



Robert (Bob) Guyette, DMD, MD  
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Basketball at University of Kentucky and Spanish League

*Dr. Guyette scored 16 points and grabbed seven rebounds in the University of Kentucky's 92-85 loss to UCLA in the 1975 NCAA Tournament championship game. A 6-foot, 8-inch forward, Dr. Guyette averaged nine points and 6.4 rebounds per game during his three varsity seasons with the Wildcats.*

*National Basketball Association (NBA) and American Basketball Association (ABA) teams drafted him, but he signed with FC Barcelona of the Spanish League. Over five years, he helped that team win three Spanish King's Cup titles, and he was the league's top scorer in 1977 with 32 points per game.*

*After sciatica ended his basketball career, Dr. Guyette completed dental school at the University of Kentucky and medical school at the University of Alabama. He founded a practice in the Phoenix, Ariz., area.*

In the 1975 national championship game, Dr. Guyette's Kentucky team faced UCLA and legendary coach John Wooden. Two days earlier, Wooden – who had won nine national titles in 11 years – announced he would retire after the contest.

"So, 99 percent of the world wanted him to win, except those of us from Kentucky," Dr. Guyette recalled. "And he did."

"We thought we had a better team than UCLA. The guys who were freshmen on my team won the national championship in '78. But time passes, and I moved onto the next step of my life and was off to Europe. Things happened pretty quickly."

The Kansas City-Omaha Kings chose Guyette with the 49th pick in the 1975 NBA Draft, and the New York (now New Jersey) Nets selected him in the fourth round in the ABA Draft. He said he was close to signing with the Nets – he and his agent prepared to fly there. But they received a phone call from a team in Barcelona that wanted to know if he was interested in playing in the Spanish League.

Dr. Guyette decided to take the all-expenses-paid, four-day trip to a destination he had never visited. He told his then-girlfriend, now-wife, he would return and likely sign with the Nets.



*Left: Dr. Guyette made Kentucky his college choice after his star prep career in Illinois. Top: Dr. Guyette (third from left) signs with Kentucky in his home with his parents (far left and right) and Wildcats coach Adolph Rupp (second from left). Credit: UK Athletics*

He traveled for the tryout, watched Formula One racing for the first time and decided he wanted to see more of Europe.

"I spent four great days there and I thought, 'I've already been to Cleveland and Chicago, I've been to New York, I've been to Cincinnati, I've been to so many other places, but I'd never been to Rome and Copenhagen and you name it.' So, I thought maybe this wouldn't be too bad."

Dr. Guyette signed a contract. He said he never second-guessed his decision to play overseas for five years instead of attempting an NBA or ABA career. He has had to answer to his three sons.

"I had this amazing time and traveled through the European continent," Dr. Guyette said. "I played in Romania, Czechoslovakia, the old Yugoslavia, all behind the Iron Curtain, which few people got to do, especially Americans."

A few years ago, Dr. Guyette traveled to Barcelona with two of his sons. They attended basketball and soccer games and visited his friends.

"One (son) said right before he was heading to the airport, 'Now I get it. Now I know why you came over here to play,'" Dr. Guyette said.

Ultimately, sciatica from a herniated disc halted his basketball career.

"We did well, and I played pretty well, but every night I was having muscle cramps, and I just knew it was time to move on," he said.

Dr. Guyette grew interested in medicine and dentistry through his older sister, Maribeth, a dental hygienist and nurse. He chose a college based on its basketball program



*Dr. Guyette played for a University of Kentucky team that finished national runner-up in 1975. Credit: UK Athletics*

and dental school and fell in love with the OMS specialty while learning about new techniques with orthognathic surgery, miniplates, screws and dental implants.

The son of a mechanical engineer who played football at Notre Dame and served in World War II, Dr. Guyette said

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*– Dr. Bob Guyette*

he always knew he wanted to branch out beyond sports. Balancing high-level basketball and a pre-dental, pre-medical curriculum at Kentucky required discipline, he said.

“Many times after practice, we didn’t get back to the dorm until about 8 o’clock and then you’re supposed to get something to eat and study,” he said. “Most of my teammates weren’t as dedicated to the school part as I was. It makes you realize you can do a lot more than you think. At a place like Kentucky, every day of practice is a war because you’re playing for a starting position, competing. If you have two or three bad days in a row at practice, you’re not starting anymore. The games were the easy part.”

Dr. Guyette said he learned organizational skills, time management, persistence and other qualities beneficial for a physically and mentally challenging OMS career.

“With all the practices and travel for road games, keeping up with the classwork was difficult, especially if you are taking chemistry, biology and physics,” he said. “Those undergraduate years at Kentucky were the most challenging years of my life.”

Growing up with a lighted basketball court in their backyard, Dr. Guyette’s three sons all played sports, and he was involved with coaching them early on. Oldest son, Rob, played basketball at the U.S. Naval Academy. Middle son, Kevin, pitched at the University of Arizona before he was drafted by the Boston Red Sox and reached Triple-A. However, an elbow issue ended his playing career. Youngest son, Brian was the captain and starting goalkeeper for the U.S. Air Force Academy soccer team.

Dr. Guyette continues to attend Kentucky games, and memorabilia – including photos and a signed basketball – adorn his office. He has treated athletes from the Phoenix Suns, Arizona Coyotes and Arizona State University baseball and basketball teams.



*Top: Dr. Guyette at a Kentucky game in 2020 with his granddaughter, Bentley. Bottom: Former NBA player Charles Barkley, Dr. Guyette and Lt. General John Regni, USAF (Ret.).*

“I don’t spend much time talking about my career because usually these guys have done more than I have in the world of sports. But sometimes they’ll ask, and we go over things quickly,” Dr. Guyette said.

Once, he removed third molars from a 7-foot, 2-inch basketball player unable to fit well in the chair.

Athletes “still want to know you are good at what you do surgically,” Dr. Guyette said. “And just because you played a sport doesn’t necessarily mean you’re going to be a great surgeon. But I think they’re able to relate to stories, and you decrease the anxiety levels that sometimes come with surgery patients. But it’s an easy conversation, and I believe they feel comfortable in our office.”