



Everything New Orleans

# The Times-Picayune

## The 60-Second Interview: Tyson Chandler

Friday, April 18, 2008

By Chris Rose

The 7-foot-1, 25-year-old California native was the second pick in the NBA draft in 2001. He had his moments with the Chicago Bulls but, after joining the New Orleans Hornets in 2006, he has truly come alive.

If you've ever watched him play, then one word comes to mind: Electrifying. And his charitable activities rival anyone's, professional athletes or otherwise.

The guy is a giver.

Going into the playoffs this weekend, the Hornets are certainly on everyone's watch list. They just might do this. A key to the team's success -- now and in the future -- rests on the big man's shoulders.

I caught up with Chandler this week by phone from his Dallas hotel room before the team's game against the Mavericks.

Let's get straight to it: Your home was burned in the California wildfires. Does that give you a keener insight into the New Orleans mindset than others on the team might have?

I guess you could say I have a bit of understanding. About half of it (the house) burned down, so I've been going through the whole process of insurance and contractors. You know, you always have a certain picture and idea of what your home looked like and what you want it to look like and all of that is changed. But it's not something I choose to complain about because I still feel very blessed and fortunate.

What do you enjoy most about your life in New Orleans?

Getting a chance to vibe with the people. It's a totally different culture for me, something I'm not used to, so I like learning the heritage and history behind New Orleans.

Where do you like to hang out?

I don't do too much going out. Every now and then I come into the French Quarter to take in the scene, but I'm more of a dinner-and-a-movie type guy.

What's your favorite restaurant?

I can't say I have a favorite yet, but I frequently visit Emeril's and also Luke, over on St. Charles Avenue. And Phil's Grill out in Metairie. I love their burgers. You gotta go there if you haven't tried it.

My children -- who are 9, 7 and 5 -- have submitted questions for me to ask.

Awesome!

OK, my 9-year-old daughter asks: How did you get so good at basketball?

It's been a lifelong thing. I didn't start off any good. But I just loved the game and wanted to play all the time and that's what I did.

My 7-year-old son wants to know: How many tattoos do you have?

Hmm. I have kind of like a half-sleeve on my right arm that I count as one, but it's actually a bunch of tattoos put together. And then, let's see: One, two, three, four . . . I guess I have five total.

My 5-year-old son asks: Are you the best alley-ooper in your family?

By far! I'm probably the best alley-ooper in the NBA.

Do you even know who Alley Oop was?

No. There's somebody named Alley Oop?

Yeah, he's an old cartoon character; a caveman, in fact. How his name became synonymous with the most exciting play in basketball is a mystery to me.

That's hilarious. They should bring that cartoon back and throw it up on the screen when I get bounced or something.

This is a topic of much discussion in my house, so all of us want to know: Who is your favorite Honeybee?

Ha! I don't think I know any of the Honeybees by name, so let's just say I like them all collectively. I like watching them during the timeouts.

Very diplomatic of you. On this topic: As you surely know, hornets live in nests, not hives. So why is the Arena called the Hive when you play there?

To be honest with you, I really don't know. I have no clue. . . . Then again, it's all just about the Honeybees anyway, so maybe it's the perfect name.

I just read on a Web site that your daughter was born 10-pounds, 4-ounces. Can she palm

a basketball yet?

10-pounds, 4-ounces? I don't know where you got that! She was 7-pounds, 14-ounces. And she is very attracted to basketball but I'm trying to keep her away from it. I don't want her to follow in her father's footsteps. I've got nothing against women's basketball, but I want my daughter to play tennis or something. Maybe golf or volleyball.

Other than being able to get rich playing basketball, what's the best thing about being 7-feet tall?

That wherever I go, I'm always the center of attention. And, if I'm ever at, say, a big casino or a big party, my friends can always find me and I can always find them.

What's the worst thing?

I'm very into fashion -- clothes and shoes. But for some reason, (manufacturers) don't think big and tall people want to look cool. I consider myself average height, and they made all the good clothes for people below average.

Last question: Are you guys going to bring a championship home to New Orleans?

Definitely.

.....

Columnist Chris Rose can be reached at [chris.rose@timespicayune.com](mailto:chris.rose@timespicayune.com); or at (504) 352-2535 or (504) 826-3309. To read past columns, visit [www.nola.com/rose](http://www.nola.com/rose).