

# Sonny Vaccaro

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**Founding Chairman, The Roundball Classic, ABCD Camp, The Big Time Tournament and Numerous Camps and Events Worldwide • Founder, Hoops That Help • Noted/Quoted Sports Marketing Innovator, Media Analyst and Personality • Former Director of Grassroots and Collegiate Basketball Programs at Nike, Adidas and Reebok • Outspoken Athletes' Advocate**

Considered one of basketball's most well-connected insiders, Sonny Vaccaro remains an influential voice in contemporary sports marketing, collegiate sports and players' rights issues.

His visionary promotional innovations (beginning with the signing of college coaches followed by the landscape-altering deal which brought Michael Jordan to Nike) revolutionized the sports marketing genre with shoe contracts, collegiate team affiliations and other ground-breaking promotional partnerships which have helped propel the fortunes of countless athletes, collegiate programs and professional teams. In a career spanning 50-plus years in the shoe industry, he brought his marketing and player development acumen to basketball programs at the world's three largest athletic shoe and apparel companies.

During his career, Vaccaro helped create a "grassroots" youth basketball paradigm that was and remains a wellspring of talent for the multi-billion-dollar college sports industry.

Beginning in 1965, Vaccaro founded what are still regarded as the seminal events in grassroots basketball. The **Roundball Classic**, America's original high school All-Star showcase, was his first major event, begun as the Dapper Dan Roundball Classic in Pittsburgh over six decades ago. The most widely imitated event in prep basketball, this charitable event annually brought together the 22 of the most-gifted high school all-stars in the country, and holds the all-time attendance record for a high school all-star event. From 1984 through 2006, the annual **ABCD Camp** held each July was a "must-be-there" week for college coaches from leading D-1 and D-2 programs across America. For nearly a quarter-century, the ABCD Camp annually highlighted wave after wave of outstanding roundballers for coaches and NBA scouts to evaluate. Sonny's **Big Time Tournament** in Las Vegas became the largest Summer basketball tournament in the world, featuring over 600 teams and 7,000 players from across America and internationally.

Continuing a charitable tradition begun with the Dapper Dan Roundball Classic in 1965, Vaccaro later established the non-profit **Hoops That Help** in 1990, a charitable partnership with *Comic Relief* (founded by Billy Crystal, Whoopi Goldberg and Robin Williams). The inaugural game at the Superdome in New Orleans featured a match-up between LSU and Notre Dame which drew a record 63,000 fans for a regular season college game. Contributions surpassed \$4 million over the years for programs benefitting the homeless, AIDS education, The Boys and Girls Clubs and other noteworthy charities. Also, in collaboration with *Comic Relief*, Vaccaro was an executive producer on the highly-rated 1991 NBC special, *A Comedy Salute to Michael Jordan*.

Vaccaro was featured in "**Sole Man**," an ESPN original film for their "30 for 30" documentary series focusing on aspects of Vaccaro's life in basketball, sports marketing and the landmark O'Bannon/NCAA federal class action anti-trust law suit.

Sonny is recognized as the catalyst in the ***O'Bannon vs. NCAA*** litigation brought to uphold the rights of players seeking to retain ownership of their NIL rights subsequent to their time as collegiate athletes. As an unpaid consultant to lead counsel Hausfeld, LLP, he again stood up as a vocal advocate for players' rights.

Widely quoted and reported on over the years in books, newspaper articles, online articles and documentaries, his efforts have had an unmistakable impact on college sports and causes supporting college athletes' empowerment. His speaking engagements have included appearances at the Wharton School of Business, Duke, UCLA, Harvard, Yale, M.I.T., NYU, Columbia, Georgetown, Howard and the University of Virginia, among others.

Vaccaro resides on the West Coast where he continues to speak truth to power on important issues and crosscurrents in contemporary sports matters, appearing regularly on television, sports talk radio and podcasts, including such programs as *60 Minutes*, HBO's *Real Sports*, *CBS Evening News*, *PBS/Frontline*, *On the Record with Bob Costas*, *ABC Nightline*, *Good Morning America* and *ESPN Outside the Lines*.

Vaccaro was recently featured as a central character in the movie, ***Air***, starring Matt Damon as Sonny and directed by Ben Affleck which was released worldwide in April 2023. His memoir, ***Legends and Soles*** will be released in stores and Amazon by HarperOne Publishing in February 2025, detailing his rise from a childhood in the tiny western Pennsylvania steel town of Trafford, to his founding of the Roundball Classic and other events, to his influential role in at Nike and the "Shoe Wars," his role in the landmark *O'Bannon vs. NCAA* litigation and beyond.