

https://www.bristolpress.com/sports/leaving-a-legacy-clingan-calnan-huckaby-headline-a-special-night-for-bristol-sports-hall-of/article_c0f6def6-8d17-47c0-a627-e5dfc16e21a4.html

LEAVING A LEGACY: Clingan, Calnan, Huckaby headline a special night for Bristol Sports Hall of Fame

Andy Close @amclose05

May 15, 2025



Bristol Central graduate, two-time NCAA national champion at UConn and current Portland Trail Blazers center Donovan Clingan speaks during the Bristol Sports Hall of Fame's "Seeking Success & Leaving a Legacy" event at the DoubleTree hotel on Tuesday, May 13, 2025.

Andy Close



BRISTOL — By now, basketball fans throughout the country know Donovan Clingan's name.

That wasn't always the case, however, as the 7'2" two-time NCAA champion at UConn and NBA lottery pick had humble beginnings in Bristol, where he went on to win a state title with the Bristol Central Rams in his senior season on his rise to stardom.

Clingan, along with Jay Calnan, founder and CEO of the J. Calnan Inc. construction management firm and co-founder of Team IMPACT, and ESPN college basketball analyst and former college and professional basketball player Malcolm Huckaby were on hand on Tuesday evening to celebrate the Bristol Sports' Hall of Fame Event "Seeking Success & Leaving a Legacy."

Proceeds from the event go to support the Boys & Girls Club of Bristol, as well as The Main Street Community Foundations' Men & Boys Fund and the Women & Girls Fund.

All three men are leaders who inspire, and they are all proud sons of Bristol.

Clingan spoke about his mom's battle with cancer, and how that helped shape him into the man he is today.

"After that, I had to face a battle, I had a choice to make," Clingan said while addressing the crowd at the DoubleTree in Bristol. "That was to play basketball and try and make my mom proud or give up and try and figure out what's next. I decided to play basketball, and it's led to great things. It hasn't been easy.

"Bristol sports have meant a lot to me. When I went to high school, my mom went to Bristol Central and something that always meant a lot to me was putting my name next to hers on all the records. I was asked by every high school in the country to play for them, to go to every state, but I just felt it was really important to me to stay loyal and stay local and do what I said I wanted to do."

Clingan's successes have been well-documented, but they didn't come easy. He recalled a workout at Bristol Central where Hurley was in attendance and thinking to himself that it may not work out, at least not with the Huskies.

"When he first recruited me, I'll never forget it," Clingan said. "It was a 6 p.m. workout during the week at Bristol Central. He walked in; he's not always on time. He wasn't there for more than 10 minutes and walked out of the gym. When I saw him walk out, in my head I was like alright, he hated

everything he saw.”

Not long after returning home, he got a call. It was Hurley offering a scholarship.

“Coach Hurley is someone who changed my life,” Clingan said. “Obviously coach (Tim) Barrette at Bristol Central as well, winning a state championship, dealing with COVID and playing with masks wasn’t easy, but those are four years I’ll remember for the rest of my life.”

Calnan, meanwhile, credits his success to his humble beginnings in Bristol as well. He talked about the struggle of trying to go to college (he ultimately graduated from Tufts with a degree in civil engineering in 1987), and the value of relationships.

Calnan had a decorated football career at Bristol Eastern and Tufts and has carried the values he learned in Bristol to his success in the business world.

One of those successes is Team IMPACT (Calnan is a co-founder), a non-profit organization whose mission is to connect and cultivate meaningful relationships between college athletic teams and children diagnosed with life-threatening diseases.

He is a man who is generous with his time, money and advice.

He stressed three keys to success: Never giving up, working hard to be successful and the value of relationships.

“My advice to young people, and I meet with a lot of young people every day, whatever it is that you want to do, you have to work hard. No one gets a free pass,” Calnan said. “There is no hack to being successful. It's not about where you grew up. It's not about how connected you are. It's not about what you look like. It's not about what your parents do. It's about how hard you work. And those life lessons come from sports.

“And one of the most important things in my life, and I try to celebrate this every day, is the concept of being a team player, a locker room person and creating relationships. And the relationships are the most important aspect, I think, of what you do every day. And here's the biggest thing that I learned from Bristol and the most meaningful thing to me as we talk about how my life played out from growing up here to where I am today. It has been all about relationships. And it's not just being in a relationship, in whatever aspect you want to have a relationship, it's about being in a healthy relationship. And that's a big difference.”

Huckaby, who led Bristol Central to a state title in 1990, played at Boston College before a stint in pro ball. He served as Master of Ceremonies for the event, and along with Clingan, they fondly recalled some of their welcome to big time basketball moments.

“My second college game was against Duke, and I had to guard a guy by the name of Grant Hill. It's a little different than guarding guys at Bristol Eastern at St. Paul,” Huckaby said with a laugh.

Clingan started 37 games this past season, his rookie season with the Portland Trail Blazers, averaging 6.5 points per game, helping the team to a 15-win improvement from the year before.

“Not personally, because I didn't have to guard him, but my first game in the NBA we played the Warriors and we lost to Steph Curry by 40,” he said with a smile. “I was like oh wow,’ he really is this good.”

After the event, Clingan stayed and took pictures with anyone in attendance that wanted one.

It was a night of fun, a night of giving back and a night of celebrating some of the very best of Bristol sports.

[Learn more about your privacy options](#)