

## Anthony Mason's high school, Springfield Gardens, renames gymnasium after late Knicks star in emotional ceremony

Anthony Mason can still pack the house.

Mason traveled a long road to become a much-beloved Knicks forward in the mid-1990s, and on Thursday he was remembered and honored by a near-capacity crowd at its starting point, the gymnasium at Springfield Gardens Educational Campus in Queens. Mason was feted by former Knicks teammates, family, the PSAL A champion Golden Eagles and the student body as the court was named for the school's most decorated basketball alumnus.

Let it be known that the first event on "Mase Court," as it is now called on the banner that hangs above it, brought out a throng.

[Mason died on Feb. 28](#), less than a month after suffering a heart attack. He was 48. He played on the first of three Springfield Gardens teams that won PSAL city championships, in 1983.

"(Death) tears at your heart every time, but this is long-lasting because it's my father: I carry his name, I carry his looks, I carry his (charisma)," former St. John's star Anthony Mason Jr. said. "I look in the mirror and see him. It doesn't stop. . . . This was a soothing feeling because now my pops, even though he is not here, he will live forever. His name and face on things shows how wonderful a person he was."

Mason was a fan favorite while playing for Pat Riley's teams and also a great teammate. Former Knicks John Starks and Anthony Bonner were on hand and said a few words on behalf of the team.

Starks and Mason were particularly good friends and he loved the idea of his teammates old gym having the court named for him.

"It shows a lot of respect for Mason and what he did for his high school. Having the gym named after him says a lot about what he meant to the program," former Knicks teammate John Starks said. "Once a Knick, always a Knick. We wanted to be here and support him and his family all we can, do what it takes to keep his legacy alive."

The Knicks provided the banner, and a plaque and a framed Mason jersey that will hang for all to see when they come to the Golden Eagles' home. They also provided 500 shirts that commemorated the event.

Starks and Bonner both described a teammate they looked up to for his outstanding work ethic.

Auburn senior Antoine Mason became emotional after viewing a tribute video that was shown and as he spoke of his father to the Springfield Gardens students about following the same path his father did. "He didn't start for this team but he was the only one who made it to Division I, the only one who made it to the league," he said before breaking down.

Mason was the sixth man on the 1982-83 Eagles team that won the city championship. Their coach, Ken Fiedler, was back at his old gym and said of Mason "he wasn't the greatest, but his heart was better than anybody else's. . . . Failure was never in his vocabulary and he became a great example."

Springfield Gardens' playoff run this season began with a home game shortly after Mason passed away. He was acknowledged before tip-off. And as the Eagles advanced through the field, Mason's name came up for them more and more.

"We did a ceremony to remember him before the first game, at home. Every game as we started to build momentum, we started reminiscing about Anthony Mason," Springfield Garden coach Angelo Buono said. "I started telling the players about him. We invoked his presence. We put him on our shoulder. We got Anthony Mason T-shirts. We wore them and embraced his spirit and his style of play with heart."