

One Last Rebound

☒ My original plan for this week's blog was to write about "American Idol." Wednesday night's shocking victory by Conway, Arkansas native and former worship leader Kris Allen is quite the story. He is yet another Christian who has done quite well on the eight-year old program that has become an international pop culture icon.

But I'll save that for next time.

Instead, I want to tell you about a great man that the city of Tulsa (and the rest of the country for that matter) lost on May 15: Wayman Tisdale.

Tisdale was just 44 years old when he passed away. After losing a leg to amputation last August in an effort to stop the spread of bone cancer, he had announced the disease had been stopped in its tracks. But apparently, the lingering effects were too much for the former All-American athlete and NBA workhorse to overcome.

It's interesting timing since just a few days after his death, the Los Angeles Clippers announced they would select Blake Griffin with the top pick in the 2009 NBA Draft. Griffin started at the University of Oklahoma (OU) where he earned All-American honors and was named by multiple organizations as the college basketball Player of the Year.

But before Griffin was even born, Tisdale was blazing the trail at OU. Many credit him with singlehandedly revitalizing the entire Sooners basketball program. In fact, Griffin himself has listed Tisdale as one of his heroes. When he signed with OU, he personally asked Tisdale for permission to

wear his retired #23 jersey. Tisdale gladly complied.

Tisdale, who won a gold medal as part of the 1984 U.S. Olympic basketball team, played 12 years in the NBA with four teams: the Indiana Pacers (who drafted him #2 overall in 1985), Sacramento Kings and Phoenix Suns.

But his real love was music. Tisdale was an extraordinary bass player. He retired from basketball in 1997 to focus on a burgeoning recording and touring career. His self-taught smooth jazz stylings earned praise and attracted collaborations from some of the genre's greats. Jonathan Butler, Dave Koz, George Duke, Jeff Lorber and Kirk Whalum were just a few outstanding musicians who found themselves attracted to Tisdale's unique lead bass compositions.

But more than anything, Tisdale was a man of God and an uncompromising husband and father. I had one opportunity to interview Tisdale. It was for a *Gospel Today* article about the unfortunate history of infidelity in the NBA. I was able to ask Tisdale and NBA legend A.C. Green in a joint conversation about their secrets to sexual purity and marital faithfulness.

And faithful he was-not just to his family, but to his faith. It came out in everything he did-from the way he worked tirelessly on the court to the way he produced brilliant art in the studio and performed it on the stage.

Tisdale's last album was called *Rebound*. It was written, recorded and released after his amputation. It reflected the infectious joy that was also evident on his smiling face. The theme was perfectly crafted and makes even more sense now that Tisdale has collected one last rebound and will no doubt be making music in God's presence for all of eternity.

For the rest of us still hanging around this earth, we are blessed to have Tisdale's music to enjoy. If you've never experienced it, I would encourage you to check out any one of his eight albums. Tisdale's songs will lift your spirits and remind you that there is one true source of creativity (our Heavenly Father) and that there should be one singular focus of our gifts (to glorify His name).

That's what Tisdale was all about.

Thousands gathered in Tulsa today (May 21st) in the BOK Center where, appropriately, basketball and music are both played. They took a moment to remember all the great things Tisdale brought to this world-hope, joy, love and an assurance that we can all rebound from whatever life tosses our way.

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