

## SPORTS

# Will Rutherford

## Synonymous with GB baseball

"It's all about making a contribution to baseball. It's not about me at all. I wish only to contribute to the development of this fine sport."

That was Willard Rutherford in a nutshell as we chatted a bit on Tuesday about the opening of the Grand Bahama Little League. Rutherford received a special honor on the occasion of the beginning of the 2018 GB Little League schedule. Going forward, the introductory phase of the game for youngsters aged 4-8, will be known as the Will Rutherford Tee-Ball Division.

It is a fitting tribute to someone who has been quite adept at instilling the skills of the game of baseball into the very young. Rutherford has indeed been a giant of a baseball mentor in Grand Bahama, in a most unassuming fashion.

Always available to put in the hard work and the many hours it took for the baseball leaders of sport in Grand Bahama to craft what could arguably be called the widest body of quality baseball in the country, Rutherford has nevertheless shied away from the spotlight.

Over the years, he became proficient at slipping behind the scenes, away from the cameras. His objective has only been the development of the scores of young Grand Bahamians under his care. With his guidance as the foundation, a goodly amount of families in Grand Bahama are indebted to Rutherford for forging paths for the advancement of their sons far beyond the Tee-Ball stage.

*"It's all about making a contribution to baseball. It's not about me at all. I wish only to contribute to the development of this fine sport."*

~ Will Rutherford

## SPORTS SCOPE

BY FRED STURRUP



He remains thoroughly devoted to the cause as is any, and much more so than many. Rutherford is a staple element of the incredibly vibrant Grand Bahama baseball landscape.

There is another side to Rutherford that bodes well for the game, as well. Known for being a fundamental thinker, his quiet suggestions had a lot to do with the sport, nationally, going back totally under the umbrella of the Bahamas Baseball Association (BBA).

Grand Bahama had been for over a decade, Bahamas Baseball Federation territory. When that organization was dissolved recently, in favor of acceptance of the BBA as the parent body, Rutherford was one of the silent partners of compromise.

Personal pride and agendas were sacrificed in order for every Bahamian to have the opportunity to maximize whatever degree of baseball talent fate provided. This could only happen by forming one body under the auspices of the organization endorsed by the International Baseball Federation (IBF).

That body is the BBA.

Now, Rutherford is able to tell his Tee-Ballers that they can realistically dream of playing the sport at any international level, all the way up to the World Baseball Classic that features the best national teams from nations throughout the world.

Congratulations Will!

• To respond to this column, kindly contact Fred Sturup at [sturup1504@gmail.com](mailto:sturup1504@gmail.com) or on WhatsApp at 727-6363.



WILL RUTHERFORD – The great baseball legacy of Willard Rutherford continues to grow. The introductory segment of baseball in Grand Bahama is now called the Will Rutherford Tee-Ball Division

## PISTONS LAND GRIFFIN FROM CLIPPERS AS LA SHEDS ANOTHER STAR

**AUBURN HILLS, Mich. (AP)** — The Detroit Pistons dramatically shook their struggling roster by acquiring one of the NBA's top players in Blake Griffin in a trade with the Los Angeles Clippers.

The deal for the five-time All-Star forward was announced early Tuesday, giving Detroit a player who has been the face of the Clippers but whose career has been undercut by injuries.

Detroit sent forward Tobias Harris, guard Avery Bradley and center Boban Marjanovic to Los Angeles, with the Clippers also receiving draft picks. Detroit also acquired forward Brice Johnson and center Willie Reed.

"We are serious about winning, and this is a major move to improve our team," Pistons' owner Tom Gores said in a statement. "Blake Griffin is one of the NBA's elite players, and when you get an opportunity to add that kind of talent, you take it."

For the Clippers, moving Griffin is another step in a makeover of a franchise that has never

made it past the second round of the play-offs.

Griffin was not expected to play in Tuesday night's home game against Cleveland, and Stan Van Gundy — Detroit's coach and team president — said his status is uncertain for Thursday night against Memphis.

"Those guys are flying in here tonight, they'll get physical tomorrow, so I think from our end, we'll be good," Van Gundy said Tuesday at Detroit's practice facility in Auburn Hills. "But I don't know if we'll be good from their end. The players have 48 hours to report, but then they've got another 24 hours, the organization, to get the physical done. ... Now, if the 72 hours expires with six minutes to go in the game, we'll run him in there."

The 28-year-old Griffin is averaging 22.6 points, 7.9 rebounds and 5.4 assists in 33 games this season, but the Clippers have been plagued by injuries and are ninth in the Western Conference standings.

Detroit is scuffling as well. The Pistons have lost eight straight.

"Needed a night to digest and reflect on what happened..." Griffin tweeted. "From being a (hashtag)1 pick, to Lob City, to six straight play-off appearances, I am so proud to have been part of the success of the Clippers organization. LA has been my home since I started in the league and I will be forever grateful to the city for embracing me and supporting me. To the fans, you have been awesome every step of the way. Thank you for years of support. "Now I'm ready for the next chapter, getting to work and helping the Detroit Pistons make a run in the Eastern Conference."

Last July, Griffin agreed to a \$171 million, five-year deal, ending a brief flirtation with free agency. He told his teammates, coach Doc Rivers and owner Steve Ballmer, "I want my legacy to be a Clipper."

The deal didn't include a no-trade clause for the second-leading scorer in franchise history

with 10,863 points.

Griffin gives Detroit's frontcourt another standout alongside Andre Drummond, but it also represents a clear change in course from the roster the Pistons had assembled. Detroit acquired Bradley in a trade with Boston last off-season, but he's in the final season of his contract. Harris has been impressive for the Pistons this season, shooting a career-best 41 percent from three-point range.

Detroit did not give up Luke Kennard or Stanley Johnson, the team's first-round picks in 2017 and 2015.

"For Blake, we probably would have done a lot of things, but yeah, we didn't want to totally deplete our roster. Obviously, they got our two leading scorers, and a first-round pick, and Boban, who had started to play very effectively for us," Van Gundy said. "We were concerned, quite honestly, with our ability to re-sign Avery anyway, so we were exploring what we could do with him at the trade deadline. Tobias was obviously

really, really hard to give up."

Detroit's season was looking promising until a late-December injury to point guard Reggie Jackson. The Pistons have stumbled while he's been out with a sprained right ankle, and the team is facing the prospect of missing the play-offs in its first season at its new downtown arena.

Detroit's next six games are at home, so the Pistons will have a chance to turn this season around — and an opportunity to build for a future with both Griffin and Drummond.

For the Clippers, moving Griffin continues a makeover of a franchise that has never made it past the second round of the play-offs.

The Clippers were one game above .500 going into Tuesday night's game against Portland. They traded All-Star point guard Chris Paul to Houston last summer. He had been credited with bringing respectability to the team that was once a laughingstock. Without Paul, Los Angeles won its first four games to

open the season, and then lost nine of its next 11.

"Blake is one of the best players ever to wear a Clippers' jersey. We want to express our gratitude and respect for everything he has done for this team and the city of Los Angeles," said Lawrence Frank, Clippers' president of basketball operations. "This was a very difficult decision, but we ultimately felt it was appropriate for the franchise."

Paul's replacement, Patrick Beverley, has missed the entire season after right knee surgery. Also missing time have been DeAndre Jordan, Danilo Gallinari, Austin Rivers and Milos Teodosic.

Yet owner Steve Ballmer remains optimistic.

"While change is hard, my confidence in our front office, led by Lawrence Frank and Michael Winger, along with the sage counsel of Jerry West, has never been higher," he said in a statement. "I believe today, more than ever, in our ultimate goal of winning an NBA championship."