

Life in LAMORINDA

Moraga's Gar Forman Named GM of Chicago Bulls

By Sophie Braccini



Gar Forman with his wife and two sons

Since he was seven years old, Gar Foreman knew that basketball was going to be his life. Born to a Moraga family where no one was tall and where academic pursuit was the norm, the odds didn't seem to be in his favor. But through unyielding determination, the young man made a name for himself in the professional basketball world and in May he was named the new General Manager of one of the most prestigious National Basketball Association (NBA) franchises, the Chicago Bulls.

"I expected him to become a doctor or a lawyer," says Gar's mother, Moraga resident Janet Forman. "I assumed that by the time he'd go to college he'd want that, too." But as the young man grew, he remained adamant. "Gar has an amazing persistence, when

Photo courtesy of the Forman family he wants something, he goes for it," says Janet, "no matter what it takes." She remembers how he prayed daily to become tall. "No one is tall in our family," she continues, "but somehow Gar managed to reach 6'2".

Forman started playing basketball with LMYA in the second grade, with his father as coach. "Sports was what bonded my father and me, and still does to this day," says Gar. Ken Forman, Gar's father, remembers those years fondly. "He was not a great athlete, but always liked basketball." Gar agrees, "I knew early on that I wanted my career to be in basketball and that it wouldn't be as a player, so from the time I was in junior high school I knew that I wanted to be a coach."

When it came time to choose a college, Forman was determined

to get into a college team. "He probably wrote to 50 junior colleges and got accepted at Lassen," remembers Janet. "When I got to Lassen, my dad told the coach I would 'make' their team," says Gar, "the coach thought it was my dad saying how good I was, but what he was talking about was that I would get some talented players to come play there which is what happened when I recruited Eric Petersen the following year." Petersen was the best player in Contra Costa County at the time.

"All his life Gar recruited players," says his father, "he never deviated, and he was willing to pay the price." A price indeed, as Forman took jobs that sometimes didn't pay much. "My first 7 years of coaching I made less than \$10,000 a year in places like Logan (Utah), Palm Desert (CA) and Las Cruces (NM)," says Gar, "but I was willing to go wherever I needed to in order to get experience at the college level."

For 17 years now Forman has built his reputation by recruiting and retaining excellent players that have turned teams around. "To detect talent you look for physical and athletic tools. A skill level and feel for the game. I've always been a believer in make-up and character," says Gar, "then recruiting in college was like any other type of sales - you had to develop a relationship and make it difficult for them to say no."

His father believes that his excellent reputation is due to the fact that he cares for his players not only on the court but off, and he remembers the example of Randy Williams, his son's first big recruit at New Mexico State. "To sign up Randy, Gar went to visit his mother who had to approve of it," remembers Ken, "If you take care of my Randy I will sign" she said, and Gar promised." When

Randy became a NBA player and bought his mother a house, he took Gar to see the mother and he asked, "So, did I take care of your Randy?"

Forman has now been with the Bulls for 11 years in numerous capacities, as Scout, Special Assistant to the VP, Director of Player Personnel and now General Manager. "Over the past six years, Gar Forman has been growing into a more prominent role within the Bulls organization," said Executive Vice-President John Paxson. "With his help, we have improved the way we conduct business within our Basketball Operations Department, and this promotion is a reflection of his hard work, commitment and contributions to the organization. For Gar, this is long overdue and well deserved."

Ken and Janet Forman are immensely proud of their son. Janet has no regrets about not seeing her son become a doctor. "I am a psychotherapist and the turning point for me was when I worked with a couple who were both doctors and whose son was a mechanical genius," she says. She remembers that the parents were always down on their son, when he was such a beautiful person. "It opened my eyes," she says, "what we want for our children is to be happy and do what they love. Not respecting their passion is in the end so damaging."

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Randy Levandowski comforts his sleepy daughter Meredith Hika as they wait for the Buzztones to finish a break Friday night.



Moraga's Brian Drue enjoys a Saturday treat at Cold Stone with his daughters Ryann and Cameron.

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