

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Tim Duncan Honored At Retirement Ceremony

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ST. CROIX -- St. Croix native and basketball legend Tim Duncan was honored in a postgame ceremony following a San Antonio Spurs matchup with the New Orleans Pelicans on Sunday at the AT&T Center.

The Spurs retired Mr. Duncan's jersey after the game, with teammates and coach Gregg Charles Popovich heaping praise on the subtle superstar, as they recalled fond memories of their time with Mr. Duncan, who during his career won five championships and two most-valuable-player awards in 19 seasons, all with San Antonio.

To honor Mr. Duncan during the game, Spurs players wore white-and-black No. 21 socks, as shared by Tony Parker, Manu Ginobili and Pau Gasol on Twitter.

Mr. Duncan became the eighth Spur in franchise history to have his jersey retired, joining a group that includes George Gervin (44), David Robinson (50), Sean Elliott (32), James Silas (13), Avery Johnson (6), Bruce Bowen (12) and Johnny Moore (00), according to [ESPN](#).

"I'm going to tell you this: I won a lot of bets tonight," Mr. Duncan joked. "I didn't wear jeans. I wore a sport coat, and I spoke for more than 30 seconds. Thank you, San Antonio. Thank you."

Mr. Duncan spoke for 4 minutes, 18 seconds, thanking a group sitting at center court that included his college coach at Wake Forest, Dave Odom, along with his children, various family members, former teammates Bowen, Tony Parker, Manu Ginobili, Robinson and Elliott, Mr. Popovich, and general manager R.C. Buford, according to ESPN.

This is the most important comment that I can make about Tim Duncan: I can honestly say to Mr. and Mrs. Duncan, who have passed, that that man right there is exactly the same person now as he was when he walked in the door.
- Spurs Coach Gregg Popovich

"To all of you in here, the fans, all of San Antonio, thank you," Mr. Duncan said. "The love and support is overwhelming, especially over the last couple of weeks. I've heard from teammates, from the guys I've been with forever, to guys I played a year or two with, to these jokers over here; just an amazing response, and just an overwhelming amount of love from these guys for what I meant to them. And it doesn't even explain how much they meant to me because I got so much more from you guys, from my teammates, than they can explain that they got from me. And I know that."

Mr. Duncan, teammates Tony Parker and Manu Ginóbili combined to capture 126 career playoff victories together, the most in NBA history by any trio, according to ESPN. That group also owns the most regular-season wins in NBA history (575) and is the first set of three teammates or more to win four championships together since Magic Johnson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Michael Cooper and Kurt Rambis, according to Elias Sports Bureau research.

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Mr. Duncan is San Antonio's all-time leader in points (26,496), rebounds (15,091), blocked shots (3,020) and games played (1,392), and he ranks as the 14th leading scorer in NBA history. He has also won two regular-season MVP awards and two Finals MVPs.

He is just the third player in NBA history to capture 1,000 career regular-season wins, with only Abdul-Jabbar and Robert Parish owning more career victories.

According to ESPN, Mr. Duncan remains embedded with the Spurs and has appeared frequently at practice this season, working out with former teammates while spending time playing one-on-one with Pau Gasol and counseling younger players, such as Jonathon Simmons and rookie point guard Dejounte Murray.

ESPN said Mr. Popovich has said that whenever Mr. Duncan is ready, he can be "coach of anything he wants," but it's an offer the team doesn't expect Mr. Duncan to take.

As Mr. Popovich closed his remarks on Sunday, he pulled out a tissue, sensing tears were about to flow. But he stuffed it back into his pocket, telling the audience that he promised he wouldn't need it. It was at that moment that Mr. Popovich made some of his most lasting remarks about Mr. Duncan, stating that Mr. Duncan had not changed throughout the years, even as the rings came and celebrity rose.

"I don't even want to talk about rebounds, points and all that sort of thing," Mr. Popovich said. "This individual made it possible for everybody we brought in throughout the years to be a part of this culture and be a part of this program. As everybody said: His empathy, his ability to make people welcome, and lead quietly, but with dignity and gravitas, made him special beyond most anybody that you could imagine.

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Feature Image: Retired Spurs forward Tim Duncan listens while special guests speak about him during his jersey retirement ceremony on Dec. 18. (Darren Abate / Associated Press)