

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the NATIONAL BASKETBALL RETIRED PLAYERS ASSOCIATION

LEGENDS

MAGAZINE

WNBA 25TH ANNIVERSARY

MOMENTUM AND GROWTH

IN THE WOMEN'S GAME

20/21 Spring

LEGEND AMONG LEGENDS

CHARLIE
ROSENZWEIG

NBA MIDSEASON UPDATES

FIRST HALF OF THE PANDEMIC SEASON

ADONAL FOYLE

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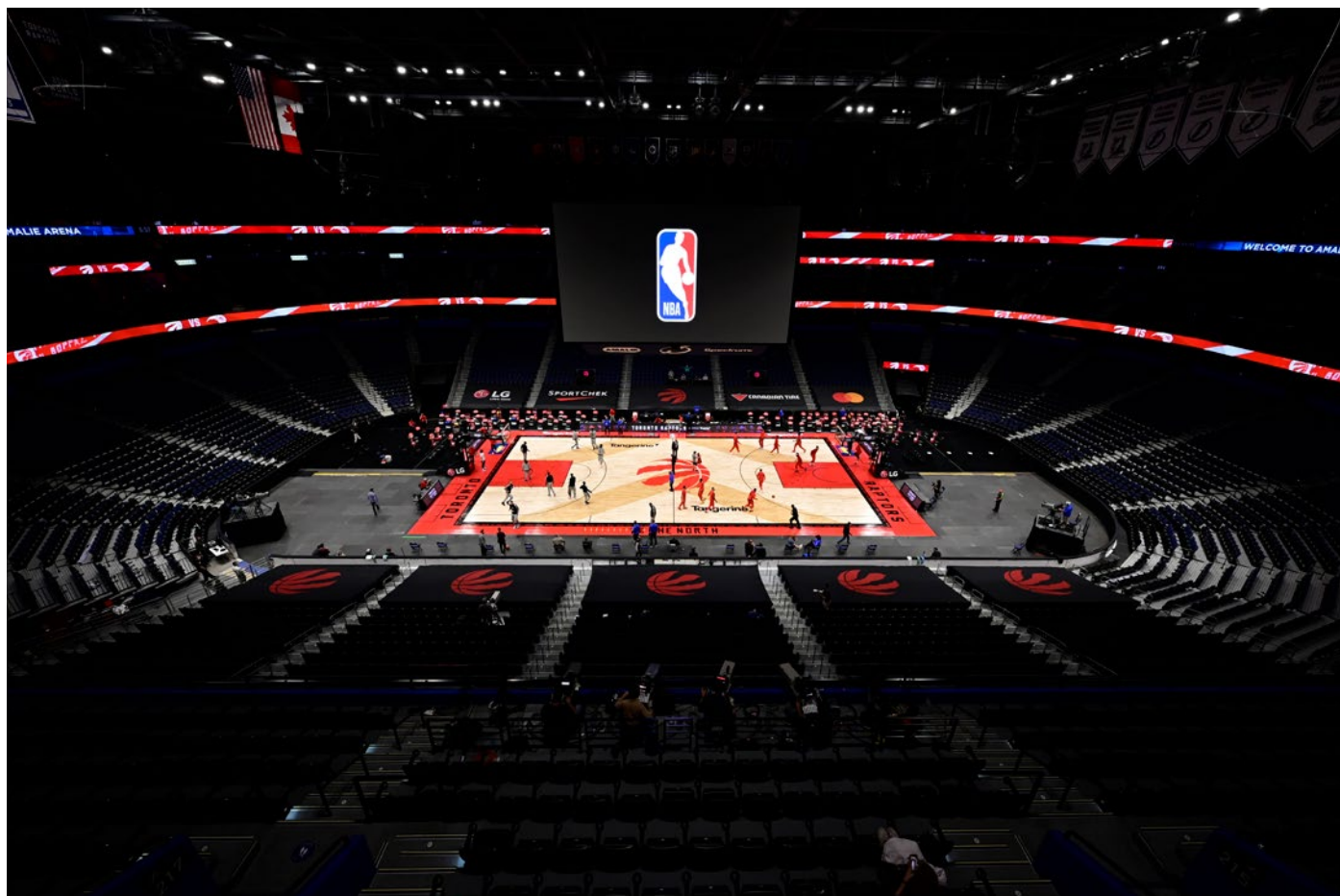
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"ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL TRAITS WE AS BASKETBALL PLAYERS LEARN AT AN EARLY AGE IS THE ABILITY TO 'PLAY THROUGH IT.'"

ADONAL FOYLE





NBA MIDSEASON UPDATES

ANALYZING THE FIRST HALF OF THE POST-BUBBLE NBA SEASON

by VIKAS CHOKSHI



Russell Westbrook #4 of the Washington Wizards sits on the bench as he wears a protective face covering due to the COVID-19 pandemic during warm ups before playing against the Memphis Grizzlies at Capital One Arena on March 2, 2021 in Washington, DC.

The NBA has undergone a dramatic transformation since the 2019-2020 season was halted due to the pandemic. After an extended hiatus, the season reconvened at Disney World for the memorably unique “Bubble” restart where the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the Miami Heat in the NBA Finals. Thankfully, the Lakers didn’t have to travel far to hang out with Mickey and Company.

After a season unlike any other, there was another test for the league when Commissioner Adam Silver announced the 2020-2021 season would begin in December after a shortened off-season. It wasn’t feasible for the all teams to live in the Disney Bubble, so having a full fan-less season amidst COVID-19 has been complicated, to say the least.

While discussing the plans, Silver said he was confident in the league’s health and safety protocols, but knew it wouldn’t go on without hiccups.

“We do anticipate that there will be bumps in the road along the way,” Silver said.

Since the season began, it’s definitely been bumpy, as the league has postponed 34 games, the Toronto Raptors have played all their home games in Tampa Bay, and NBA officials forced Kevin Durant to leave a live game twice due to contact tracing.

It’s astounding to think about how much has changed in one year, however, the show must go on. With NBA All-Star weekend behind us, let’s take the opportunity to look back at the memorable moments from the first half of the season.

MIDSEASON UPDATES:

EASTERN CONFERENCE

The Philadelphia Sixers, led by their two All-Stars Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons, went into the All-Star break atop the Eastern Conference standings for the first time in their young careers. Embiid is currently frontrunner for Most Valuable Player, while Simmons is in contention for the Defensive Player of the Year.

Meanwhile in Brooklyn, as if Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant teaming up in the offseason wasn't enough, the team pulled off a blockbuster deal to acquire James Harden. Brooklyn now has its own "Big 3" and are the favorites to come out of the East, especially after signing Blake Griffin over All-Star Weekend to bolster their lineup for the playoffs.



Joel Embiid #21 and Ben Simmons #25 of the Philadelphia 76ers look on against the Miami Heat at the Wells Fargo Center on January 14, 2021 in Philadelphia, PA.

DISAPPOINTMENTS

ATLANTA HAWKS, ORLANDO MAGIC,
BOSTON CELTICS

Trae Young and company had high hopes this year after their offseason signings, but instead they are one game under .500. Young also missed out on a hometown appearance in the All-Star game, which had to hurt.

After being a surprise playoff team the last couple of seasons, the Magic have fallen off the map. Orlando is currently ranked 14th in the Eastern Conference, ahead of only the lowly Detroit Pistons. It would not be surprising to see the team blow up the roster to start yet another rebuild.

Boston went into the All-Star break streaking, but they've failed to live up to their expectations. Particularly because it seems like they are still a tier below the Conference's powerhouses. Let's see if the team can gel before it's too late. With the trade deadline looming, the Celtics are a team to keep an eye on for a big move.

SURPRISES

NEW YORK KNICKS, CHICAGO BULLS



Head Coach Billy Donovan of the Chicago Bulls talks to Wendell Carter Jr. #34, Coby White #0, Garrett Temple #17, Zach LaVine #8, and Patrick Williams #9 during a timeout against the Philadelphia 76ers at Wells Fargo Center on February 19, 2021 in Philadelphia, PA.

The Knicks and the Bulls were supposed to be in rebuild mode this season, as both teams have new front office regimes and coaching staffs. However, no one gave that memo to Coaches Tom Thibodeau and Billy Donovan, respectively, as both have their squads making strong pushes for the postseason.

The Knicks' first-time All-Star Julius Randle is having a breakout season and "Thibs", as many like to call him, has New York suffocating opposing offenses with a defense currently ranked first in points allowed.

Chicago also has a first-time All-Star in Zach LaVine, who has been lighting up The Association with 28.7 points per game, sixth best in the league. Speaking of scoring, the Bulls are sixth in points scored, which is a big jump from last season when they were one of the worst offensive teams in the NBA.

"I think the team (Bulls) has a good mindset," LaVine said. "Over the last couple of years I think I've established myself as one of the hardest workers and a guy that's very serious about winning. Coach (Billy) Donovan has come in and started to teach us championship habits; so it's not just me. The whole organization has helped along the process. I think we're getting better."



Tristan Thompson #13 of the Boston Celtics defends Nikola Jokic #15 of the Denver Nuggets during the first quarter at TD Garden on February 16, 2021 in Boston, MA.

MIDSEASON UPDATES:

EASTERN CONFERENCE

— EASTERN CONFERENCE FAVORITES FOR MVP —

This year's Most Valuable Player competition has been fun to watch due to so many players playing at an elite level. When the season began, it looked like it would primarily be a two-man race between Giannis Antetokounmpo and Luka Doncic, but a lot has changed since then. Let's dive into it.

Embiid went into the break as the favorite to win the award and understandably so. The Process is in great shape and has been a force of nature on both ends of the floor. Embiid is averaging a career high 30.2 points while anchoring the league's fifth ranked defense. The Sixers are 23-7 with Embiid and only have one win without him. Fun fact: Embiid has five 40 point-10 rebound games this season. This number is as many as the rest of the league, COMBINED.

Not to be forgotten the Beard has quietly thrown his hat into the ring for MVP. Harden is putting up 25.5 points, but it's been his passing that has pushed the Nets to the next level. The former-MVP is averaging a career high 11.4 assists, leading Brooklyn to a 9-1 record over their last ten. The only knock on him is the fact that he's teammates with two other superstars. Some might see that as a slight and go with Embiid or Jokic instead. If Harden and the Nets stay hot, he'd be in pole position for the race.



Trae Young #11 of the Atlanta Hawks handles the ball against the Philadelphia 76ers on January 11, 2021 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta, GA.

— SECOND HALF PREDICTIONS —

I like the Nets to take down the Sixers in the Eastern Conference Finals. While Philadelphia is coming together, I don't see them being able to keep up with Brooklyn's firepower.

Both the Knicks and Bulls make the playoffs. How's that for a bold prediction? I know their schedules get tougher in the second part of the season, but I like what I am seeing. Effort and veteran coaches go a long way in a season like this.

Philadelphia will come up just short of the Finals, but Embiid will hold off the competition to win MVP and Simmons will lock up DPOY.



Giannis Antetokounmpo #34 of the Milwaukee Bucks dunks against Justise Winslow #7 of the Memphis Grizzlies during the second half at FedExForum on March 4, 2021 in Memphis, TN.



Kevin Durant #7, James Harden #13 and Kyrie Irving #11 of the Brooklyn Nets celebrate during the first quarter against the Cleveland Cavaliers at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse on January 20, 2021 in Cleveland, OH.



Zion Williamson #1 of the New Orleans Pelicans dunks during the first half against the Memphis Grizzlies at FedExForum on February 16, 2021 in Memphis, Tennessee.

MIDSEASON UPDATES:

WESTERN CONFERENCE

The Western Conference is locked and loaded with stacked rosters, which means the intensity should pick up down the stretch. The Utah Jazz are in first place in the standings thanks to the team's three All-Stars, Donovan Mitchell, Rudy Gobert, and the criminally underrated Mike Conley.

The Phoenix Suns, Los Angeles Lakers and Los Angeles Clippers follow the Jazz to round out the upper-tier of the Conference.

We'd be remiss if we didn't bring up Zion Williamson's first half. The sophomore star just made his first All-Star game, and is averaging the rare combination of scoring 25 points per game while shooting over 60 percent from the field. The combination of stats and ferociousness with which he attacks the rim is Shaq-like.

DISAPPOINTMENTS

SACRAMENTO KINGS,
MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES

This was supposed to be the year both the Kings and Timberwolves took a step forward. Instead, both squads have gone backwards both in terms of production and watchability.

Minnesota fired their coach Ryan Saunders before the break, and second-year coach Luke Walton is on the hot seat as the Kings have the worst defense in the NBA.

The Wolves are right there with Kings, ranking just two spots ahead at 28th on defense. Unless both teams can tighten up the reigns, it's looking like they'll be back in the lottery.

SURPRISES

UTAH JAZZ, PHOENIX SUNS

With the Clippers and Lakers dealing with injuries to star players, the Jazz and Suns have taken advantage. Both teams have been menacing on the defensive side of the basketball, ranking in the top five in several key defensive metrics. Couple that with the fact that both units are orchestrating beautiful offenses, and you understand why they are at the top of the pack.

"It's just a mindset. It's the culture around here," Devin Booker said. "We expect to win if we're playing the way that we play."

"We're not really worried about our matchup coming into games. If we do what we have to do – share the ball and defend – then we'll be in pretty good shape. Our defense is something that we've been able to rely on a lot through the season – making shots or not."

A lot of credit should also go to their coaches in Quin Snyder and Monty Williams, respectively. As long as both teams can remain healthy, they'll be in the mix to win their divisions and make a deep run into the postseason.



Rudy Gobert #27 and Donovan Mitchell #45 of the Utah Jazz react after a play during a game against the Atlanta Hawks at Vivint Smart Home Arena on January 15, 2021 in Salt Lake City, UT



— WESTERN CONFERENCE FAVORITES FOR MVP —

There was a stretch during the first half of the season when LeBron James was running away with the award. Both him and the Lakers have cooled off since then, allowing other competitors to overtake him. Still, what James is doing in his 18th season is insane, so let's take a moment to appreciate him. Once Anthony Davis comes back and the team starts winning again, it wouldn't be surprising to see the King right there in contention.

If there is one player in the West not being talked about enough, it's one of my favorite players to watch, Nikola Jokic. The Joker is setting new career highs in points (27.1), rebounds (11.0), assists (8.6), steals (1.6) and three-pointers (1.6) per game. There is nothing funny about that. If it wasn't for Embiid's best Batman impersonation, Jokic would be the clear favorite.

— SECOND HALF PREDICTIONS —

Call me crazy, but I don't think the Lakers make it back to the Finals this year. As great as LeBron and Davis are, the team is starting to look mentally and physically fatigued after last season's run.

I envision either the Jazz or Suns to represent the West in the Finals. It's about time we had a new squad in the Big Dance, right?

Speaking of fatigued, I'd love to see Portland get fully healthy, because they are my sleeper to make the Finals out of the West. They have one of, if not, the best backcourt in the NBA and a plethora of guards and wings that can give any team fits. Health has been a detriment to the Trailblazers for a very long time, which means they are due.

So, there you have it folks. I'm thankful for a great first half, and here's to an even better second part of the season.

LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers dribbles off of a Montrezl Harrell #15 screen, in front of Domantas Sabonis #11 and Edmond Sumner #5 of the Indiana Pacers, during the second quarter at Staples Center on March 12, 2021 in Los Angeles, CA.



Damian Lillard #0 of the Portland Trail Blazers defends Chris Paul #3 of the Phoenix Suns as Deandre Ayton #22 sets a pick during the first quarter of the game at Moda Center on March 11, 2021 in Portland, OR.

WE STAND TOGETHER, TODAY AND EVERY DAY, IN UNWAVERING SUPPORT OF RESPECT AND JUSTICE FOR ALL



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AND ITS MEMBER LEGENDS REPRESENT A DIVERSE GROUP OF
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in advancement of a collaborative culture that openly and
willingly denounces racism and discrimination.**



#LegendsTogether



LEGEND AMONG LEGENDS

CHARLIE ROSENZWEIG

by JULIO MANTEIGA

For former NBA and WNBA players, there are many ties that bind them together.

For some, it's a championship, for others it may be a past experience at an All-Star Game or a certain city that they played in or even a shared laugh on a long road trip. However, for nearly all former players, there is a connection to one man that they all share in common. That man is Charles Rosenzweig. Charlie, as he is affectionately known universally throughout the basketball world, is as synonymous and revered with former players as the ever-popular Legends Brunch held every year at NBA All-Star. For the past 30 years, Charlie has been the gatekeeper, promoter, confidant, friend and tireless champion to the members of the NBRPA.

In those three decades Charlie has worked with the NBA, beginning as Entertainment Counsel and most recently as Senior Vice President, Entertainment & Player Marketing. In addition to acting as the NBA's principal

liaison to the NBRPA and the NBA Coaches Association, he's overseen the marketing and promotion of NBA players, business dealings between the NBA and its partners with both current and retired players, and secured marketing opportunities on a global basis for league initiatives. In February 2010, Rosenzweig was appointed Trustee of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass., where he also serves on the marketing committee and if those duties weren't enough, Charlie also manages all aspects of the NBA's talent relations, including securing top performers for major NBA events such as NBA All-Star and The Finals. To say that Charlie is omnipresent in his dealings with the NBA's past, present and future talent would be an immense understatement.

We here at Legends Magazine, in an effort to say thank you to a man that so very much supports us, decided what better way to give thanks,

than to reach out to those he has impacted the most along the way. We hope you enjoy this collection of stories, anecdotes and one-liners from some of the game's greatest personalities. From everyone here at the NBRPA and Legends Media & Entertainment – thank you Charlie and we can't wait to see what the future brings!

BILL RUSSELL:

"I've known Charlie for over 25 years and in that time, he's been a champion for retired players, an advisor, a confidant and, most importantly, a friend. He has strived to help the Legends that made our game what it is today and has always exhibited the utmost respect for our wishes and our time. I am proud to join all of the other basketball greats in saying THANK YOU to Charlie. I never thought Charlie would last as long as I have at the NBA."

JULIUS ERVING:

When I think of Charlie Rosenzweig, I can't help but think of the numerous trips he's hooked up for us... We've had such a congenial relationship over the years, going back to when the NBA first started its international programs. I was one of the guys that was brought in to consult on that and fortunately I had international basketball experience with Converse and Spalding, in particular. So, teaming up with Charlie and others from the NBA, to make that a reality was a joy and a very good memory, that I still look back on today. Even though we now talk through middle people, I know that if there was ever a time, I called on him – he would be there in a heartbeat and he feels the same way about me.

BILL WALTON:

"...[Charlie] You always make it fun, and ensure that we are safe, secure, properly dressed, and well-fed. You created the culture, you established the open lines of communications, you built the trust, and inspired the loyalty that makes the NBA what it is. You are the NBA, and the reason we are all so proud, loyal, and grateful. You take us everywhere, and introduce/connect us to everyone, around the globe, and beyond."

SAM PERKINS:

"My man!!! I met Charlie while playing...in the NBA...did a sponsored appearance and never looked back...great guy and respected by the players - especially former players. No matter your NBA status he respected all...he was a friend in those private moments before the event and then it was business when the doors opened. There are so many memories and moments with Charlie...he always paired us up well and he did so much with personalities that made us (the players) get to know each other on trips and assignments while promoting the NBA...fun times. I honestly didn't care if I got paid or a charitable cause...I just enjoyed his company is what I'm trying to say. The NBA should be proud to have someone like Charlie representing them...my man!"

**CLYDE DREXLER:**

"He's like a brother, he cares about everyone and tries to include everyone and make you feel comfortable and it's like a family atmosphere. Charlie has been mainly responsible for keeping that atmosphere together. He's one of those people that truly cares and he always went the extra mile to make everyone feel comfortable... Charlie is an icon in the NBA, one the guys behind the scenes that make the NBA what it is today."

NANCY LIEBERMANN:

"Sometimes when we think of legends we think of the great men and women who have run the hardwood for many years in the NBA. It goes beyond that, it's a partnership and no player has played harder than Charlie Rosenzweig... It doesn't really matter what the event is, Charlie has always had his hand in elevating the footprint of the retired players to make sure that they have a home in the NBA and WNBA. I've been very fortunate to be on the board of the NBRPA and see Charlie at work in his finest moment. He's kind, giving, brilliant, trusted in the league and players are better for having Charlie in their lives. I couldn't think of anyone that should be highlighted that is more worthy of being a great teammate and a partner and our friend, Charlie Rosenzweig."

TERESA EDWARDS:

"Charlie can be credited for so much but what's important to retired players as myself is... he answers the phone and return calls long after we stop scoring baskets. He has kept value in the game through relations that keep legends associated and connected to the careers we've garnered."

Loyal, Earnest, and Honest. It's has been and always will be the best phone call I get when I see his name on my phone. I'm very grateful to him and to say I worked with him as a female legend of our game."





2021 NBA ALL-STAR GAME

*ALL THE ACTION OF
ALL-STAR WEEKEND IN
A SINGLE NIGHT*

by **DAMON SALVADORE**

It was an exciting night of NBA basketball filled with thrilling slam dunks, incredible three-point shooting, and some eye-popping passes on display.

This year's NBA All-Star Weekend was originally scheduled to be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, but, due to the global pandemic, was later moved to Atlanta, Georgia. The entire 2021 NCAA Men's tournament will be played in Indiana due to Covid-19 precautions, so Atlanta was more than happy to host this year's All-Star events. This also marked the first NBA All-Star Game held in Atlanta since 2003.

All-Star Weekend began with the always entertaining skills competition. Pacers forward Domantas Sabonis shocked many fans when he flawlessly won the first two rounds not missing a pass, layup, or a three-point shot. Chris Paul was the favorite to win, but Nikola Vucevic had other plans. Vucevic defeated CP3 in a big upset to advance to the finals.

The final round gave NBA fans a true nail-bitter. Both Sabonis and Vucevic each successfully made their first pass attempt and layup creating a scenario in which both players were at the three-point line with a chance to win it all. Unexpectedly, both All-Stars began by missing their first three consecutive shot attempts. However, Sabonis's high arching fourth attempt shot went in, thus crowning him the 2021 skills competition champion.





Giannis Antetokounmpo #34 of Team LeBron and Zion Williamson #1 of Team Durant jump for the ball during the opening tip off during the 70th NBA All-Star Game as part of 2021 NBA All-Star Weekend on March 7, 2021 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta, GA.

Standing 6'11, Sabonis's victory adds to a growing trend as big men have been winning the skills challenge a lot more in recent years than we're accustomed to seeing. Spencer Dinwiddie (6'5), Kristaps Porziņģis (7'3), Karl-Anthony Towns (6'11), Jayson Tatum (6'8), Bam Adebayo (6'9), and now Sabonis have won the last six skill challenge competitions.

"I wanted to make sure I got it done this time" Sabonis said after his victory referring to finishing as the runner-up to last year's skills challenge champion, Bam Adebayo. Sabonis is the first Pacers player to win the competition.

Next up at State Farm Arena was the three-point competition. Stephen Curry, who won this event back in 2015, came in as the

betting favorite, and he didn't disappoint. Curry exploded for 31 points in the first round, making four of his five money ball attempts. Mike Conley, the oldest competitor in this event, made 24 three pointers in the first round and 27 in the second round. Conley's lead was short lived however as Curry bedazzled fans once again. The Golden State Warriors sharpshooter made 28 three-pointers just moments later in the final round to capture his second three-point contest championship.

Curry's 28 points in the final round is tied for the highest amount ever made in this competition with Devin Booker, who made 28 back in 2018 with the Phoenix Suns. Booker, who suffered a sprained knee injury just last week,

was replaced in this competition by Conley. Following his impressive victory, Curry said "What's up Dub Nation. I'm just walking off the court in Atlanta at the three-point shootout. I get to bring this (trophy) home finally. The splash brothers, we are back. This one goes out to Klay Thompson. We got it done big fella."

Following Curry's remarkable performance, the players took to the court for the annual All-Star game with Team LeBron taking on Team Durant. Unfortunately, Kevin Durant was unable to play due to a hamstring injury. The Brooklyn Nets superstar has only played in 19 games this season.

In a closely contested first quarter, Team LeBron and Team Durant shared leads multiple



Back Row: Paul George, Nikola Jokic, Luka Doncic, Giannis Antetokounmpo, Domantas Sabonis, Rudy Gobert. Front Row: Stephen Curry, Chris Paul, LeBron James, Damian Lillard, Jaylen Brown and Quin Snyder of Team LeBron.



Back Row: Nikola Vucevic, Bradley Beal, Jayson Tatum, Zion Williamson, Kawhi Leonard, Julius Randle. Front Row: Mike Conley, Donovan Mitchell, Kyrie Irving, James Harden, Zach Levine and Doc Rivers of Team Durant.



Stephen Curry #30 of Team LeBron looks on after the MTN DEW 3-Point Contest as part of 2021 NBA All-Star Weekend on March 7, 2021 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta, GA.



Anfernee Simons #1 of the Portland Trail Blazers holds the AT&T Slam Dunk Contest trophy AT&T Slam Dunk Contest.



Domantas Sabonis #11 of Team LeBron holds the Taco Bell Skills Challenge trophy during as part of 2021 NBA All-Star Weekend.

times with Team LeBron ultimately winning the quarter, 40-39. Just like the three-point contest, it was once again Curry who stole the show in the first quarter of the All-Star Game. The three-time NBA Champion scored 12 points, all coming from downtown. With seven minutes left in the first quarter, Curry shot a corner three and proceeded to turn around before the ball even came down already knowing the inevitable, the shot was made. Just three minutes later, Curry took and made a shot from 10 feet beyond the middle of the three-point line, on the NBA All-Star logo. Kyrie Irving's 10 points led all players on Team Durant in the first quarter.

In the second quarter the two teams were almost dead even after Team Durant's James Harden made a three-point field goal to cut Team LeBron's lead to just 73-72. Then, an avalanche of scoring from Team LeBron gave them a decisive second quarter victory. Following Harden's made shot with 3:54 remaining, Team LeBron went on a 21-2 scoring run eventually winning the quarter, 60-41. Team LeBron led at half, 100-80. Giannis Antetokounmpo led Team LeBron in scoring with 24 points on a perfect 11 of

11 shooting while Kyrie Irving's 15 points led Team Durant at the half. Curry made six three-pointers in the first half, falling just one shy of Russell Westbrook's All-Star game record of seven made in a half back in 2016.

During the halftime break, fans got to watch the slam-dunk contest. New York Knicks power forward Obi Toppin set the tone in the first round scoring a 48 from the judges with his creative between the legs baseline dunk. Standing 6'9, Toppin was the tallest player in this year's event. Anfernee Simons of the Portland Trail Blazers scored a 49 with his Tracy McGrady 360 degrees tribute dunk (from the 2000 Slam Dunk contest) in the second round, the highest dunk score of the tournament.

Simons and Toppin met in the finals. Toppin went first with a between the legs dunk, jumping from about a foot after the free throw line. Simons followed that by attempting to kiss the rim when he dunked the ball, but fell a few inches short of making his contact. Regardless of missing the kiss, Simons won over the judges with his unbelievable elevation on his dunks. Simons is the first ever Portland Trailblazers player to win the slam dunk contest.



LeBron James #23 of Team LeBron dunks the ball during the 70th NBA All-Star Game as part of 2021 NBA All-Star Weekend on March 7, 2021 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta, GA.



Chris Paul #3 of Team LeBron during the second half in the 70th NBA All-Star Game at State Farm Arena on March 7, 2021 in Atlanta, GA.

"I tried to get close enough so obviously I don't hit my head on the rim too hard. I just tried to get as close as I can as possible and then get out," Simons said of his winning dunk. When asked about why he wasn't able to literally kiss the rim, Simons said, "You know, I've never -- in practice I never actually kissed the rim, but I was like, I've got to commit to it. I was trying to put a mouthpiece in last minute but it didn't fit in my mouth, so I just scratched it, and I was like, I'm just going to emphasize the smooth face so people know that I'm right there next to the rim and I'm trying to kiss it."

Despite the fact that LeBron James only had two points through three quarters of play, his team outscored Team Durant 46-42 in the third quarter, thus taking a 146-125 lead heading into the fourth and final quarter. Antetokounmpo, "The Greek Freak" led all scorers with 35 points on a perfect 16 for 16 shooting performance through three quarters of action.

In honor of the great NBA Legend Kobe Bryant, the NBA decided to add 24 points to Team LeBron's score making 170 the final mark for both teams to win. Team Durant went on a 9-0 scoring run in the fourth quarter cutting the deficit to 159-144, but Team LeBron wouldn't let up. Unable to mount a comeback, Team Durant fell to Team LeBron 170-150 as Damian Lillard sealed the deal with a game-winning half court three-point shot. Curry and Lillard each



Giannis Antetokounmpo #34 of Team LeBron reacts after receiving the MVP Award during the 70th NBA All-Star Game as part of 2021 NBA All-Star Weekend on March 7, 2021 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta, GA.

finished with eight three-pointers made, falling just one shy of the record set by Paul George back in the 2016 All-Star game.

Antetokounmpo was named All-Star Game Most Valuable Player. His 16-16 performance is a new NBA All-Star Game record for most makes without a single miss. Antetokounmpo



Nikola Vucevic #9 of Team Durant boxes out Rudy Gobert #27 of Team LeBron during the 70th NBA All-Star Game as part of 2021 NBA All-Star Weekend on March 7, 2021 at State Farm Arena in Atlanta, GA.

finished with seven rebounds, three assists, one steal and one block in just 19 minutes of action.

When the All-Star draft selections were made last week, Antetokounmpo seemed more than confident that Team LeBron would win this contest. "It's over, guys. Me, LeBron, Luka, Jokic and Steph. Man, that's a good starting five," said the 2-time defending NBA MVP. It turns out he was more than right about that prediction. Postgame, Antetokounmpo went on to say "It's fun. It's fun. I was happy, my teammates had fun. Just being around great players it's easy to play with."

This victory marked the fourth consecutive victory for Team LeBron under the new All-Star Game format. Following the win, LeBron James said "I hope that they allow me to retire from being an All-Star captain, so I can retire with a perfect 4-0 record. I'll keep that forever. But we'll just see what happens. I always try to pick the right team, and I've been lucky enough for four years to pick the right team. Guys go out and compete and play to win. I've been on the winning side of all four."

While this year's mid-season showcase was not the typical affair, we've all been accustomed to, it was no doubt entertaining. Next year Cleveland, and let's hope that we can all once again gather as only basketball fans can and celebrate the 75th anniversary of the NBA in person.



LEGENDS CARE

Legends Care is the initiative of the NBRPA that positively impacts communities and youth through basketball. NBRPA Legends give back through clinics, mentoring, charitable outreach and other grassroots initiatives in the United States and abroad with the goal of educating, inspiring and keeping youth active, healthy and safe.



FULL COURT PRESS

Legend Care's cornerstone program - Full Court Press: Prep For Success - went virtual, giving children around the world the opportunity to learn basketball skills through drills demonstrated by WNBA Legend Sheryl Swoopes and NBA Legends Grant Hill, Shawn Marion, Dale Ellis, Fat Lever, Greg Oden and Caron Butler.



LEGENDS GIRL CHAT

Legends Girl Chat is a virtual Legends Care program consisting of one-hour video conversations between middle school and high school girls and WNBA Legends. Partnering with the NBRPA on Legends Girl Chat is Girls Inc. Through this Legends Care partnership, all 78 affiliates of Girls Inc. are able to schedule a Legends Girl Chat to incorporate into their programming.



LEGENDS HOME COURTS

Through the Legends Home Courts program, monetary grants are given to community groups for the renovation of outdoor basketball courts.

BACK2BACK

BACK2BACK prepares elementary students for the upcoming school year by providing them with brand new backpacks filled with essential back to school supplies.

THANKSGIVING COMMUNITY ASSIST

The Thanksgiving Community Assist is an annual Legends Care program through which families in need receive a Thanksgiving turkey and holiday cheer from the Legends of Basketball.

Legends™

TIP-OFF CAMPAIGN

In December 2020, the NBRPA launched the inaugural Legends Care Tip-Off Campaign. A five-day, end-of-year giving campaign, the Legends Care Tip-Off Campaign raised funds for Legends Care Community Assist programs including BACK2BACK, Legends Home Courts and the Thanksgiving Community Assist. Thanks to the overwhelming support of Legends Care donors, the inaugural Tip-Off Campaign goal of \$22,000 was achieved during the five-day span.

\$22,000

\$19,250

\$16,500

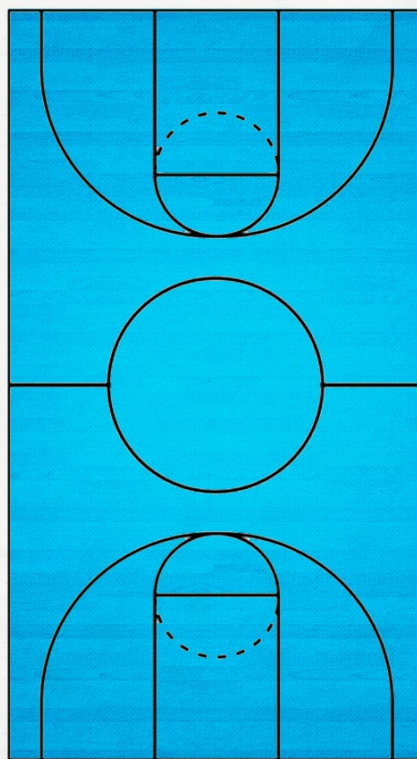
\$13,750

\$11,000

\$8,250

\$5,500

\$2,750



THANK YOU!

LEGENDSOFBASKETBALL.COM/LEGENDSCARE

“

“Through this unique opportunity, girls are connecting with remarkable female role models and building on the experiences they are getting at Girls Inc., including learning about the importance of teamwork, using the skills they develop through sports participation to become leaders in their communities, and speaking out against injustice.”

Dr. Stephanie Hull, Girls Inc. President & CEO

“The Legends Girl Chat with Valerie Still was an awesome opportunity for both our girls and staff. To hear from such a strong, smart, and bold woman was inspirational and showed the girls the power of believing in themselves and not giving up.”

Brionna Pendleton, Girls Inc. of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey

“She’s just like me!”

Jalayah, 9

“Thank you! I won’t give up!”

Iam, 10

“The call with Valerie Still meant so much to me, she was amazing and I admired how she talked about what success really means to everyone. Thank you, Valerie Still and thank you, Girls Inc.!”

Keyanna, 14

“It truly was a great experience talking to two WNBA Legends. Their stories truly inspired me to work toward my goals with motivation and self-confidence.”

Jada, 16

Legends™

GIRL CHAT

Last summer, the NBRPA announced Legends Girl Chat - a new, virtual Legends Care program consisting of one-hour video conversations between WNBA Legends and girls from Girls Inc. affiliates all over North America. Since then, hundreds of girls have been impacted and inspired through the Legends Girl Chat, but don’t take our word for it...

“I went to a lot of Indiana Fever games, I have a very vivid memory of seeing Ebony Hoffman play! It was always inspirational for me to see women playing the same sport as men and be just as talented.”

Elizabeth, 18

“We loved meeting Carla McGhee and really appreciated the insights she shared about what it means to be part of a team; that you may not be best friends with everyone on your team, but you all have to respect each other. We often talk with the girls about the importance of respect and it was great to have that message reinforced by a professional athlete, speaking from her own experience.”

Sara Gmitter, Girls Inc. of Santa Fe

“Thank you :) I learned a lot from the WNBA Legends and how I can I accomplish whatever I’m passionate about. Thank you so much for inspiring me.”

Leslie, 14

“Legends Girl Chats allow girls to meet women who have achieved incredible things despite the inherent barriers they’ve faced as female athletes. When girls hear their stories, it normalizes their own experiences and encourages them to keep dreaming and hold on to their worth.”

Kate Gilbert, Girls Inc. of Chicago

“I would personally like to thank the WNBA Legends for coming and speaking with my group. It was honestly amazing to hear all the advice and stories that were told.”

Jamira, 15

“I would just like to thank the WNBA Legends for lending their time to talk to us and share their stories. They really gave me good advice, that I could use now and as I move forward in my life.”

Maryam, 18

”

WE WILL PLAY THROUGH IT

*STAYING FOCUSED IN THE
FACE OF ADVERSITY*

by ADONAL FOYLE



One of the fundamental traits we as basketball players learn at an early age is the ability to “play through it”. We play through hard practices, difficult opponents, and injuries. This unique skill set is engrained in our minds and bodies and is what helped us reach the highest level in the Game.

The COVID-19 Pandemic, our countries Social and Political challenges, and the 2020 US Election have strained us all emotionally to levels many have never felt. The stress, the anger, and the fear all add up. For most of our lives, we’ve had the escape of Basketball, but for us retired Players, that option is gone and this too adds to feelings of hopelessness. We can only counter these the best we can and for me, it has helped to be able to harness that “play through it” mentality to push through each day.

Right now, our Sport has returned to the court to again attempt to play a season in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 season took place in the controlled environment of the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex. Within these 220 acres in Central Florida, the NBA created a campus for today’s Players, Coaches, and Support Staff to play a season where certain variables could be controlled and player health and safety was monitored 24/7.

The 2021 season took a different path having teams resume play at home arenas. In most cities, this is being done with no fans or limitations on attendees. Teams are also traveling which adds an element of challenges for all involved. Yes, there are “back-to-backs” but the League and the Union have done their best to ensure that safety protocols are put in place, structure is enforced, and when necessary, games are postponed and rescheduled when situations arise.



Adonal Foyle stands on the court before a game between the Memphis Grizzlies and Golden State Warriors in Game Two of the Western Conference Semifinals during the NBA Playoffs on May 5, 2015 at ORACLE Arena in Oakland, CA.

As an observer watching along like many of us, I worry about the “off the court” elements that our Players are going through. There are so many issues that this generation is dealing with and I often ask myself “how the hell would I have handled that?”. We’ve talked a lot about the mental side of sport the past few years – and as we continue in this period of uncertain times, our Players of today must find the strength to play through this as well.

In watching the games, one aspect that I am seeing more of is joy. Joy in just playing ball. We all remember what those 48 minutes can be like and the emotions both good and bad

that we are able to experience. It is our escape, and albeit uncertain times, our Players know that once they step on the court the drama that is going on outside the arena is at least being blocked out by the sound of sneakers, yelling for screens, and the ball hitting the bottom of the net.

The business side of our game has also been dealt a major blow. We hear of the lost revenues and economic challenges that Teams and the League are going through. None of us are naive to the fact that as Professional Athletes, we are extremely fortunate, but the reality of our economy is showing us first-hand how fragile



NBA Legend Adonal Foyle participates in a Jr NBA clinic and Parent Forum focused on positive coaching at the Ultimate Fieldhouse in Walnut Creek, California on October 11, 2017.

**“PLAYERS KNOW THAT
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THE BALL HITTING THE
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ADONAL FOYLE

and delicate things can be. Many players are being vocal about the aspect that we are only playing because of the money. As this will be a long-term debate, I do feel it is important for us to try to resume some type of normal activities when and where possible and the NBA is doing its best to achieve that goal.

But how do we play through this period in our lives? For me, it's trying my best to stay focused on the things I can control – my personal life focus.

FOYLE FOCUS:

Step 1 - Breathe.

In the middle of difficult times, taking some time for self-care is so important and the result though modest, is quite illuminating and transformative. You will be surprised how often we forget to breathe. So, you are going to need some “me” time... For about a minute or two take some deep diaphragmatic breaths and hold it for a few seconds. Hold it. Then exhale smoothly. Rinse and repeat a few times. Your Apple Watch has a breathing function that you can use that encourage you to breathe for a minute. Headspace is an excellent app that has numerous exercises for mindfulness meditation and basic stress reduction techniques.

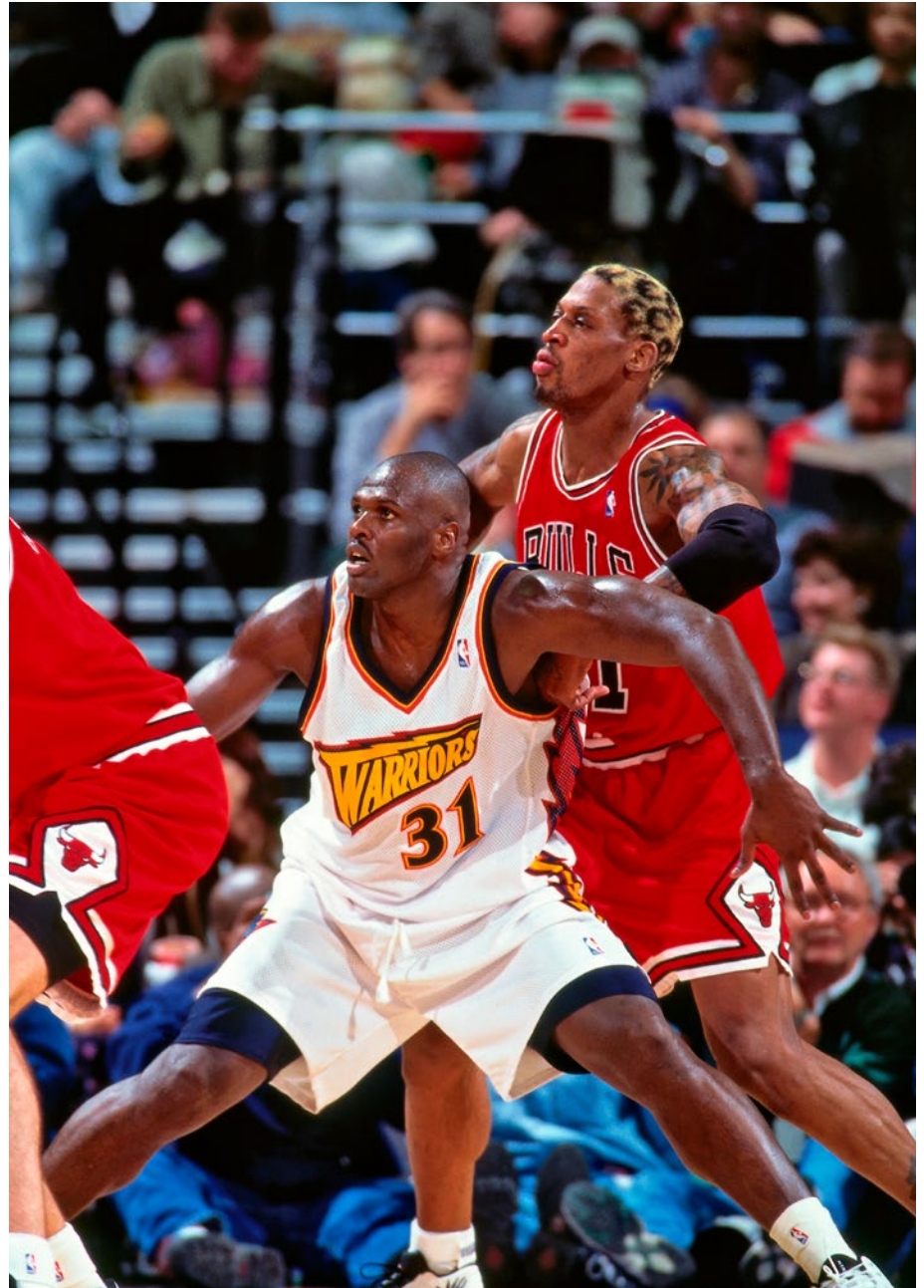
Step 2 - Focus on our Mental Health.

So much of our time is focused on the Game, Family, Finances, your Spiritual Life, and all the “noise” around us that we often forget how important our Mental Health is. The power of the mind is often an afterthought and it is so crucial to every aspect of our life and so important to our overall happiness. The impact of understanding the benefits of Mental

Health can be compared to your favorite food. When applied correctly, it can be a magical life seasoning that you can sprinkle on your food to make it incredible! Without it, life can be bland, uninteresting, and hard to take in. With the right mental framework - everything tastes good! Furthermore, your mindset is the tool that can transform our life in meaningful ways like understanding your abilities, handling the stress of work/life balance, contributing to the community, and feeling comfortable in your own skin.

Step 3 - Identify a positive aspect of our lives that we can work on.

We are more than our job! We are more than our status in life. There's always something in our life that we can work on. There's always something that we've been putting on the back burner – a vacation we always wanted to take, the Cooking Class we wanted to take, even organizing the clothing closet! Adversity creates an opportunity for growth. A friend of mine lost her job and after the initial shock, disappointment, and frustration she decided that



Left: Adonal Foyle #31 of the Golden State Warriors smiles during the game against the Washington Wizards at the Arena in Oakland on March 27, 2006 in Oakland, CA. The Wizards won 116-98. Right: Adonal Foyle #31 of the Golden State Warriors posts up against Dennis Rodman #91 of the Chicago Bulls on January 30, 1998 at The Arena in Oakland in Oakland, CA.



Adonal Foyle walks to the court before Game Six of the NBA Finals between the Toronto Raptors and the Golden State Warriors on June 13, 2019 at ORACLE Arena in Oakland, CA.



Jumaine Jones #33 of the Cleveland Cavaliers guards Adonal Foyle #31 of the Golden State Warriors during the first quarter at Gund Arena in Cleveland, OH.



NBA Legend Adonal Foyle participates in a Jr NBA clinic and Parent Forum focused on positive coaching at the Ultimate Fieldhouse in Walnut Creek, CA on October 11, 2017.

she's going to take control of her life. She went back to school to finish her degree, she improved her physical fitness, caught up on some reading, and immersed herself in family and friends. Being a cockeyed optimist is not such a bad predisposition. Find the positive in chaos and focus on self-improvement.

Step 4 - Be part of solutions.

Sometimes it is easier to state what the problem is and only complain about it. Often times, when it comes to either internal or external problems, very few are willing to take the challenge of finding a solution. We don't have to possess the answer to every problem, but we could choose to be a positive force in trying to change the world in which we find it. To be part of the solution, we need to be clear about our purpose, be specific and succinct with our intentions, accurate and honest in our reasoning and finally be complete and open with specific solutions. You can throw popcorn at the screen or you can be an agent of change...

Step 5 - Check in on teammates.

What I discovered in quarantine is that I need human connection more than I thought I did. We all need quality people in our lives whether we want to acknowledge that or not. I am much more aware of the need for connection, intimacy, and friendship. The same is true in sports and for Professional Athletes. As the world spins out of control, it is important to check in and see how your teammates are doing. It doesn't have to be a long drawn out conversation but a legit check in. Asking question like "bro how are you holding up?" - "How are you and the family feeling coping with you being at home?" "What are you doing with the extra time?" "What you working on in your spare time?" These check-ins may seem insignificant but to others in your orbit, it means the world (even though they may not admit to you!).

As we know from the many hurdles in our lives - "this too shall pass". I am very much looking forward to life getting back to some sense of normalcy. To attending games, running into each other in the hallways or at League events, and being able to re-connect in person. It's been a long road - and still many difficult days ahead - but as long as we continue to "play through it", we will all be much better in the end. - **ADF31**

WE'RE PROUD TO SUPPORT THE NATIONAL RETIRED BASKETBALL PLAYER ASSOCIATION

At Wintrust, we're committed to giving back to the organizations that support and strengthen our communities, like the National Retired Basketball Players Association. Thank you for your dedication to positively impacting the next generation through basketball. We can support you during your time after the game with financial solutions, including:

- Commercial and community banking
- Wealth management guidance
- Mortgage origination
- Commercial insurance premium financing
- Short-term accounts receivable financing
- Certain administrative services

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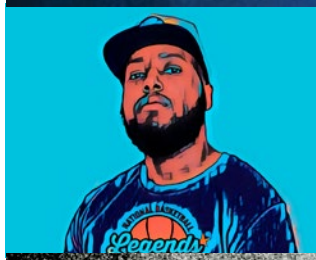
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TRILL'S TAKE:

TOP 10 TRASH TALKERS OF ALL TIME

by **TRILL WITHERS**

Dr. James Naismith invented basketball in December of 1891, as a way to keep his students in peak physical shape during cold months. I'd like to think that "trash talk" was invented shortly thereafter in January 1892, as a way to separate those that were good at throwing an old soccer ball into a peach basket, from those that were...less inclined. While I'm sure that the trash talk of the early 1890's sounded MUCH different than what we hear now, I am positive that it existed. The beauty of it is that it's not limited to specific regions of the country or eras of time. It transcends both and anyone who played basketball growing up can remember the best trash talkers they played against and grew up watching. Who were some of my favorites? I'm glad you asked!

TOP 10 TRASH TALKERS OF ALL TIME

- 10 VERNON MAXWELL
- 9 JOEL EMBIID
- 8 CHARLES BARKLEY
- 7 DRAYMOND GREEN
- 6 KEVIN GARNETT
- 5 REGGIE MILLER
- 4 KOBE BRYANT
- 3 GARY PAYTON
- 2 LARRY BIRD
- 1 MICHAEL JORDAN

Larry Bird



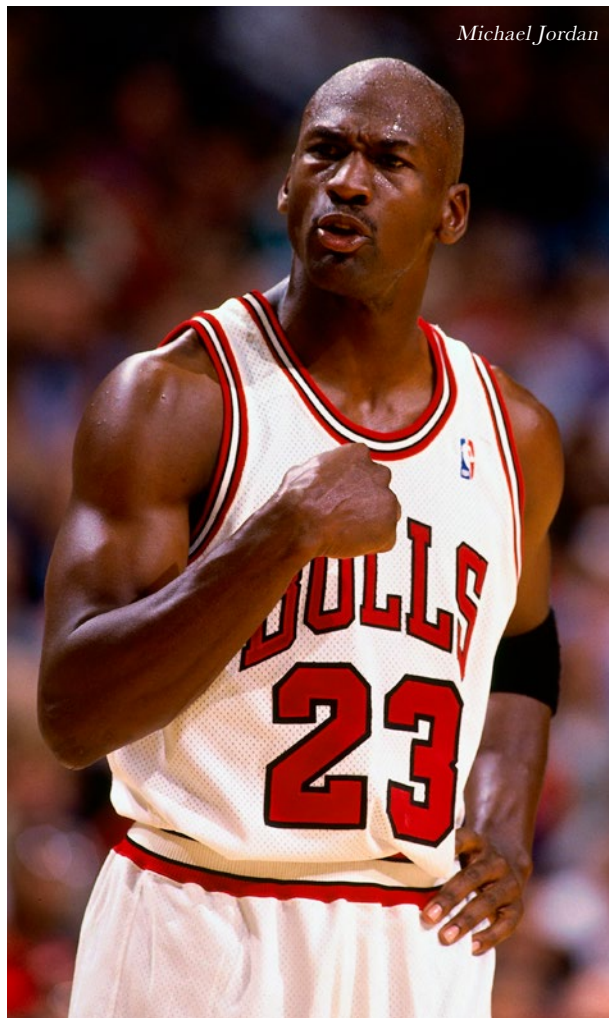
Gary Payton



Kobe Bryant



Michael Jordan



Reggie Miller





ALL-STAR MEMORY LANE

by **PETER VECSEY**

It's All-Star (Reader's Digest) time. Hence, another trip down the Memory Lane (Violation) of observations and anecdotes from exhibitions gone by.

Interest of full disclosure, Michael Jordan froze me out of many memories, so I'm putting a fair amount of faith in Al Gore's Internet.

I was much younger and smarter back in '64 when icons of yore, led by Tommy Heinsohn, Oscar Robertson, Jerry West, Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, Elgin Baylor and others decided the show didn't have to go on.

This was at the old Boston Garden, but the arena paled in comparison to the agenda. The players' union reps, backed by many of the participating All Stars, took a stand vs. a knee less than an hour before the NBA's first made-for-TV All-Star Game.

Create a pension fund, Norma Rae declared, or we're outta here!

One can't forget that back then, test patterns and civil-defense drills had more television

exposure than the NBA. So, when ABC decided to give the league a shot by airing the All-Stars, it was ankle-breaking news.

Not wanting the humiliation of airing dead air, J. Walter Kennedy, only months into his inaugural season as commissioner, placated the rancor and file despite owners' uncompromising position against complying and on-the-scene threats to ban the leaders from ever playing again in the league.



Kennedy huddled with the player reps in the dressing room and promised he would convince the owners to start a pension plan. They took his word. Within months, it was approved.

By virtue of 26 points, The Big O was judged the game's MVP in leading the East to a 111-107 win, though it failed to cover, according to well-preserved IOUs to my least favorite bookie.

Robertson, West and Russell all played 42 minutes, a feat matched by Nate Thurmond's feet in 1967, but never surpassed.

Fifty-five years ago (1966) was the game of Adrian Smith's career. Playing at home in Cincinnati Gardens, the Royals' reserve, in his lone Star soirée, went for a game-high 24 points in 26 minutes.

The car ('66 Ford Galaxie; shade under 60,000 miles as of Jan. 2016) remains in his garage; at least that's what every feature I've skimmed, scanned or browsed maintains.

Back in 1973, inside Chicago Stadium, the East won, 104-84. Those 188 points may very

well be a first-quarter total when the defense parade rests come Sunday in Atlanta. The West's figure was the last time either side failed to crack triple figures.

For some strange reason, the West took 25 fewer shots. A vicious rumor has it players broke a sweat back then.

In 1975, Walt Frazier was awarded the MVP in Phoenix where the 'best' hotel was Del Webb's Town House, owned by the former co-owner (ex-partner Dan Topping died the year before at 61) of the Yankees.

The sole spot to eat afterward for famished players was a diner-like restaurant. At the table to my left were Tiny Archibald and a beautiful woman named Jean. At the table to my right was Frazier, decked out in a full-length fur coat.

Milwaukee hosted the 1977 classic. It was Julius Erving's initial NBA appearance as a 76er. His MVP award (30 points, 12 rebounds, four steals, three assists) was controversial in that the West rallied late behind Paul Westphal to win, 125-124.

"I've seen him almost every game this season, but this is the first time I've seen him play," hissed Turquoise Erving, rebuking Gene Shue's constrained coaching of her then husband.

John Havlicek's last All Star presence occurred in Atlanta in 1978, his retirement season. Doug Collins paid homage by surrendering his starting East spot to him. Randy Smith (11-14 FG, 27 points) led a late comeback offensive and dominated MVP voting.

A most intense retention of the 1982 All Star Game in East Rutherford involved Cavaliers owner Ted Stepien and coach Bill Musselman. I had branded them 'Septank' and 'Musselhead' and unremittingly used their nicknames in columns. They asked to talk with me in private. I walked vigilantly alongside them into the bowels of Brendan Byrne Arena, fully expecting swings to be swung. Instead, they politely asked me to stop using the nicknames. So I did.

In 1987, Sonic Tom Chambers won MVP in Seattle. I remember little about the game other than Bob Lanier was a beast. I do vividly recall a commotion after it. I was leaving the arena with Rick Barry, who obliged numerous requests for an autograph, when an abrasive young fanatic crumpled the signed piece of paper, threw it in Barry's face and took off. Lamentably, Rick failed to catch him.

David Stern's favorite All-Star Game was 1992 in Orlando when Magic Johnson, though retired upon learning he'd become HIV-positive, was voted to the West's starting lineup by the fans. Despite an outcry from numerous players and executives, alarmed about potential health risks, the commissioner resolutely supported Magic's participation. I spoke to a large hotel gathering the morning of the game, and proclaimed Johnson a living lock to win MVP.

Salt Lake City was the site in 1993. John Stockton and Karl Malone shared MVP. Following the previous day's events, as I was about to exit the arena, a sizeable loaf of oaf

threatened me with corporal punishment for repeatedly taking the name of Frank Layden in vain. Supposedly it was his son-in-law. Out of nowhere, which isn't easy to do when you're 6-9 and 260 pounds, Wayman Tisdale, God bless his soul, intervened, allowing me to make myself scarce.

In 1994, Scottie Pippen won MVP while Michael Jordan was spring training with the Birmingham Barons, and non All-Star Toni Kukoc wasn't available to take any winning last second shots.

The 1995 All-Star Game in Phoenix was special on many counts. NBC boss Dick Ebersol gave me the latitude to select the player the network would feature that weekend; Joe Dumars was my choice. During Saturday's activities, Dumars pointed to a skinny 6-6 guy who was talking to someone off the court.

"Is that Charlie Scott?"

It is, I confirmed.

"Do you know him?"

Yes. I covered him in the ABA and NBA, and he played for my team at Rucker Park.

"Can you introduce me? He was my idol growing up (Shreveport, LA)."

Dumars didn't have to explain. I was well aware Scott was the first black athlete to attend the University of North Carolina.

That weekend also stands out because Stockton, who, during an NBC interview in the late '90s, gave up less information than John McCain did as a POW, approached me at pool-side of the hotel we were all staying. He told me how much he loved my line when he set the NBA assist record.

I'd written, "Stockton gives it up more than Madonna."

The 1997 event in Cleveland is my all-time favorite because it assembled the NBA's all-time Top 50 players (minus three; the deceased Pete Maravich, Jerry West and Shaquille O'Neal), according to 50 voters, of which I was one. Witnessing Bill Russell help George Mikan onto the platform during the ceremony was especially touching. Being rejected by Russell for a Top 50 book autograph in a room reserved for the revered (and some privileged invitees) was typically haughty.

I loved the '98 game at Madison Square Garden, not so much for tenderfoot Kobe Bryant's disposition to duel Jordan, the eventual MVP, but for waving Malone out of the region when offered a Gunite pick.

Los Angeles hosted so many All-Star Weekends I get cloudy what happened when. However, I clearly remember 2004, because



it was LeBron James rookie revelation. My first impression was disappointing. Unable or unwilling to hide his dissatisfaction in front of a swarm of spectators, James snapped at a lackey waiting on him hand and 'foot' in the locker room after his shower. Seems the slippers were late in arriving, or they didn't fit, or weren't made by Nike.

Denver's 2005 hosting was noteworthy for 60-70 degree weather the whole weekend. Perfect for walking around the city, and getting a long overdue shoeshine. Except the old guy wielding the stand refused to let me sit down. "Come back after you learn to take care of 'em," he scolded.

The 2012 Game took place in Orlando. That Saturday, I shared a cab to one of the events with Hall of Famer Dolph Schayes. I'd often seen him play for the Syracuse Nationals, and, on occasion, absorbed an elbow of his on the outside court at Kutsher's Country Club where the Maurice Stokes charity event was played for many years before moving inside. Schayes showed me an enlarged photo of Russell smothering a lefty hook. "Do you believe this guy!" Schayes grumbled. "He blocked my shot, and he won't even sign the photo!" When we got out of the cab, Dolph signed the photo and gave it to me.

New York's 2015 All-Star Game was highlighted in my heart by a compelling poster of the city's most influential basketball people. Coordinated by NBA Entertainment's Paul Hirschheimer and Dan Klores. It hangs prominently in my living room. That Legends' Brunch was the last time I saw long-expired Cal Ramsey, Pearl Washington and Fatty Taylor.

Even after I retired, Adam Silver always welcomes my presence at All-Star Games with two tickets to almost every event. In 2016, at Toronto, I was at the front desk asking a question when Michael Jordan stopped to talk. We spoke for ten minutes or so, at which time I asked if I could interview him in Charlotte for the book I'll never finish writing. He gave me his secretary's name and number. Several subsequent calls proved fruitless. Jordan, I was ultimately informed, wanted to tell conflicting versions of his story.

Indianapolis was the location of the 1985 All-Star Game. For Larry Bird and Isiah Thomas it was their homecoming. For rookie Michael Jordan, it was his unveiling. At halftime, Thomas' agent, Dr. Charles Tucker, alerted me on press row to an alleged 'freeze out' of Jordan, which I broke the next day in the New York Post. Supposedly, Thomas was its organizer.

If anything, it was not a freeze out, but collusion by Tucker's clients, two of them opponents, George Gervin and Magic Johnson, the purported objective being to show up the sensed showoff; Nike had him adorned in a flashy (the first) Air Jordan sweats during the Dunk Competition and a shoe the NBA was opposed to him wearing.

The real intent, I submit, was to make Michael honor the chain of command and respect his accomplished elders by not intentionally or unintentionally trying to upstage them. In 1998, Jordan wrote "For the Love of the Game, My Story" he thought Thomas and Dominique

Wilkins and others felt disrespected. "I was just trying to help the company. It had invested a lot of money in me."

In any event, Gervin flushed his first six shots being defended by Jordan, and finished 10-12. Magic, I'm convinced, felt Jordan was on course to command competing commercial thunder. Thus, he pounced on the East squad as if it were a playoff game, and pushed the pace (15 assists), which had Jordan backpedaling on the break, and staggering into screens.

Any way you wish to view it, Jordan's debut was a dud. He was 2-9 (seven points) from the field and committed four fouls in 22 minutes.





Thomas, meanwhile, injured his hamstring at the end of the second quarter after recording 17 points. He played sparingly thereafter, yet managed to notch 9-14, nourish Bird, Moses Malone and Erving (five assists) and hypothetically neuter Jordan.

"Just go back and examine the game," Thomas challenged me years ago when his would-be principal role in the debate was discussed at length. "People say, 'you could have passed to Jordan, but you passed to Bird or Erving.' That's right! But those were the guys you're supposed to throw the ball to."

Those same people, Thomas professed, "forget that Jordan wasn't Jordan then. What he was in the '80s, was not what he became in the '90s. He was one of many. Not the dominant guy!"

What's more, he underlined, all the starters got roughly the same number of shots. Bird hoisted 17, Erving 15, Thomas 14, Malone ten, and Jordan, who saw the least amount of daylight due to foul trouble, nine

"It's preposterous to think I had the clout to orchestrate such a scheme. To say, we need to do this or that. I was not one of the top guys then."

However, he was. The previous All-Star game in Denver, Thomas won the MVP. He also won it the next year in Dallas. In his fourth season, he had already become one of the NBA's celestial beings. That doesn't mean he coordinated a conspiracy, of course, but it also doesn't liberate him from being a lead participant in one.

"I believe Michael just had a bad game," Thomas conclusively decreed.

Jordan has been quoted in later years saying he doesn't believe there was a freeze out. There's not a lucid person alive who believes him.

Years ago, Rod Thorn told me in a long interview at the league office, where he was VP of Violence, felt from his vantage point in the stands as then-Bulls GM that something troublesome concerning Jordan was going on in the game.

Conversely, Jordan did not pick up the scent of scandal until the next day when papers blared the story. Bulls beat writer, Sam Smith, wrote in the Chicago Tribune Michael was both furious and embarrassed. Whether it occurred or not, he determined it had. He told reporters it made him feel small, that he felt like crawling in a hole and hiding and not coming out.

"I was very quiet when I went down there (Indy)," Jordan said. "I didn't want to go there like, 'I'm a big shot rookie and you must respect me.' And then they try to embarrass me out of jealousy?"

At practice back in Chicago, Jordan fumed about the situation, and fumed about Thomas. As destiny would dictate, the Bulls played the Pistons two days following the All-Star game.

In a, 139-126, overtime win, the Bulls' record reached the equator.

Jordan detonated for 49 points (19-31 FG, 11-13 FT), 15 rebounds (seven offensive), five assists and four steals.

"We never really got to know each other," Thomas told me during our studio time together at NBC.

When he coached the East All-Star team in Atlanta, 2003, Jordan's third and final swan song, Thomas urged Vince Carter to sacrifice his starting spot to His Airness, which he got big ups for doing. It was a great game, with the West winning in double overtime, as Jordan and Kobe battled sublimely for posterity.

"Michael was as gracious to me and my son in private as he was in public," Thomas said. "He took pictures with my son (Zeke), and gave him his All-Star shoes. It was a great weekend. I was shocked to learn he harbored such hostility."

Yup, who woulda guessed...



Legends Studios, presented by the NBRPA, is the #1 podcast destination for basketball fans who want to hear from NBA and WNBA Legends.

Episodes of the All-Access Legends Podcast, On Deck with Scott Rochelle, Legends Live with Trill Withers, and Hoop du Jour with Peter Vecsey can all be found in one place at Legends Studios.



SUBSCRIBE to Legends Studios on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher or wherever you listen to podcasts to stay up-to-date with Legends content.





NEW EXPANDED MULTIMEDIA PLATFORM TO SHOWCASE THE STORIES, SUCCESSES, LESSONS AND PERSONALITIES OF NBA AND WNBA LEGENDS

The National Basketball Retired Players Association (NBRPA) announced the expansion and launch of Legends Media & Entertainment (LME), a multifaceted storytelling platform that will produce, distribute and quantify the wide-reaching stories of many of the NBA and WNBA's biggest stars. The content will span the history of both leagues and feature more recent alums of the game ranging from Sheryl Swoopes and Grant Hill to the sport's greatest legends and business successes on and off the court, delivered through all forms of media, from print and spoken word to long and short form video.

The NBRPA represents over 1,000 former NBA and WNBA players, making it the largest agency of its kind in basketball. This has allowed for direct access to players for opportunities domestically and internationally.

"With the creation of LME, we are building a multimedia platform for some of the most compelling men and women connected to basketball's history and culture under one umbrella, something which has been asked for, and needed for some time," said NBRPA President and CEO Scott Rochelle. "LME will be a vibrant stop for fans, businesses and others who want to enjoy, learn and explore the amazing stories of our Legends both on and off the court. These stories are some of the best in the global business of sport, and now we can house them under one impactful roof."

NBA Champion and NBRPA Director Caron Butler adds, "Every NBA and WNBA player has a story to tell and Legends Media & Entertainment offers ALL Legends a platform to tell their stories and let their voices be heard."

Some of the key unified elements of LME will include:

Legends Magazine which debuted in 2018 and is the official publication for NBA and WNBA Legends. Produced quarterly, Legends Magazine has featured cover stories about NBRPA Director Caron Butler, Jerry Stackhouse, Elton Brand, Jamal Mashburn and "The Knuckleheads" – Quentin Richardson

and Darius Miles. Each issue is delivered to all former players, active players, coaches, stakeholders, influencers and league officials worldwide.

Legends Studios also debuted in 2018 with the launch of original live-action and animated short videos and two podcasts, the All-Access Legends Podcast and On Deck with Scott Rochelle. In April 2020, Legends Live, a weekly web series broadcasted to multiple social media platforms featuring live conversations with NBA and WNBA Legends, was added to the Legends Studios portfolio. In addition to 32 standard episodes, Legends Live also covered the 2020 WNBA Draft and ESPN's The Last Dance with live commentary from Legends. Last week, media personality Tyler Johnson, aka Trill Withers, joined the LME team as host of Legends Live, where he will spend time with many of the game's most successful and dynamic personalities and business people. Johnson will also be a key contributor to Legends Magazine, the All-Access Legends Podcast and the NBRPA's social media strategy and content.

To follow along with LME
content from the NBRPA,
find us on social media.

TWITTER, INSTAGRAM,
YOUTUBE AND TWITCH:
@NBAALUMNI

FACEBOOK:
NBA ALUMNI



Today I got my first dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. I'm so excited to have taken one of the final steps to protect myself and my family from COVID-19! *Via Magic Johnson, @MagicJohnson on Twitter*

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

FORMER PLAYERS ARE USING THEIR INFLUENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES RECEIVING THE COVID-19 VACCINE AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME



Officially Vaccinated! Let's all keep doing our part to make sure we keep ourselves and others #safe and #healthy! #covid19 #vaccinated *Via Tamika Catchings, @Catchin24 on Twitter*



Questions & Answers About COVID-19 Vaccines

Answers to questions you may have about COVID-19 vaccines all in one place. This initiative brought to you by the Ad Council and our partners. Learn more. getvaccineanswers.org

I GOT MINE! GET YOURS!!

Via Lisa Leslie, @LisaLeslie on Twitter



Grateful to get my first shot yesterday. Hope is on the horizon! #covidvaccine *Via Alex English, @alexenglish_803 on Instagram*



SOME @HOOPHALL INDUCTEES ARE STILL TAKING THE BIG SHOTS

@juliuserving
@realbillrussell
Wayne Embry
Dave Bing
@kareemabduljabbar_33
Jerry West
#LegendsTogether

VISIT CDC.GOV FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Via @NBAalumni on Instagram



Just got my #COVIDVaccination "This is one shot I won't block" I know it is difficult to get an appointment! My wife put in the time for weeks and finally got us in. No side effects to report. @NBA @BostonGlobe @celtics #Covid-19 #CovidVaccine @espn #NBA @BleacherReport
Via Bill Russell, @RealBillRussell on Twitter

Me, my dad, and his girl all got our 1st dose of the vaccine today. We were the last ones out of my immediate family that had to go. I know there's a lot to say about this process. A lot of doubt, especially from the black community, and rightfully so. But I have been following the guidelines for a year and I'm tired. I'm ready to go back to normal life, and for me, this was the first step. Via Devereaux Peters, @mspeters14 on Instagram



NCAA WOMEN'S TOURNAMENT

Aari McDonald #2 of the Arizona Wildcats brings the ball down court against the Stony Brook Seawolves in the first round game of the 2021 NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament at the Alamodome on March 22, 2021 in San Antonio, TX.

LEGEND SIGHTINGS

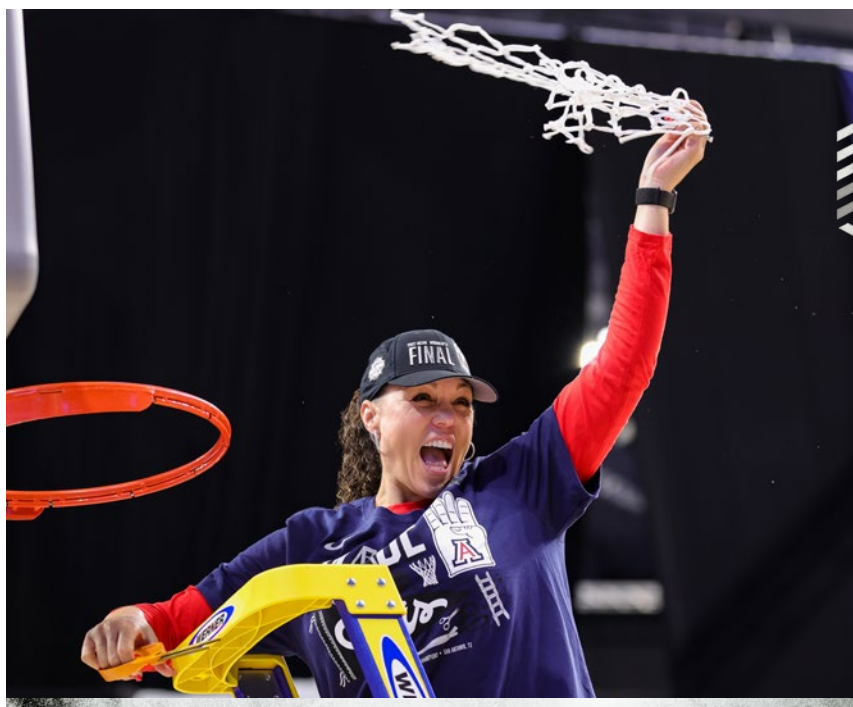
FORMER NBA AND WNBA PLAYERS TOOK TO THE COURT AS HEAD COACHES DURING THIS YEAR'S NCAA BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT



Head Coach Megan Duffy of the Marquette Golden Eagles reacts during a game against UConn Huskies at Mohegan Sun Arena on March 8, 2021 in Uncasville, CT.



BYU Cougars Head Coach Jeff Judkins during the second round of the NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament game against the Stanford Cardinal at Maples Pavilion on March 25, 2019 in Palo Alto, CA.



Head Coach Adia Barnes of the Arizona Wildcats cuts the net after defeating the Indiana Hoosiers in the Elite Eight round of the NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament at the Alamodome on March 29, 2021 in San Antonio, Texas.



Brooke Wyckoff of the Chicago Sky speaks during a WNBA Inspiring Women Luncheon presented by Meridian Wines at Hot Chocolate July 23, 2007 in Chicago, IL. After serving as an assistant coach on the Florida State women's basketball staff since June 2011, Wyckoff was elevated to interim head coach for the 2020-2021 season.



Head Coach Dawn Staley of the South Carolina Gamecocks looks on during a women's basketball game against the Maryland Terrapins at the Xfinity Center on November 10, 2019 in College Park, MD.

NCAA MEN'S TOURNAMENT



Head Coach Patrick Ewing Jr. of the Georgetown Hoyas reviews his notes before a college basketball game against the Villanova Wildcats at the Capital One Arena on February 20, 2019 in Washington, DC.



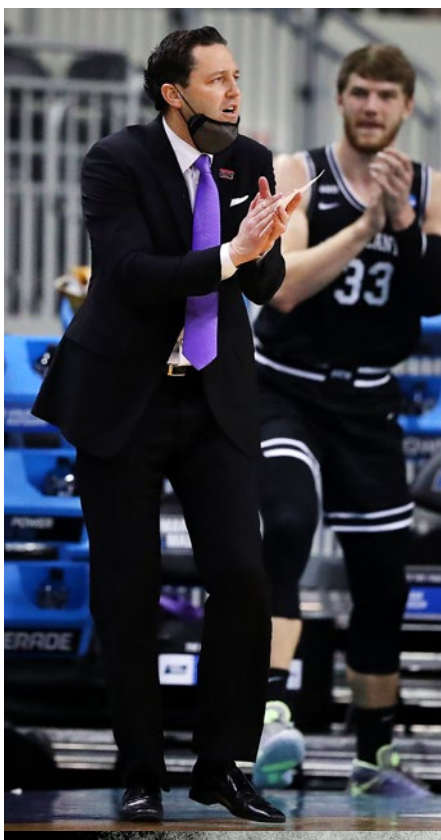
A general view of the March Madness logo on center court is seen before the game between the Oral Roberts Golden Eagles and the Florida Gators in the second round game of the 2021 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament at Indiana Farmers Coliseum on March 21, 2021 in Indianapolis, IN.



Head Coach Cuonzo Martin of the Missouri Tigers yells at his team during a game against the Arkansas Razorbacks at Bud Walton Arena on February 22, 2020 in Fayetteville, Arkansas. The Razorbacks defeated the Tigers 78-68.



Head Coach Tony Bennett of the Virginia Cavaliers reacts following a call during the second half of their quarterfinals game against the Syracuse Orange in the ACC Men's Basketball Tournament at Greensboro Coliseum on March 11, 2021 in Greensboro, NC.



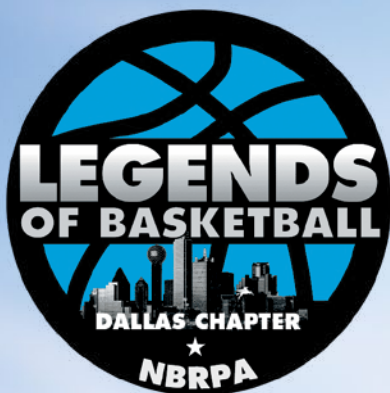
Head Coach Bryce Drew of the Grand Canyon Antelopes reacts on the sidelines during the first half against the Iowa Hawkeyes in the first round game of the 2021 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament at Indiana Farmers Coliseum on March 20, 2021 in Indianapolis, IN.



Head Coach Juwan Howard of the Michigan Wolverines reacts to a play against the LSU Tigers in the second round game of the 2021 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament at Lucas Oil Stadium on March 22, 2021 in Indianapolis, IN.



Head Coach Mark Pope of the Brigham Young Cougars gestures as his team takes on the Pepperdine Waves during the West Coast Conference basketball tournament semifinals at the Orleans Arena on March 8, 2021 in Las Vegas, NV.



THE INAUGURAL NBRPA GOLF INVITATIONAL

MAY 24, 2021

HACKBERRY CREEK COUNTRY CLUB
IRVING TEXAS

Come Join NBA legends for this exciting event benefiting
The MAVS Foundation and Agnes Lucille Craft Greene Memorial Scholarship at UNT.

INDIVIDUAL - \$250

FOURSOME - \$1,000

10:30 AM - REGISTRATION & DRIVING RANGE OPENS

12:00 PM - SHOTGUN START

5:00 PM - DINNER/19TH HOLE AWARDS RECEPTION

*Registration is limited.

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LEGENDS CHAPTER
SPOTLIGHT

PHOENIX

Fifteen members of the Phoenix Chapter of the NBRPA participated in an event signing autographs alongside Legends of baseball and football.



APRIL 24, 2021

10:00 AM-2:00 PM

The Phoenix Chapter of the NBRPA is partnering with Future Stars, Inc. and the City of Phoenix to present the Future Stars 2021 Virtual Hands on STEM Fair. This Virtual Hands on STEM Fair will provide youth with a day for learning, fun and teamwork.

Volunteer virtually from the comfort of your home (internet access required). Volunteers are needed to chaperone the virtual activity rooms and assist students with completing the activities virtually.

This year's Virtual STEM Fair activities include:

Mousetrap, Solar Car, Slime, Wind Lift/Wind Turbine



Alysha Clark #32 and Sue Bird #10 react to Breanna Stewart #30 after winning the WNBA Championship against the Las Vegas Aces following Game 3 of the WNBA Finals on October 06, 2020 in Palmetto, FL.



WNBA 25TH ANNIVERSARY

ENTERING THIS MILESTONE YEAR,
THE WNBA SEES MOMENTUM AND
GROWTH THANKS TO FREE AGENCY

by **MATT ELLENTUCK**

In Year 25, WNBA free agency is hitting its stride. A second consecutive year of dramatic roster shake-ups have proven that stale off-seasons are a thing of the past. This year's class was headlined by 13-year Los Angeles Sparks superstar Candace Parker dropping the purple and gold to head back home and play for the Chicago Sky.

Splashy free agency periods are a fever-dream for players, fans, and the WNBA alike as storylines are created, record-breaking salaries are paid, league-wide parity is sustained, and women's basketball remains in the news cycle past the five-month summer season.

Moves as Earth-shattering as Parker's departure from her long-time team were a rarity prior to the 2020 collective bargaining agreement between the league and its players. Franchises held much more power over superstars' movements then. The "core player" designation, which is similar to the NFL's "franchise tag," allowed teams exclusive



Ruthie Bolton-Holifield #6 of the Sacramento Monarchs in action during Game One of the Western Conference Finals against the Los Angeles Sparks at Arco Arena in Sacramento, CA. The Sparks won 74-73.



Candace Parker #3 of the Los Angeles Sparks celebrates after defeating the Phoenix Mercury in the semifinal Game Three of the 2017 WNBA Playoffs at Talking Stick Resort Arena on September 17, 2017 in Phoenix, AZ.

negotiating rights with one player for up to four seasons. At times, that kept players with their current team against their will and without the benefit of fielding their worth around the league. The core designation's power has since been reduced to three seasons which allowed Parker, a 34-year-old who'd been cored for three seasons already, her first true free agency. In 2022, core designations will be reduced to two seasons.

Having an unrestricted free agency is an opportunity Ruthie Bolton, the two-time WNBA All-Star and eight-year Sacramento Monarch, wishes she had for herself. Bolton, who played from 1997 to 2004, loved her time with the Monarchs, but she still thinks about what her career would've been like elsewhere. "Even though I gelled well in Sacramento, I think that you never know what heights my game would have taken plant on another team," Bolton said, "where we had some solid players on our team, you know, but I think about it often, like you go to a buffet and it's like 'why'd I only get one dessert? Man, I wish I had at least a little piece of cake or something.'"

Hype for the start of the 2021 season doesn't end with Parker, though. She's one of dozens of the world's best women's basketball players to move teams this winter including sharpshooting wing Kayla McBride (12.5 points per game last year) leaving the runner-up champion Las Vegas Aces for the Minnesota Lynx, two-way guard/forward Aerial Powers (16.3 points per game) leaving the Washington Mystics to join her, and 3-and-D reigning champion Alysha Clark (10 points per game) leaving the Seattle Storm for the Mystics.

Ticha Penicheiro, the 15-year Sacramento Monarchs and Sparks legend, has worked as a WNBA agent since she retired in 2012 and represents all three of those stars. She's noticed the difference in how her clients have been recruited now as opposed to years prior, especially with more money on the table thanks to the CBA spiking the league's salary cap by more than 30 percent between 2019 and 2020, and nearly doubling the payout for maximum contracts for the league's best players.

She described the rush as a "full-court press," with most of the WNBA believing they're in play

Top Left: Ticha Penicheiro #21 of the Los Angeles Sparks dribbles against Seimone Augustus #33 of the Minnesota Lynx at Staples Center on August 7, 2011 in Los Angeles, CA. Left Middle: Natalie Achonwa #11 of the Indiana Fever handles the ball against the Phoenix Mercury on June 12, 2015 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, IN. Bottom Left: Tamika Catchings #24 of the Indiana Fever handles the ball against the Dallas Wings on September 18, 2016 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, IN.

"CHERYL REEVE BEING THE HEAD COACH AND THE GM, AND SHE KNOWS WHAT IT TAKES, I MEAN, HER RECORD KIND OF SPEAKS FOR ITSELF, SHE'S A WINNER..."

TICHA PENICHEIRO



Cheryl Reeve of the Minnesota Lynx draws out a play during the game against the Dallas Wings on August 19, 2020 at Feld Entertainment Center in Palmetto, FL.

for a championship. Her clients sat through PowerPoints presentations and had Zoom calls with pitches from teams around the league.

The Minnesota Lynx stood out from the crowd, though, and are helping set the pace for the new-age of free agency. A team that surprised many by reaching the semifinals in 2020 without several key players pitched its franchise success along with personalized forms of appreciation to bring McBride, Powers, and Indiana Fever forward Natalie Achonwa in to team up with Sylvia Fowles, Napheesa Collier, and Rookie of the Year Crystal Dangerfield.

"I mean, I think just Cheryl Reeve being the head coach and the GM, and she knows what it takes, I mean, her record kind of speaks for itself, she's a winner," Penecheiro said. "And at the end of the day, those two players [McBride and Powers], they are winners, they want to win, they want to be competitors. They want to play for a championship and they

know that when you go to Minnesota, there's a great chance that you can compete for a championship. I mean, Cheryl has won what, four [championships]?"

History wasn't the only part of Minnesota's pitch. Penecheiro noted customized shoes and an Xbox controller for Powers, a Team Liquid esports player, were also appreciated. Franchises around the league are doing their homework and recruiting as hard as ever. Chelsea Gray, who left the Sparks to join the Aces this winter, even published a video of the tour Las Vegas gave her a year ago in free agency.

This is the new normal for WNBA off-seasons going forward, and it's an incredible leap forward for a league still in its early development. Free agency chaos is building anticipation for the next season like never before. Parker, McBride, Powers, and Clark are laying the groundwork for WNBA winters that are destined to one-up themselves year after year.



Left: Aerial Powers #23 of the Washington Mystics drives to the basket against Bria Holmes #32 of the Connecticut Sun during the second half of Game Two of the 2019 WNBA finals on October 1, 2019 in Washington, DC. Middle: Candace Parker of the Los Angeles Sparks poses for a portrait during the 2020 NBA All-Star circuit on February 13, 2020 at the Westin Michigan Avenue Hotel in Chicago, IL. Right: Kayla McBride #21 of the Las Vegas Aces shoots the ball against the Seattle Storm on June 25, 2019 at the Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas, NV.



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