



[Login / Register / Pickem](#)

[share](#) |

[RSS](#)

collegehoops★net

SEARCH CHN

[message board](#) | [home page](#)

[chn info](#) ★ [naaa tournament](#) ★ [conferences](#) ★ [draft](#) ★ [scores & stats](#) ★ [recruiting](#) ★ [preview](#) ★ [rankings](#) ★ [blogs / groups](#)

Q&A with Colorado Basketball Legend Cliff Meely



Kobe or LeBron? Bet on the NBA Playoffs with Bodog

February 27th, 2010 by [Jon Teitel](#)

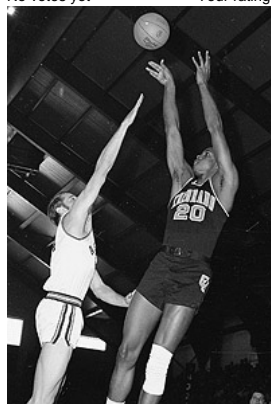
» Tags [Big 12](#) [Colorado](#) [Interviews](#)

Average:

Your rating:

No votes yet

Your rating: None



Colorado legend Cliff Meely

© AP Photo/William P. Straeter

In the latest installment in his interview "series", CHN writer spent some time with University of Colorado great Cliff Meely, who was a two-time All-America and is currently the school's third all-time leading scorer.

Jon Teitel: You were heavily recruited out of high school until you suffered a knee injury in a playoff game and ended up in a cast for several months: how did you cope with the injury, and what effect did it have on your recruiting process?

Cliff Meely: It was tough; when you are used to playing and then have to sit, it is no fun at all. We were 1 of the teams favored to win the playoffs until I got injured, and it was easier to play than to just sit there and watch. I was leaning toward going to Kansas, but they kind of backed off from recruiting me after my injury, as did many other schools.

JT: In 1967 you played at Northeastern JC and were named an All-American. Were you simply a better player than most of the opponents you faced?

CM: It was my passion: since age 15 all I wanted to do was play basketball. I played against some great opponents like Spencer

Haywood (1970 ABA MVP) and John Johnson (who was a 2-time NBA All-Star), but I just had an outstanding year on a great team.

JT: From 1968-1971 you were a 3-time All-Big 8 performer. How did you make the leap from junior college to the NCAA, and how were you able to continue to dominate throughout the rest of your college career?

CM: I just enjoyed playing and I tried to play all the time. Colorado and the players it had were just a great fit for me. My big advantage was all the playing experience I had, so when I got a B average at Northeastern JC and was able to follow my plan of transferring as a sophomore, it was an easy transition for me.

JT: What are your memories of the 1969 NCAA tourney (you had a Colorado tourney-record 32 PTS and 11 REB in an 8-point loss to Colorado State, and followed that up with 26 PTS in a win over Texas A&M in the consolation game)?

CM: It was good to get the record, but difficult to lose to our in-state rival. We lost 2 starters during that season to injury, which greatly affected us, and we just did not have enough to compete.

1970 World University Games

JT: You scored 10.6 PPG in 8 games for Team USA: what did you think about the competition you faced?

CM: It was difficult because it was my 1st time outside the US. I tried to focus on defending the best player on the other team, and I think playing against great competition led to me having a great senior year.

JT: One of your teammates was Jim McDaniels of Western Kentucky: how does he rank among all the teammates you have had?

CM: Jim was a great player: we became good friends after rooming together on the tour. Jim was great,

+CHN's 2010 NCAA Bracket Contest



CHN SPONSORS



www.ncentricenter.com

Arts by Goodie



NEW ARTICLES

[College Basketball Coaching Changes 2010](#)
[National Title Game Recap: Duke Wins 4th Title](#)
[2011: Early Top 50 Ranking](#)
[Duke vs Butler: Grading the Lineups](#)
[John P Wise: I Love Bob Huggins, I Really Do](#)

CHEERLEADER OF THE DAY

>> >> >> [..All](#)

but I played against some great guys in the Big 8, and one of our other players on Team USA was George McGinnis, so I have been fortunate to play with a lot of great teammates.

JT: Team USA lost to the USSR in the gold medal game by 7 points (its first-ever loss at the World University Games). Why was the USSR able to pull out the win, and what was the feeling like in your locker room afterwards?

CM: The Russians just slowed the game down and hit some big baskets at the end. It was very difficult for us because we had never lost to Russia in basketball. We were supposed to win it all and carry the torch for USA basketball, so we were dejected because we did not come that far to win the silver medal.

JT: The USSR was led by future FIBA Hall of Fame coach Vladimir Kondrashin, who two years later coached the USSR in its controversial gold medal win over Team USA in the 1972 Olympics. Are coaches very important in international competition, or is it primarily a matter of the talent out on the court?

CM: I felt that Kondrashin was 1 of the top coaches in the world, but I played for some great coaches in Italy as well. Talent is very important, and foreign coaches improved by having American players go abroad, as American basketball was the model.

JT: In 1971 you were moved into the post after playing on the perimeter for most of your college career and you ended the season with a school-record 28 PPG. Why did you switch positions, and why was it so easy for you to make such an adjustment (at least on the offensive end)?

CM: I played a little at center in high school, and at Colorado we lost our 7'2" center, so I just did what my team needed me to do. My experience really showed during my senior year: it was not necessarily easy, but I got it done.

JT: Your best game in 1971 was when you scored a school-record 47 PTS and has a career-high 25 REB vs. Oklahoma after scoring 43 PTS against them the previous month. Why did you have such great success against Oklahoma, and do those games stand out in your mind as some of your best performances?

CM: It was just 1 of those things where you match up well against certain teams, as I had many outstanding games against Oklahoma during my career.

JT: You finished your time at Colorado with a career 24.3 PPG (a school-record) and 12.1 RPG: did you realize at the time how prolific a player you were?

CM: I did not really come to Colorado to score points: I came to win games. In the midst of doing that, I did not really think about it breaking records. Now that I look back on it, I think to myself 'Wow. Look what I accomplished during my career.' I just did what the team needed me to do to give us the best chance of winning.

JT: In the summer of 1971 you were drafted 7th overall by Houston (one spot behind "Downtown" Freddie Brown of Iowa), while also being a 1st round pick in the ABA draft: did you ever consider going to the ABA, or was your heart set on playing in the NBA?

CM: Fred is a good friend of mine. I considered playing in the ABA a little bit because it was different, but as a kid growing up I watched the NBA, so my dream was to go play against the NBA guys.

JT: Houston coach Tex Winter allegedly fined you for saying anything and told you not to shoot the ball: was it just a personality conflict, or was there real resentment due to the salary you received after a contract dispute with the team?

CM: Tex did not fine me for saying anything; people just wanted me to be quiet, but I continued to talk. It was not a personal conflict: I had some of my best years playing under Tex. They asked me not to shoot as much: I was the best defensive player on Houston, so they wanted me to focus on defending the best opponent. If I shot the ball too much on offense, they figured I was not concentrating on defense and they would take me out, which affected my confidence. It was difficult: I came out of college after scoring about 30 PPG as a senior, and then they told me not to shoot the ball! I had one of the highest contracts when I came into the league, so I felt there was a certain amount of resentment due to that.

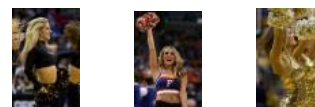
JT: You averaged 8.4 PPG and 5.4 RPG during your 5-year NBA career, but were forced into early retirement due to some back problems. Did you feel fulfilled because you had reached the peak of your profession or devastated that you had to cut short your career due to injuries?

CM: I was devastated because I did not accomplish everything I wanted to do in pro ball. It took me years to recover because I did not do everything I was capable of doing. My stats were not bad, but I had high expectations.

JT: From 1976-1980, you played and coached professionally in Italy and France. What did you learn from the experience, and how did it compare to the NBA?

CM: It was great in Italy; I played with Willie Sojourner in the 2nd-division and we made it all the way to the Italian league title game before losing. Italy was one of the best leagues in the world after the NBA, so I played against a lot of college stars and NBA veterans. I would play outside the country during the week, and then play in Italy on the weekends: it was a great experience for me.

JT: In 1985 you were sentenced to 90 days in jail and three years probation for pleading guilty to selling one ounce of cocaine to an undercover officer. Was the incident a direct result of your parents' poor health and your own multiple divorces, and what life lessons did you learn?



ABOUT JON TEITEL



Columnist
Penn/Ivy League Columnist

Contact
jonteitel@hotmail.com

Background

Jon attended college at the University of Pennsylvania (class of 1996) and law school at the University of Arizona (class of 2001), so his 2 favorite college teams are the Quakers and the Wildcats. While at Penn, Jon was the sports director of the school TV station, where he covered their 1994 and 1995 NCAA tournament appearances. He has also worked as a production assistant for ESPN, and a broadcast assistant for CBS during 2 different NCAA tournaments. He currently works as an investigator for the federal government in Washington, DC.

Location
Washington, DC

[View full user profile](#)



- * Prove Your Fandom
- * Blog about your team
- * Create poll & links



Jeff Borzello



Jason Brub.



Jeff Fox



Raphielle J.



Shawn Siegel



Jon Teitel



Joel Welsler



Jacob White

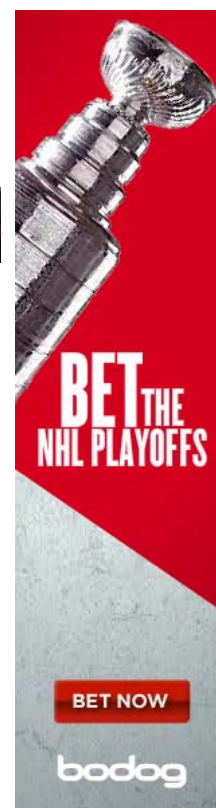


Rob Carpenter



Jason Tom,
Adam Stanco
Ed Matisik
Kevin McNeill

[Want to Write?](#)



HOOPS & FOOTBALL STORE

+ \$4.99 Shipping All Orders
+ Gifts, Sales, Jerseys



CM: My divorces played a part, and it was difficult to play ball for so many years and then to be out of basketball. I tried to distract myself from my problems by using drugs and becoming an addict, and after getting caught they gave me treatment, classes, specialists, etc. My doctors taught me about the harm of drugs, and they were able to get me off of cocaine and get me going in the right direction. I felt like I was a failure but my doctors helped me understand that I had succeeded as a college graduate who had won numerous awards in basketball. It was a difficult transition to be out of basketball so the lesson I learned was that I was blessed and had to move on with my life. I put everything in the right perspective, got my Masters degree, and worked with young people in the community. I wanted to show everyone that it was just a mistake in my life.

JT: In 1989 you founded the Cliff Meely Youth Basketball Program in Boulder. Why did you do so and what has the program accomplished?

CM: I went around to corporations to raise money. If kids only had a dollar, they could get into the program and we would subsidize it with scholarships and donations to non-profit program. I wanted to be involved with kids, but after a while my injuries were so great that I had to stop. It was very rewarding, and I would occasionally do camps for the YMCA. Due to an irregular heartbeat, I had to give up basketball, but I still swim and golf.

JT: In 1996 you received the NCAA Silver Anniversary Award and were also named to the Big 8 All-Time team. What do these honors mean to you and which one are you proudest of?

CM: I am proud of both honors. The NCAA award was due to work I did after my basketball career, so that was a great way of showing how I had been able to move beyond basketball. Back in my day the Big 8 was 1 of the top conferences in the country and produced a lot of great pros, so it was a great basketball honor to me. I still swell up at the thought of it, as there were so many great players who came before me and after me.

Jon's Big 12 "Fantasy" List

Baylor: Terry Teagle (1982): 2189 PTS (#1), REB (#4), 3-time All-American, conference POY

Colorado: Cliff Meely (1971): 1940 PTS (#3), 971 REB (#2), 123 BLK (#4), 2-time All-American, 2-time conference POY

Iowa State: Jeff Grayer (1988): 2502 PTS (#1), 910 REB (#4), 199 STL (#5), All-American

Kansas: Danny Manning (1988): 2951 PTS (#1), 1187 REB (#1), 3-time All-American, 3-time conference POY, national POY, NCAA MOP

Kansas State: Rolando Blackman (1981): 1844 PTS (#2), 314 AST (#4), 2-time All-American, conference POY

Missouri: Doug Smith (1991): 2184 PTS (#2), 1053 REB (#1), 178 STL (#3), 129 BLK (#2), All-American, 2-time conference POY

Nebraska: Dave Hoppen (1986): 2167 PTS (#1), 773 REB (#4), 60 FG% (#2), All-American

Oklahoma: Wayman Tisdale (1985): 2661 PTS (#1), 1048 REB (#1), 57.8 FG% (#2), 3-time All-American, 3-time conference POY

Oklahoma State: Byron Houston (1992): 2379 PTS (#1), 1189 REB (#1), 222 BLK (#1), 159 STL (#4), All-American, conference POY

Texas: Travis Mays (1990): 2279 PTS (#2), All-American, 2-time conference POY

Texas A&M: Bernard King (2003): 1990 PTS (#1), 232 3PM (#1), 550 AST (#2)

Texas Tech: Rick Bullock (1976): 2118 PTS (#3), 1057 REB (#3), 149 BLK (#2), 56.5 FG% (#2)



LATEST TOP 144 PREVIEW



Add comment

Your name: *

Anonymous

E-mail: *

The content of this field is kept private and will not be shown publicly.

Homepage:

Subject:

Comment: *