

Bill Walton: (WFAN, January 18, 2012 12:15 PM)

NEW YORK (WFAN) – Knicks coach Mike D'Antoni might be on the hot seat here in New York, but he certainly has a superfan in hoops legend Bill Walton.

Before dissecting exactly what has gone wrong with the 6-7 Knicks, Walton went out of his way to praise D'Antoni for bringing his unique run-and-gun style to the NBA.

"I've known Mike D'Antoni for 40 years," Walton told WFAN's Boomer & Carton on Wednesday. "He is a brilliant basketball mind. He is a genius in terms of creativity and imagination."

Upon resistance from Carton, Walton stepped up his game: "The NBA owes a huge debt of gratitude to Mike D'Antoni, who saved the sport 10 years ago."

Listen: Walton talks D'Antoni with Boomer & Carton

D'Antoni made his reputation with the Phoenix Suns, but has had little success since signing with the Knicks before the 2008-09 season.

Despite a trip to the playoffs in 2010-11, the Knicks still haven't recorded a win in postseason play since 2001. D'Antoni led the team to a

42-40 record last season, but he's still well below .500 overall (109-150) with New York.

"I stand by that statement," Walton said when asked if he'd like to retract his comments on D'Antoni. "I stand tall on that statement. I stand tall as others have stood tall for me. Mike D'Antoni is a genius, he is a monument to the history of basketball."

The Hall of Famer credited D'Antoni for rescuing basketball from "going down this disastrous path of nothing but standing around and grinding it out."

D'Antoni has taken his lumps for the Knicks' lack of defensive acumen. This season the 'D' has improved with the addition of Tyson Chandler — it's the offense that's sputtering. The Knicks are ranked 17th overall in points per game, 26th in assists and 24th in rebounds.

So if not D'Antoni, what exactly is the problem? According to Walsh, it all comes down to the concept of teamwork.

"It's not about numbers," said Walsh. "It's about a style, it's about creativity, it's about coming together, it's about the fluidity of controlling and defining the terms of a conflict. That Knicks team has not come together yet."

Should D'Antoni get more credit for bringing his brand of offense to the NBA, or is Walton way off? Sound off below...