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# Steelers scout Nunn honored with Chuck Cooper Award

LexisNexis Feed | Dave Mackall, Pittsburgh Tribune Review

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Bill Nunn Jr. had an eye for talent, and the Steelers capitalized on it.

Nunn, the legendary Steelers scout and former editor of the Pittsburgh Courier, was honored Friday with the inaugural Chuck Cooper Award, given to an individual who has contributed to the city's black community. The presentation took place during a luncheon and dedication ceremony of the Chuck Cooper Building at Duquesne University.

"He's credited for breaking through barriers and unearthing a lot of great players," said Kevin Colbert, the Steelers director of football operations. "Bill was part of a scouting staff that put together the best draft in NFL history with the likes of Mike Webster out of Wisconsin, Lynn Swann out of USC, Jack Lambert out of Kent State and, of course, John Stallworth out of Alabama A&M."

Then there was Southern University defensive back Mel Blount, a Steelers third-round selection (53rd overall) in 1970. Coach Chuck Noll was considering him as a safety. Nunn figured Blount's best position was corner.

"Chuck and Bill went back and forth," Blount said, "and finally Bill Nunn convinced Chuck that I could play the corner. Bill had a good eye for talent. To this day I consider Bill Nunn a dear friend and truly an asset not only to the Steelers organization but to the city of Pittsburgh."

Colbert; Blount; Nunn's son, Bill Nunn III, and Cooper's son, Chuck Cooper III, were among those honoring Nunn Jr., who spoke via video screen to the gathering at the Duquesne Union, Africa Room. Nunn Jr. and the elder Cooper, a former Duquesne star and the first black player to be drafted by an NBA club, played basketball together at Westinghouse High School and West Virginia State before Cooper entered the Navy. Cooper later enrolled at Duquesne.

Cooper's son heads the Chuck Cooper Foundation, which provides scholarship funds for underserved populations.

"This is something that will go on forever as far as Charlie is concerned," the elder Nunn said. "He brought a lot to the school and took a lot away from the school. Charlie over the years brought a lot to the city of Pittsburgh."

Nunn III said he realized how close his father had been to Cooper after Cooper, a Homewood native who attended Duquesne from 1947-50, died of liver cancer in 1984. Nunn III said his mother told him that was the first time she saw his father cry.


"The award is so special," Nunn III said, "especially being the first one."

The event kicked off a weekend of festivities that was to include a reception and concert last night at the August Wilson Center as well as Sunday's scheduled Chuck Cooper Classic men's basketball game between Atlantic 10 co-leaders Duquesne and Xavier at 2 p.m. at Consol Energy Center.

Cooper will be honored during halftime of Sunday's game with a feature tribute to his accomplishments in professional basketball and community development.

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