



# THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

January 16, 2024

## 2023-2024 Board Members

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## *George Lynch – Founder of HBCU Heroes and Senior Business Development Officer at MAI Capital*

by **Susie Masotti**

**Andy Dinkin** introduced Tuesday's Speaker – George Lynch. George was a member of the UNC Men's Basketball Team that won the NCAA Championship in 1993 and graduated the same year. George grew up in Roanoke, Virginia but spent his Senior year in high school playing in the D.C. area and was voted one of the top 5 players in the country. Many thought he would attend UVA, but George felt the atmosphere created by UNC Hall of Fame Coach Dean Smith and made his choice to attend.

His 4 years in Chapel Hill playing under Coach Smith instilled in him that family is everything. He was a huge presence in the civil rights community and George's teams included players from countries such as Germany and Africa. George holds on to Coach Smith's comment that if we all just get along then we can change the world.

After his years in the NBA, he was honored to be recruited to be a HBCU coach – first as an assistant coach and rising to head coach of Clark Atlanta. It's only then that he realized the difference between his experience at UNC and the experience of HBCU student-athletes. At UNC they each had at least 3 or 4 practice uniforms, but there were none of these for his HBCU teams because they lacked the funding. George reached out to Nike, and they helped secure practice gear to make these teams look like a team which is how you build community and family. For comparison, every men's basketball player at UNC is on scholarship, at the HBCU schools out of 13 student athletes, only about 5 are on

scholarship and the majority do not graduate. George met a player who went an entire semester without books and when he asked the school about this (he was a scholarship player) he was told there just weren't enough funds.

Looking back, he asked for advice from Roy Williams about accepting the coaching job at the HBCU and his advice was not to not accept the job. But George believes that Coach Smith would have told him to take them and spread hope. Sadly, his program ended after only 2 years due to Covid. From there George recognized the need for HBCU fund raising so he partnered with several wealth management companies such as his employer, MAI Capital, to create HBCU Heroes to raise funds for scholarships. They started with athletes, but the scholarships are now available to everyone and include funds for those that can't even afford application fees, those that can attend school but can't buy their books, etc.

JP Morgan Chase has a program now where they go into HBCU's and talk about financial responsibility and planning, these talks are open to all students and hopefully help them plan for their future. The athletes, especially with the new Name, Image, and Likeness regulations, hopefully help them use their funding wisely.

George's oldest son graduated from SMU, his a daughter is a sophomore at UNCC (with aspirations to transfer to UNC Chapel Hill's journalism program) and his youngest son is playing basketball and has aspirations to play on the college level, hopefully at UNC Chapel Hill if he is lucky.

George spends as much time as he can at local high schools and colleges talking about financial literacy. He has teamed up with Tracey Pennywell to write "Hustle Your Way to Financial Freedom." It encourages focusing on financial literacy at a young age and not only does he encourage you to buy the book (it's available on Amazon in both print and e-format) but you can also purchase one and donate it to a younger person through the HBCU Heroes program.

George was asked about the change of rules regarding name, image and likeness of all NCAA Players. George's thoughts are that it's new territory and there is much ground to be covered. He knows of one young basketball player who is a High School Junior from Boston, MA but is attending school and playing basketball in California where his school pays him \$250,000 to play – for many kids that kind of money is not something you can turn down. Nike and others have already offered millions of dollars to all age athletes and this new "normal" presents challenges that need to be addressed.

When asked about the NCAA Portal – George feels that the athletes should have the ability to move after 2 years, but with so many players selecting colleges for their coach that there should be a clause that allows a player to change schools if the coach leaves. Again, we're in a new era of student athletics and it may take a while to get it to a point where it is fair to all.

George was asked to compare playing for Dean Smith and Larry Brown (since he played for both). He said they had different styles because Larry had coached in the NBA but Larry has always been the most like Coach Smith in creating a family atmosphere, which is difficult in the NBA (Coach Brown allowed families to travel with the team which made a huge difference for him personally). From a game preparation standpoint, they were almost identical in game preparation.

George was asked should student athletes who opt for the name, image, likeness funding must give up their Academic Scholarship to another with a baseline based on income. George reminded the audience that all NBA players are making so much money that the game isn't always their top priority. He stated that for the Hornets, if he were Mitch Kupchak, he would have several older players who had attended college for 4 years on the team to serve as mentors in the locker-room.

George was asked to explain the "haves" vs. the "have nots" in college athletics. He compared UNCC which has a team that has \$500,000 to spread amongst their players, while an SEC team has \$1.5 million in name, image and likeness funds – and that's just for their basketball team – that's \$100,000 per player. College sports are going to have to figure out a way to deal with that disparity or the divide is going to continue to get larger. The college experience is priceless and while there may be more "have nots" than "haves" – those that stick it out and get their degrees tend to have a more well-rounded life outside athletics.

When asked who his most hated Duke player was, George laughed and said .....well Christian Lattener but then explained that they were rivals in college but now they are former teammates and friends. It's all about the game!

When George was asked about a story or event of Dean Smith that you remember during times of adversity. George replied that when he was at Chapel Hill there was not a black cultural center. He was asked to participate in a protest to have one built but was also fully aware that there were people on campus that would seek out the support of athletes to further their cause. He went to Coach Smith for advice and his reply was if you believe in it, then do it – not because it's popular or an athlete but because you believe in it. That protest helped establish the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History. He follows that advice in all his endeavors.

Finally, George was asked if he recognized Stephen Curry's talent early on. George told the story of seeing Stephen Curry's routine prior to a game in college – he did a full lift (weightlifting) session, followed by a full practice and finally taking shots for a full hour after practice. He pointed out to his son that Stephen worked hard to hone his craft because he was smaller than the average player, but he worked harder, and it made him a better player.

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/903729281>  
The speaker's introduction begins at approximately 25:00 minutes.