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Reppas Too Has A Dream Seeing Cota Play In NBA

ORANGE – For the past four months, Peter Reppas, a native of town, has flown more than 12,000 miles, has talked on his cell phone more than 6,000 minutes, has worked out for nine hours a day, and has provided guidance, in an effort to help one of his former players reach his dream – the NBA.

The player is former University of North Carolina's point guard, Ed Cota. In four years as the starting point guard he led the Tar Heels to three Final Four tournaments. He is Carolina's all-time assist leader (his 1,030 assists broke Kenny Smith's record of 768); he is the only player to lead the ACC in assists four years in a row; and he is the only player in NCAA history to record 1,000 points, 1,000 assists and 500 rebounds in a career.

Not even Michael Jordan accomplished that feat.

Reppas is a known name on the campus in Chapel Hill. He was involved in the NBA pre-draft camp in Chicago, in Long Beach, Calif. for the NBA Summer League and in Boca Raton, Fla. where Cota and Reppas work out and train.

Reppas is always asked the same question, "How did you get involved with Ed Cota?"

Reppas coached Cota at the Saint Thomas More School in Oakdale, Conn. Saint Thomas More has one of the finest prep school basketball programs in the country. They send an average of eight to ten players a year to some of the finest Division 1 basketball schools in the nation.

him, so he could reach his dream of playing in the NBA. I'm not too sure he took me seriously. Never did I think that four years would pass so quickly. It is a lot of work, but it has been one of the best experiences of my life."

Reppas has met many people of note in his travels. "I am a people person and

I enjoy meeting people everyday. At the Saint Thomas More School, I was an administrator for seven years and involved in admissions. I interviewed thousands of prospective students and parents. I was able to meet some of the most wonderful people of all walks of life. That's what made the job so enjoyable."

He recalls meeting Michael Jordan at his restaurant, "The 23" in Chapel Hill. He has worked out with Toronto Raptors NBA Slam Dunk Champion Vince Carter.

He has trained University of North Carolina's freshman All American Joe Forte. He had dinner in Beverly Hills with three time NBA champion Mario Ellie of the San Antonio Spurs and actor Duane Martin, who had a starring role in the movie "Above the Rim." He has had meetings with sports agent Carl Poston, who represents NBA star Penny Hardaway, and the NFL's Orlando Pace,



Reppas and Protege – Peter Reppas (right) gives shooting instructions to University of North Carolina's Ed Cota in the Dean Dome in Chapel Hill

Saint Thomas More provides a structured atmosphere where students can achieve and work up to their potential in the classroom and on the court. Reppas commented, "Ed and I always used to stay up late at night and talk in the dorm. We would always kid each other that when his career was over at Carolina, I would be on my way down to the Dean Dome to help guide

Ty Law and Charles Woodson. He has talked with former Celtic great Dennis Johnson and the multibillionaire owner of the Dallas Mavericks, Mark Cuban.

In Florida, Reppas has trained with All Pro and Future Hall of Fame wide receiver Chris Carter of the Minnesota Vikings and the NFL's Rookie of the Year Randy Moss. Carter had Cota and Reppas at his house for dinner and explained to them the demands of being an elite athlete.

Conversations with legendary North Carolina coach Dean Smith are memorable.

Out of everyone he has met, the one who has made the most impression on him he said is, "Ed Cota. Ed is a very special person to me. He is blessed with an enormous talent to play this wonderful game. I am most proud of Ed's belief and trust in me." Ed's dream of the NBA is simply a goal with a deadline. Together we have developed a "blue print for success" to reach that goal. I always preach that "good things happen to good people who are doing good things. You will see Ed Cota in the NBA."

What exactly does Reppas do? Is he a trainer? Nutritionist? Coach? Agent? The answer is yes to all of them.

For the past four months Reppas has traveled with Cota, providing guidance and structure daily wherever their travels take them. He designed a program for Cota that includes lifting, health, nutrition, supplementation, running and playing basketball. Cota is the only one out of all his former players and friends that was able to stay with every aspect of the program, Reppas says.

Weight loss has caused Cota to regain the quickness that made him one of the great New York City prep point guards. He works out for nine hours a day, taking 2,000 jumpers a day.

Reppas says, "Cota has never worked so hard in his life. To be in a college atmosphere and trying to accomplish all of this is nearly impossible. Helping Ed stay motivated and consistent can be challenging, but his dream helps keep

things in perspective."

Cota comments, "I have been very fortunate to have someone like Coach Rep around. He has the ability to motivate and never tries to build you up more than you should be. He is painfully honest with you and is very demanding. He has given up a lot to be with me. Some players have four or five people doing what Coach Rep does. I don't know if this will get anyone in trouble, but even the basketball secretaries were so impressed with Coach Rep that they gave him a set of keys to the Dean Dome – that says enough."

North Carolina assistant coach Pat Sullivan and college legend Phil Ford commented that they tried everything to get Cota motivated and up early in the morning to go work out consistently for the past four years. They were not successful.

They heard that people saw Ed Cota running the streets of Chapel Hill at 6 a.m. with his trainer. The coaches said it had to be someone else. They heard that Ed was in the weight room sometimes twice a day with his lifting partner. Again they thought mistaken identity. Then they heard Ed was in the Dean Dome doing drills and shooting with his coach for about three hours a day. They didn't believe it until they saw it with their own eyes. What they also couldn't believe, was that the person with Ed, at every step of the way, was the same guy – Reppas.

UNC's Sullivan commented that if Coach Rep was around for Ed's first two years at Carolina, Ed would already be in the NBA and that the staff would be looking for a new point guard to fill his spot.

Reppas' background stems from a passion for sports. He was a three sport standout in soccer, basketball, and baseball at Mahar Regional High School before transferring in his junior year to Cushing Academy in Ashburnham. He became a three sport captain at Cushing, received numerous athletic awards and was recipient of the Athlete of the Year honors in both his junior

and senior years. From there he was recruited to Ithaca College to play soccer and basketball.

What's in store next for Cota and Reppas?

"Hopefully Ed will get invited to play in veterans camp. He played extremely well in the Pro Am league in Long Beach with the Los Angeles Clippers. He showed that he could run a team and play at the next level. If veterans camp doesn't work out, we have to take a look at the other leagues – the CBA, the USBL, the IBL or overseas in Europe. The worst case scenario is that he is making a living playing basketball, which is a great scenario;" Reppas answers.

How does Cota feel about this? "The NBA is my goal," he states, "I know there are guards who are going to be picked that aren't better than me. But I'm determined to show teams what they missed on. I know how good I am."

Reppas also has an interest in the University of Connecticut. He traveled to every home game last year to see another of his former players from Saint Thomas More perform and work towards his goal of the NBA. He is the starting 6 foot 11 inch power forward Ajou Deng. "Ajou is very special to me and that's another wonderful story in itself," states Reppas. It seems as if all of Reppas' former players have a special place in his heart.

Reppas responds, "They most definitely do."

He recently returned from Florida to meet a new person in his life, "My little nephew, Athan Reppas, who I really believe has a basketball body, long arms and long legs. I can't wait to work with him!"

Peter Reppas is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Reppas of town.

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