

For the first four years of the WNBA, every road to a championship ended in Houston. The league could introduce new teams, promote new stars, change its playoff format, and send another challenger into the Finals. The Houston Comets kept taking the trophy home. They won in 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000—the first four championships the league ever awarded. That achievement gave women’s professional basketball in America something powerful at its beginning: a team everyone else had to measure themselves against. And at the center of that team stood Black women whose skills, judgment, personalities, and competitive authority shaped what greatness in this new league would look like. Cynthia Cooper, Sheryl Swoopes, and Tina Thompson became its most recognizable combination. Understanding their achievement also requires remembering Kim Perrot, Janeth Arcain, and the teammates whose work made those famous names so difficult to defeat. [WNBA’s history of the Comets](#)

The word *dynasty* belongs here, but it deserves an explanation. In sports, a dynasty is a team that sustains championship-level dominance across multiple seasons. One title establishes that a team could solve the problems of a particular year. Repeated titles require solving new problems while opponents study everything that worked before. Successful players become targets of more detailed scouting. Injuries change available lineups. Age changes bodies. Expectations change relationships. The emotional energy of chasing a first championship gives way to the pressure of defending one. Houston won through those changes. Its championships were connected by a core of exceptional players, but each season demanded something different. The first established their authority. The second tested how they would respond when an extraordinary season nearly ended in defeat. The third unfolded under the weight of a teammate’s death. The fourth required another full journey through a league increasingly familiar with their methods.

To appreciate the opportunity they seized, it helps to step back to April 24, 1996, when the NBA’s Board of Governors approved the creation of the Women’s National Basketball Association, with play scheduled to begin the following year. The league arrived under the memorable declaration “We Got Next,” a phrase borrowed from the everyday language of basketball courts, where waiting players announce their turn. Its significance was easy to understand: women were claiming a lasting place on a professional stage in their own country. But the arrival of a league and the arrival of talent are different events. The talent already existed. Women had been developing their games in schools, colleges, international competition, and professional leagues overseas. The WNBA created another place for that accumulated expertise to be seen, employed, and followed over time. Houston would benefit enormously from players who brought years of experience into a league that was itself brand-new. [WNBA league history](#)

Cynthia Cooper’s life makes that distinction especially clear. Born in Chicago in 1963 and raised in the Watts community of Los Angeles, Cooper played college basketball at the University of Southern California, where she and Cheryl Miller helped win consecutive national championships. Her professional career then took her to Spain and Italy. When

she joined Houston for the WNBA's inaugural season, she was 34. A viewer encountering her for the first time might have thought America had discovered a remarkable new player. In reality, American television audiences were being introduced to a veteran whose game had been sharpened over many years. Her WNBA opportunity arrived late enough that much of her athletic life had already happened elsewhere. She entered the league carrying the knowledge of someone who had learned how to produce against different opponents, in different basketball cultures, with the responsibility that comes from earning a living through performance. Cynthia Cooper's Basketball Hall of Fame biography

Cooper was devastating with the ball because she could force a defender to make a decision and then punish that decision. She could drive toward the basket, pull up for a jump shot, or draw additional defenders before releasing the ball to a teammate. A *drive* is an attacking move toward the hoop while dribbling; a *pull-up* occurs when the player stops that dribble and rises into a shot. The combination matters. A defender who retreats too far to protect the basket concedes room for the jumper. A defender who crowds the shooter risks being beaten off the dribble. Cooper's changes of speed made those choices harder. Speed in basketball is valuable, but the ability to accelerate after persuading an opponent to relax can be even more destructive. Her game required defenders to remain alert to several threats at once. That kind of scorer changes the responsibilities of an entire opposing team. WNBA's analysis of Cooper and Houston's offense

The distinction between an ordinary scoring possession and a great scorer's influence is worth lingering over. Suppose a guard gets past the player assigned to defend her. A second defender steps toward the ball to prevent an easy basket. That second defender has now moved away from somebody else. If the ballhandler recognizes the opening and delivers the pass, the defense has to move again. One woman's advantage becomes another woman's opportunity. This is why an offense can benefit from a star even on possessions when she does not take the final shot. Cooper's ability to threaten the basket made her teammates more difficult to guard. Her statistical record confirms the scale of her individual production: she won the league's first two regular-season Most Valuable Player awards, led the WNBA in scoring three times, and earned Finals MVP in all four championship seasons. Regular-season MVP recognizes a season's outstanding value; Finals MVP recognizes performance in the championship round. Cooper owned both stages. Basketball Hall of Fame

Sheryl Swoopes arrived with a different kind of public recognition. She had already given college basketball one of its unforgettable championship performances, scoring 47 points for Texas Tech in the 1993 national title game. Raised in Brownfield, Texas, she attended South Plains College before Texas Tech, a path that also complicates the polished version of athletic success in which every great player travels directly from celebrated high school recruit to major university star. Swoopes became one of the WNBA's original marquee players. Her reputation rested on the completeness of her game: she could score, defend, rebound, and make decisions that improved an entire

possession. Over her WNBA career, she earned three regular-season MVP awards, in 2000, 2002, and 2005. Those years matter because they show that her individual greatness continued beyond Houston's championship streak. She was an enduring force in the league, not merely a member of a famous team at the right moment. [Sheryl Swoopes's Basketball Hall of Fame biography](#)

Her first Comets season, however, was shaped by motherhood. Swoopes gave birth to her son, Jordan, on June 25, 1997, and made her WNBA debut on August 7. She appeared in nine regular-season games that year. That detail prevents a common distortion of the dynasty: the fully developed Cooper–Swoopes–Thompson partnership did not simply arrive intact on opening day and remain identical for four summers. Houston's first championship team had to take shape around Swoopes's absence and return. Her situation also made visible a reality professional sports had often handled awkwardly: an elite athlete could be a mother with continuing professional ambitions. The significance lies in her opportunity to pursue both, with the recovery and support her circumstances required. Her individual timetable should never become a standard imposed on other women. What belongs in the historical record is that the league's first season included a prominent star whose life could not be separated neatly into "athlete" on one side and "mother" on the other. [Swoopes's biographical timeline](#)

As Swoopes's role grew, opponents had to confront her on both ends of the floor. Basketball people call such a player a *two-way star*: someone capable of changing games through offense and defense. Defense involves far more than swatting a shot into the stands. It includes preventing a scorer from receiving the ball where she wants it, anticipating a pass, maintaining balance against a change of direction, and recognizing when to leave one assignment to help a teammate. A defender can destroy a play before the audience realizes that a scoring opportunity existed. Swoopes won Defensive Player of the Year in 2000, 2002, and 2003. In 2000, she combined that award with the league MVP and a championship. That combination captures the breadth of her responsibility. Houston could ask her to create points and then turn around and interfere with the other team's best plans. [WNBA Defensive Player of the Year history](#)

Swoopes also occupied a significant place in the commercial culture surrounding basketball. Nike introduced the Air Swoopes in 1995, making her the first woman with a Nike signature basketball shoe. A *signature shoe* carries a particular athlete's identity rather than merely placing that athlete in an advertisement for an existing product. In basketball, it represents a judgment that the player's name, style, and appeal can anchor a product of her own. For girls who had largely encountered the sport's commercial mythology through men's names, that was a meaningful change. A woman could become the reference point for the equipment itself. For Black girls especially, Swoopes offered an image of athletic authority that extended beyond the scoreboard into the world of design, advertising, and public recognition. The shoe did not erase inequalities in investment or attention. It made one woman's excellence materially visible in a space where people could wear her name. [Andscape on the Air Swoopes legacy](#)

Tina Thompson entered Houston's story at the opposite end of a professional career from Cooper. She was 22 when the Comets selected her first overall in the inaugural WNBA draft in 1997, following her college career at USC. It is useful to distinguish that milestone from the signing of the league's early stars: some foundational players had already been signed and assigned to teams before the college draft occurred. Thompson was the first player selected in that draft, a specific and lasting distinction. Houston immediately placed substantial responsibility on a young forward alongside established veterans. She would eventually become a nine-time WNBA All-Star and an Olympic gold medalist in 2004 and 2008. When she finished her playing career, she held the league's career scoring record. Those later achievements help restore the proper scale of her talent. Being the youngest member of a celebrated trio did not make her a minor contributor. [Tina Thompson's Basketball Hall of Fame biography](#)

Thompson's ability to score away from the basket created a particular problem for opponents. A forward often faces defenders accustomed to protecting the interior—the area near the hoop where short shots and rebounds are contested. When that forward can also make long jump shots, the defender has to travel farther from the basket to challenge her. Coaches describe the resulting room as *spacing*. The term refers to how offensive players position themselves to keep defenders from covering several threats at once. Imagine Cooper attacking the basket while Thompson waits far enough away to require serious attention. Thompson's defender must choose between helping stop Cooper and remaining close enough to contest Thompson's shot. This example explains the value of their complementary skills. Houston's stars did not need identical games. Different abilities could make the same possession more dangerous, with one player's strength increasing the usefulness of another's.

The coach charged with organizing all that talent was Van Chancellor, who came to Houston after a long career at the University of Mississippi. He coached the Comets for ten seasons and earned the WNBA's Coach of the Year award three times. His earlier experience included 14 NCAA tournament appearances at Ole Miss; his later international work included coaching the United States to Olympic gold in 2004. Such a résumé helps explain his standing, but coaching a team like Houston still involved more than drawing plays. A coach has to determine which combinations belong together, how responsibilities should change, and when a trusted player needs instruction, freedom, or a place on the bench. The presence of exceptional athletes makes those decisions consequential. Chancellor deserves recognition for overseeing the dynasty, while the players deserve recognition as knowledgeable professionals whose understanding of the game helped shape it. [Van Chancellor's Basketball Hall of Fame biography](#)

Kim Perrot's arrival provides a revealing example of that shared judgment. At 5 feet 5 inches, she did not possess the size that makes a basketball prospect immediately reassuring to a coach. She went undrafted and reached Houston through an open tryout in 1997. Yet her teammates recognized what she could contribute. In their later accounts, Swoopes, Cooper, and Thompson all supported keeping her. Perrot had already been a prolific college scorer at the University of Southwestern Louisiana and had spent years

playing overseas. Houston did not need her to reproduce every part of her earlier identity. It needed her ball pressure, organization, competitiveness, and ability to connect people. By 1998, she averaged 8.5 points, 4.7 assists, and 2.8 steals per game. An *assist* credits a pass that directly produces a basket; a *steal* records taking possession from the opponent through defensive action. Her contributions touched both the creation and prevention of scoring. [Andscape's account of Perrot and her teammates](#)

Perrot's importance also helps explain what a point guard actually does. The position is often associated with bringing the ball upcourt, but its deeper responsibility is organization under pressure. A point guard must recognize whether the team should attack quickly or settle into a planned action. She must notice which teammate has an advantage, which defender is vulnerable, and whether an attempted pass would create an opportunity or a turnover. A *turnover* means surrendering possession before getting a shot or otherwise completing the offensive opportunity. Leadership at that position is therefore practical: it determines who receives the ball, when she receives it, and what she can do next. Perrot brought a personal dimension as well. Chancellor later remembered how her voice and example helped unite the group. That kind of influence depends on trust. Teammates are more likely to accept correction from someone whose effort demonstrates that she is carrying the same burden. [Chancellor's recollections of Perrot](#)

Another essential name is Janeth Arcain, whose career reveals how international the Comets' excellence was. Arcain came from Brazil with accomplishments that deserved recognition on their own. She helped Brazil win the 1994 world championship and Olympic silver in 1996, later adding Olympic bronze in 2000. She belonged to all four Houston championship teams. A history that treats her simply as an unnamed helper beside three American stars loses an accomplished player and a significant part of the team's identity. On an unusually talented roster, a player may take fewer shots because the team has several strong options. That smaller scoring role does not establish the limit of her ability. Arcain's international record makes that especially clear. She had already helped her country succeed against the world's best before becoming part of Houston's professional dynasty. [FIBA's Janeth Arcain biography](#)

Arcain's changing responsibilities would become even clearer in 2001, when she averaged 18.5 points per game and won the WNBA's Most Improved Player award. She also earned All-WNBA First Team recognition, placing her among the league's outstanding performers that season. The award's name can make it sound as though a modest player suddenly discovered greatness. In her case, the fuller history shows an accomplished international athlete producing more visibly as Houston's needs changed. That is a useful lesson in reading sports statistics: production reflects ability, opportunity, teammates, and assignment together. A smaller scoring average on a championship team can coexist with considerable individual talent. Arcain was inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in 2015 and the FIBA Hall of Fame in 2019, honors that recognize a career extending well beyond the portion of her work most

American audiences remember. [Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, FIBA's Hall of Fame tribute](#)

The supporting cast changed across the championship years. Tammy Jackson and Monica Lamb supplied frontcourt presence; Sonja Henning contributed at guard during the later championship seasons; Spain's Amaya Valdemoro was part of the 1998, 1999, and 2000 title teams. Their names belong in the story because a basketball team must survive entire games, not just the possessions selected for a highlight film. Players away from the spotlight set screens, occupy defenders, secure rebounds, and provide usable minutes when someone else rests or encounters foul trouble. A *screen* is a legally established position that obstructs a defender's route, giving a teammate room to move. A *rebound* is possession of the ball after a missed shot. These actions can decide whether a star receives a clean opportunity or whether an opponent gets another chance. The scorer's name appears beside the basket in the record. The labor that made the basket possible is often distributed among several people. [Comets' historical roster and player record](#)

In 1997, Houston finished the regular season with 18 wins and 10 losses. The championship pathway was shorter than the series-based formats many viewers now expect: the semifinal and championship were each decided by one game. Houston defeated the Charlotte Sting 70–54 in the semifinal, then beat the New York Liberty 65–51 on August 30 to claim the inaugural title. There was no second championship game available to repair a poor first one. That format placed enormous weight on immediate execution. It also means the first championship should be understood within its actual setting, rather than described as though Houston had survived a modern, extended postseason. The Comets won the competition that existed, with a team still establishing its relationships and a returning Swoopes still becoming part of the season. A league that had begun with promises now had its first champion. [Houston's season record, WNBA's 1997 playoff results](#)

The following season produced the dynasty's most striking regular-season number: 27–3. Houston won 27 of 30 games, a winning percentage of .900, meaning 90 percent. That is extraordinary consistency. It requires winning on nights when the shooting is less comfortable, travel has been tiring, or an opponent arrives with a well-prepared plan. A short season is not identical to a much longer one, so comparisons across different leagues and schedules require care. The achievement remains immense within its own conditions. Houston had moved from winning the first championship to imposing itself across nearly an entire regular season. Cooper again earned regular-season MVP, and the team swept Charlotte in the semifinals. Everything about that record could encourage a casual observer to assume another title was inevitable. The Phoenix Mercury made that assumption look foolish. [Chancellor's Hall of Fame record, WNBA's 1998 postseason archive](#)

The 1998 Finals were a best-of-three series: the first team to win twice became champion. Phoenix won the opener 54–51, leaving Houston one defeat away from elimination. The

Comets then needed overtime to win Game 2, 74–69. Overtime is an additional playing period required when regulation ends in a tie; reaching it while facing elimination means the entire season remains exposed to a few possessions. Houston survived, then won the deciding game 80–71. Cooper again received Finals MVP. The sequence matters more than simply recording “second championship.” A team that lost only three regular-season games had still come close to losing the title. Dominance does not provide immunity from danger. Houston’s second championship required its players to execute while knowing that a single bad stretch could end a season they had otherwise controlled. Phoenix’s resistance is part of the achievement, because an opponent’s quality gives a victory its full meaning. [WNBA’s complete 1998 playoff results](#)

Then the story changed in a way no scouting report could address. In February 1999, Perrot was diagnosed with lung cancer. She died on August 19, at 32 years old. Houston finished the regular season 26–6, but those numbers cannot describe what it meant to continue working while a teammate was seriously ill and then gone. The team’s championship pursuit became associated with “No. 3 for No. 10”—a third title for the woman who wore number 10. It is tempting to turn that season into a clean inspirational formula in which grief creates determination and determination produces victory. The human truth is less orderly. A championship could honor Perrot; it could not restore her presence. The women still had to experience her absence after the arena emptied. Their ability to compete while mourning deserves respect without treating the death of a friend as something that existed to improve a basketball team. [WNBA’s account of the 1999 season](#)

Houston first had to get past the Los Angeles Sparks in the Western Conference Finals, winning that series two games to one. It then faced New York again and won the opening Finals game 73–60. Game 2 delivered one of the most famous moments in the league’s history. With 2.4 seconds remaining, Houston led 67–65 after a Tina Thompson basket. New York had to put the ball in play and attempt a shot almost immediately. Teresa Weatherspoon received the inbound pass, advanced the ball, and launched from beyond half court. The shot struck the backboard and went in as time expired. New York won 68–67. It became known simply as “The Shot.” For a moment, the Comets’ championship celebration had seemed close enough to touch; suddenly, there would be another game. Weatherspoon’s willingness to attempt the nearly impossible had forced Houston to keep playing. [WNBA’s oral history of “The Shot”, 1999 playoff results](#)

The deciding game took place the next day, September 5. That quick return is central to understanding the response. Houston could not spend a week making the previous night’s shock more manageable. It had to prepare, take the floor, and win another basketball game against a team that had just created an unforgettable moment. The Comets won 59–47. Cooper scored 24 points and earned her third consecutive Finals MVP. Holding New York to 47 points also gives the ending a different emphasis from the famous long-distance shot that preceded it. The title was secured through an entire game of work, including the less spectacular business of preventing the opponent from scoring. Houston’s place in the history books was settled by the result of the deciding

game, even though the most replayed image from the series often belongs to the team it defeated. Both deserve to remain in the story. [WNBA's 1999 playoff archive, Finals retrospective](#)

During the celebration, Cooper stood on the scorer's table and held up Perrot's jersey. That image brought the missing woman into the center of the championship scene. It also reminds us how incomplete the familiar trio can become as a way of remembering Houston. Perrot had helped the Comets win their first two titles through actual basketball work, and she had occupied a significant place in the relationships that held the team together. Her number represented a player, a friend, and a life interrupted. The distinction matters because women remembered through tragedy can gradually lose their accomplishments in the retelling. Perrot should remain visible as the guard who pressured opponents, delivered passes, competed for a roster place, and earned the confidence of exceptional teammates. The tribute meant more because of the person and professional they had known. [Andscape's remembrance of Perrot](#)

The fourth championship arrived in 2000 through a perfect postseason. Houston swept Sacramento in the opening round, swept Los Angeles in the Western Conference Finals, and swept New York in the championship series: six victories without a loss. A sweep means winning every game necessary to take a series without conceding one to the opponent. Yet even that clean record can hide how difficult individual games were. Houston beat New York 59–52 in the Finals opener, then needed overtime to win the second game 79–73 on August 26. Swoopes scored 31 points and Cooper 25 in that clincher. Cooper received her fourth Finals MVP. The season therefore displayed both the evolving balance of the team and its continuing reliability under championship pressure: Swoopes had earned the regular-season MVP, while Cooper once again received the highest individual honor of the final round. [WNBA's 2000 playoff results, contemporary championship report, Cooper's Finals honors](#)

There is a basketball education inside that division of recognition. A successful partnership does not require the same person to lead every category or possess every distinction. Different opponents and different stages of a season create different demands. One night may require a scorer to take greater responsibility; another may require her to attract defensive attention and trust the next pass. The challenge is to keep pursuing the strongest available team outcome while maintaining the confidence that makes an elite player effective. Houston's record shows a group capable of doing that repeatedly. It does not prove that every relationship was easy or every disagreement disappeared. No championship record can establish such a thing. What it establishes is that these women, working with their coaches and teammates, repeatedly produced a winning answer on the floor. Their cooperation was skilled work, performed by people with substantial abilities and substantial responsibilities of their own.

For Black women, the significance of that achievement reaches beyond the familiar language of “having someone to look up to.” The Comets offered several forms of authority at once. Cooper represented the seasoned professional whose knowledge

demanded attention. Swoopes made excellence visible across scoring, defense, commercial recognition, and motherhood. Thompson demonstrated that a young woman could carry major responsibility beside accomplished veterans. Perrot showed how a player's judgment and relationships could influence a team more deeply than her height or publicity suggested. These were distinct lives and distinct ways of leading. Their presence widened the range of what a girl might imagine for herself. She could admire a scorer, a defender, a decision-maker, or the teammate who helped everyone else function. The variety matters. Representation becomes richer when people can recognize individual differences instead of being offered one supposedly acceptable model of achievement.

Their work also deserves to be described with intellectual precision. Basketball excellence includes memory, anticipation, deception, timing, and rapid judgment. A defender reads where a passer is looking while accounting for where her own assignment is moving. A scorer recognizes whether the opponent's weight is positioned to stop a drive in one direction and attacks the other. A veteran notices that a defender has reacted the same way twice and adjusts the third time. Calling such athletes merely "naturally gifted" leaves a large portion of their expertise unnamed. Physical ability matters, but it does not automatically produce a well-timed pass or a correct defensive rotation. For women whose labor has often been appreciated more readily than their authority, naming that intelligence is part of giving proper credit. Houston's championships were the results of bodies and minds working together under demanding conditions.

There was room for pleasure in that public visibility, too. The meaning of a team cannot be reduced entirely to overcoming prejudice or carrying the hopes of a community. Fans could enjoy the Comets because the basketball was compelling. They could argue about a possession, celebrate a favorite player, dislike an opponent, and anticipate the next game. Former players have described the intensity of Houston's support and the excitement surrounding the first championship and its parade. That ordinary freedom to be absorbed in women's competition is culturally significant. A girl did not need to attend every game as a lesson in perseverance. She could come because Cooper was difficult to stop, because Swoopes might take over, or because winning was fun. The team gave its audience shared memories built around women's athletic achievement, memories that could belong to families and a city as naturally as those created by any other beloved team. Players recall Houston's championship atmosphere

The end of the championship streak did not mean the immediate end of important Comets basketball. Cooper retired after the 2000 season, later returning briefly in 2003. Swoopes missed 2001 after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament, or ACL, a major stabilizing ligament in the knee. Houston had to continue without two central figures from its title run, and Arcain's larger scoring role became part of that adjustment. The team still reached the playoffs in 2001, where Los Angeles eliminated it. Swoopes returned to earn league MVP in 2002 and again in 2005. Houston reached the Western Conference Finals in 2005 before losing to Sacramento. Those later seasons deserve

space because they reveal careers continuing through injury, recovery, and changing circumstances. The first four trophies dominate the franchise's memory, but they do not contain everything its players accomplished. [Comets' season-by-season history](#), [Swoopes's career honors](#)

The original franchise's ending was a business failure with lasting consequences. Original owner Leslie Alexander sold the Comets to Houston businessman Hilton Koch in 2007. The team moved from Toyota Center to the smaller Reliant Arena for the 2008 season. The WNBA took over operations that year, and an effort to find another buyer failed. In December 2008, the league announced that the Comets would cease operations. The first four championships remained in the record, but Houston no longer had the team that had won them. Explaining that ending requires separating competitive achievement from organizational survival. Players can win games; they cannot personally guarantee an ownership group's resources, an arena arrangement, or a successful sale. The loss of the franchise does not retroactively diminish the quality of the women's work. It demonstrates how vulnerable even a historically important team can become when the structure supporting it breaks down. [Houston Chronicle's account of the franchise's collapse](#)

That distinction carries a difficult lesson about recognition. Applause and secure investment are different things. A community can treasure a team while the organization struggles to sustain its operations. Championship banners can celebrate past achievement without ensuring future opportunity. It would be too easy to invent a single cause, blame an entire city, or imply that more determination from the players could have prevented the ending. The documented history involves ownership changes, declining stability, and the failure to secure a buyer. The broader lesson is that honoring women's excellence requires attention to the institutions that employ and preserve it. Players should not have to be historically dominant merely to justify their existence, and even historic dominance cannot substitute for sound organizational support. The Comets' disappearance made that truth unusually painful because the achievement being left without a living team was so substantial.

As of September 2026, that absence is approaching a new chapter. The sale and relocation of the Connecticut Sun to Houston received league approval in May, with the team scheduled to begin playing in Houston in 2027 under the Comets name. This is a return of the name and of WNBA basketball to the city through the relocation of an existing franchise; the original team did not operate continuously through the intervening years. That distinction preserves the historical record. It also acknowledges that Houston's renewed opportunity involves a loss for Connecticut's supporters, who have their own years of loyalty and memories. The returning Comets will have to create their own relationships and accomplishments. The old name gives them a history to honor, but no future roster can inherit the four championships as a substitute for doing its own work. [Reuters on the approved relocation](#), [Houston's decision to restore the Comets identity](#)

The women themselves have continued to receive recognition in institutions that preserve the game's history. Cooper entered the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2010, Swoopes in 2016, and Thompson in 2018. Those dates place their achievements within basketball's larger historical record, where they belong. Perrot's name survives through a different kind of annual recognition: the Kim Perrot Sportsmanship Award, which honors ethical conduct, integrity, and fair play. Sportsmanship is sometimes mistaken for softness or a lack of competitive desire. Perrot's example makes that interpretation inadequate. A player can pressure opponents, pursue victory intensely, and still earn recognition for how she treats people and respects the game. The award keeps her name attached to a standard of conduct, reminding new generations that a basketball legacy can include both the quality of competition and the character brought to it. Cooper, Swoopes, Thompson, the Kim Perrot Sportsmanship Award

Another part of her legacy lives at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Kim's Place, a space for adolescent and young adult patients. There, her name connects the history of a basketball team with people seeking companionship and some ordinary enjoyment during treatment. It is an especially fitting form of remembrance for someone whose teammates valued her ability to bring people together. The Comets' story can be found in championship footage, award records, and Hall of Fame biographies, but it also survives in this quieter expression of care. Andscape on Kim's Place

Remembering Houston fully means allowing all of these women to remain visible: the veteran who finally received a major professional stage at home, the star who commanded both ends of the court, the young forward whose range enlarged everyone else's opportunities, the Brazilian champion whose role changed with the team's needs, and the small point guard whose presence carried extraordinary weight. Around them were teammates performing necessary work that a trophy photograph cannot explain by itself. Their significance becomes greater as the details come into focus. Black women were making the decisions, setting the standards, solving the problems, and producing the performances around which an entire league's early championship history was written. For four consecutive seasons, the last team standing was theirs.