

Ex-Coach: Raymond Lewis a Victim of NBA-ABA War

PORTLAND (UPI)—Raymond Lewis, one of the hottest basketball prospects to come out Los Angeles in years, may never realize his dream of becoming a pro star, his former college coach said.

Bob Miller, Lewis' coach at Cal State Los Angeles, told a meeting of the Oregon Sportswriters and Sportscasters of Lewis' problems.

He said Lewis was a "victim of circumstances" during the war between the NBA and ABA and sought too much money.

Lewis, a three-sport star at Verbum Dei High in Los Angeles, averaged 40 points a game for the Cal State L.A. freshman team in 1972. The next year he averaged 32.9 points for the varsity, second best in the NCAA.

Miller said Lewis then thought he was ready for the pros and declared hardship. He was drafted by Philadelphia. Miller said he signed a four-year contract with a bonus and a progressive \$10,000 raise each year. "By the time he would have reached age 45 or 50, he would have received something like \$450,000," Miller said.

But, the coach said, Lewis heard that Philadelphia's first-round pick, Doug Collins, was getting a flat \$100,000 a year and "wanted the same amount." He said Lewis was told he would have to play to prove he was worth it. Lewis left camp, declaring his contract was "illegal" because his agent was not present when he signed.

Miller said the 76ers invited him to a preseason game in Chicago. Lewis suited up and watched the first half from the bench. Feeling slighted, he left the arena and went home.

The next year Utah of the ABA gave him a look but again he demanded big money and was sent home. Next it was Phoenix and then Los Angeles. Miller said the Lakers agreed to send him to Europe for a year, but Lewis wanted the \$100,000 he thought the league owed him and the deal was off.

He was invited back to the Laker rookie camp this year but showed up about 20 pounds overweight, Miller said.

"Now he is on the streets, living in a dream world," Miller said.

"It was a case of a 20-year-old getting caught in the violent world of professional sports and not knowing how to handle it.

"His ego got the best of him and he had too many people trying to tell him what to do," Miller said.

"He was a victim of circumstances during the war between the NBA and ABA," Miller added, a 20-year-old demanding too much money.