

# The First RBC National Championship: 10 Years Later

*Former RBC men's basketball coach Chuck Moore and his team reminisce on their historic run.*

SOUTH PRINCE GEORGE, VA, UNITED STATES, January 28, 2025

[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- Before the confetti. Before the hoisting of the trophy. Before the accolades. Richard Bland College of William & Mary men's basketball—and the entire athletics program for that matter—had been obsolete for about three decades. In 2011, Hampton, Va. native Chuck Moore was brought on board to revive the program. He was hired as both the athletic director and men's basketball head coach. He knew it would be a hefty undertaking, but he was attracted to establishing a new culture from the ground up.

And just a few years later, Moore and his team reached the mountaintop and secured the college's first national championship.

In Moore's first season, the team took off without a hitch going 27-4. Unfortunately, they were eliminated in the NJCAA (National Junior College Athletic Association) Region 10 Tournament. But the team wasn't chagrined for long because the roster remained relatively intact the following season.



The RBC 2015 national championship men's basketball team and coaches joined by their loved ones, RBC President Debbie L. Sydow and Scott Newton, RBC Director of Student Life and Athletics.



The RBC 2015 national championship men's basketball team standing alongside former Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe (center) during their visit to the Virginia State Capitol.

“We had weapons everywhere,” Moore said.

With their early exit in the rearview mirror, the team had championship aspirations for the 2014-15 season. They wouldn’t be deferred and their hunger proved it.

Although the team had a plethora of raw talent, Moore was able to rally his players to buy into his fundamental, smash-mouth style of play. He ruled with an iron fist, while his assistant coaches, Dominic Parker, Brian Henderson and Allen Harris, operated more as player-coaches. But despite the contrast in coaching styles, Moore stressed how emboldened he was and is to his staff.

“I can’t say enough about their character and knowledge of the game,” Moore said. “Every day I learned from them.”

The team’s standard was excellence. All the coaches held the players accountable, conditioned them into tip-top shape and empowered them to reach their full potential.

The team was so gifted and balanced their starting five rotated practically every game.

“We went so deep into the bench,” Moore said. “We didn’t have fall offs.”

Most games this was the starting lineup: guards LeQuan Thomas and

Brian Adkins, forwards Melvin Gregory and Averyl Ugba, as well as forward/center Tavon Mealy. Height-wise, the team was relatively small—Gregory, the tallest player on the team, stood at 6-foot-eight. But where they lacked in size, they overcompensated in tenacity and grit.

The team redeemed themselves in the conference tournament by making it to the championship. A win would punch their ticket to the national tournament. But first they had to endure a heavyweight bout with their feisty conference rival, Louisburg College.

“Louisburg College was always tough,” former RBC guard Pedro Berrios said. “It’s a small gym—a hostile environment.”

The game was tightly contested, but the Statesman eventually came out on top, winning 80-77.



Chuck Moore, former RBC men's basketball coach and athletic director, is all smiles with a plaque commemorating the 2015 national championship team.



Former RBC guard Evan Bates (left) catching up with his teammate, Pedro Berrios (right), who also played at guard.

This was the team's first conference title since 1990.

The win did wonders for the team's morale and confidence and gave them their first taste of championship pedigree.

"I'll never forget when we got in that locker room after the win—we were dancing and screaming," Moore said. "But our guys said, 'This is amazing, but we're not done yet."

We're going to win a national championship."

With the battery in their backs, they were ready to make history.

Unfortunately, during the preliminary rounds, Ugba received news that his brother had been killed. He had doubts about whether he wanted to compete in the tournament.

But somehow, in the days to follow, Ugba was able to compartmentalize his grief and go on to have "one of the best tournaments I've ever seen a player have," according to Parker.

"He played out of his mind in the tournament," Mealy seconded.

RBC powered through the tournament and eventually made it to the semi-finals against Phoenix College, the reigning national champions. The team, led by All-American guard Brandon Brown whose elite play was lauded by both RBC's coaches and players, was a formidable opponent in the grueling, back-and-forth game that went the distance.

Moore reminisced on the contest, which he declared as the game of his, his staff and players' RBC careers. It showcased the team's competitiveness, resilience and grit.

"We were down by 13 points with roughly 10 minutes to go," Moore said. "I said, 'Guys, look at their bench.

Look how cocky and confident they are. They don't know what's about to punch them in the face."

The Statesman led a gutsy comeback capped off by a clutch shot by guard Evan Bates— which borderline put Moore and the assistant coaches into cardiac arrest—to send the contest into overtime.

"I've always had ice in my veins," Bates said. "It was a bottom-of-the-net type of shot—it didn't touch the rim."

The game eventually went to double overtime with RBC narrowly escaping with an 87-85 victory.

"That was actually the championship game," former RBC guard Jhamir White chuckled.

In the actual championship against John Wood Community College, Berrios caught fire from behind the arc in the early going, which catalyzed the team to a dominant 64-53 win.

The prophecy was fulfilled. The first-ever national championship for Richard Bland College.



Former guard Pedro Berrios looking on as he and his teammates reminisce about their historic championship run.

"I used to sit in church and just dream about it—dream about what that feeling would be like," Moore said. "It was powerful because these group of guys believed in themselves and they put the work in.

"And through that work, we got the ultimate prize."

Moore and Ugba were named the tournament's Most Outstanding Coach and Most Outstanding Player respectively. The forward's impressive performance garnered him more than 30 NCAA (National Collegiate Athletics Association) Division I offers. Mealy and Thomas were named to the All-Tournament Team. Mealy was also named an NJCAA All-American and NJCAA Region 10 Conference Player of the Year.

Since RBC is a junior college, the conclusion of the season meant all second-year players had to part ways with the team. It was a difficult realization because the players and coaches knew they had captured lightning in a bottle.

"The guys were asking 'There's no way that we can make RBC a four-year school?'" Parker said with a laugh. "It was a true family."

Moore and Parker both agreed the team was one of the best they'd ever coached. They are immortalized in the RBC history books forever.

Mealy can't wait to share the historic feat with his son.

"Once he gets old enough, he'll be able to go back to RBC, and say, 'Oh, that's my dad,'" he said with a big smile.

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