitational Tournament and named tournament MVP.
- 3 In 1986/87 – scored 74 points in Bulleen Game versus Manly and for the rest of my career I was always chasing a repeat performance.

Screaming Eagle

If you could pick a team of 9 with you being the 10th, of all the players you ever played with, who would you pick in the team, who would be the coach, and why?

Cecil Exum

John Stockton, Kenny Smith, Jimmy Black, Michael Jordan, Al Wood, (Cecil Exum), Murray Jarman, James Worthy, Sam Perkins and Brad Daugherty. Bill Guthridge, my assistant coach when I was in college. He would be perfect for such an All-Star selection of players.

Screaming Eagle

You clearly enjoy working with kids and were obviously well known for it in your playing days. What gives you the most satisfaction in basketball today, is it working with the kids?

Cecil Exum

Yes I do enjoy working with kids, just seeing their development and improvement and what the future holds for them. I was just recently at the Australian School Nationals and a player that I helped developed came up to me to say hello. Her name is Rachel Jarry. I did individuals with Rachel for four years and put in her signature move, the Australia two foot jump stop into a lay-up. I worked with her when she attended Wembley Primary School and Williamstown High School.

Screaming Eagle

Rachel Jarry? Fair name to have on your resume, and I suppose you're a fair name to have on hers!! Any social basketball in Cecil's life at the moment or are you absolutely retired?

Cecil Exum

I am indeed retired. The last time I played in a game was in 2002 in the Masters (Over 40's). I get my fix by watching my children play.

Screaming Eagle

I usually finish with this question, if you could magically click your fingers and have something done, changed, fixed and absolutely in place at Diamond Valley right now, what would it be (don't be afraid to dream big)?

Cecil Exum

To have additional courts built with a show court at the Diamond Valley's main Stadium.

Screaming Eagle

It's my standard question and with almost no exception I get the same answer!

Wow, what an interview, when I look at it on paper it seems to go forever, but I have to say I was mesmerised with every answer and the interview just flew by. When the name Michael Jordan is mentioned it is generally some kid saying he's my idol, not with Cecil, he's a good friend and got to play with not only him but a massive amount of absolute legends of the game both by NBA and NBL standards..

And to cap it off, he is a legend in his own right of the game on Australia.

I have done a lot of interviews of some pretty good basketball stock and despite enjoying every single one of them for different reasons, I don't think I have enjoyed any interview more than this one.

It was great to get the opportunity to speak with you Cecil and many thanks for giving so freely of your time.

Cecil Exum, the Screaming Eagle salutes you!