



TEAMS TICKETS GLOBAL D-LEAGUE WNBA ENE-BE-A IHOOPS USAB KIDS [Get News & Offers](#) [Login](#)

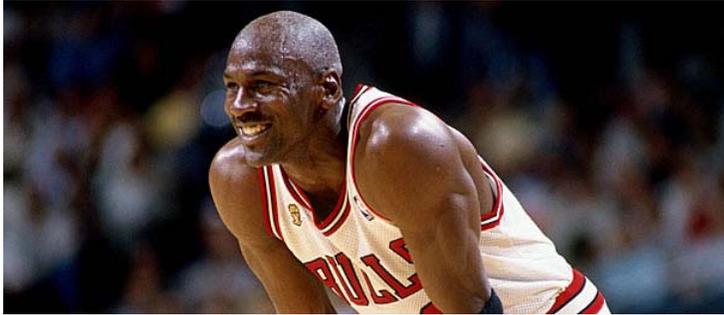
[NEWS](#) [SCORES & SCHEDULES](#) [VIDEO](#) [PLAYERS](#) [STANDINGS](#) [STATS](#) [BLOGS](#) [FANTASY](#) [FAN STUFF](#) [PHOTOS](#) [MOBILE](#) [TV](#) [LEAGUE PASS](#) [STORE](#)



NBA HISTORY



- PLAYER SEARCH
- SEASONS
- AWARDS
- LEGENDS
- TEAMS
- DRAFT
- ALL-STAR
- TOP MOMENTS
- FEATURES
- VIDEO
- HALL OF FAME



Michael Jordan made an everlasting impact both on the court and as a cultural icon. Nathaniel S. Butler/NBAE via Getty Images

Legends profile: Michael Jordan

Posted Mar 4 2013 4:14PM

By acclamation, Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player of all time. Although, a summary of his basketball career and influence on the game inevitably fails to do it justice, as a phenomenal athlete with a unique combination of fundamental soundness, grace, speed, power, artistry, improvisational ability and an unquenchable competitive desire, Jordan single-handedly redefined the NBA superstar.

Even contemporaneous superstars recognized the unparalleled position of Jordan. Magic Johnson said, "There's Michael Jordan and then there is the rest of us." Larry Bird, following a playoff game where Jordan dropped 63 points on the Boston Celtics in just his second season, appraisal of the young player was: "God disguised as Michael Jordan."

A brief listing of his top accomplishments would include the following: Rookie of the Year; Five-time NBA MVP; Six-time NBA champion; Six-time NBA Finals MVP; Ten-time All-NBA First Team; Nine-time NBA All-Defensive First Team; Defensive Player of the Year; 14-time NBA All-Star; Three-time NBA All-Star MVP; 50th Anniversary All-Time Team; Ten scoring titles -- an NBA record and seven consecutive matching Wilt Chamberlain; Retired with the NBA's highest scoring average of 30.1ppg; Hall of Fame inductee.

However, his impact is far greater than awards and championships. He burst into the league as a rookie sensation scoring in droves with an unmatched first step and acrobatic drives and dunks and concluded his career as a cultural icon. Along the way, he became a true champion who spearheaded the globalization of the NBA with his dynamic on-court abilities and personal sense of style that was marketed to the masses.

He was an accessible star who managed to maintain an air of mystique. He was visible as "Air Jordan," as part of a sneaker advertising campaign and endorsing other products as well as the star of the movie, "Space Jam". However, he would vanish into retirement twice only to return until hanging up the sneakers for the last time after the 2002-03 season.

Although Brooklyn born, Jordan was bred in the more tranquil North Carolina. The son of Delores and James Jordan, he shared a special bond with his father, which included baseball being both of their first love. However, following his older brother, Larry, whom he idolized and was a spectacular athlete in his own right, Jordan began to play basketball.

He attended Laney High school in Wilmington, North Carolina, but as a 5-foot-11 skinny sophomore, he was cut from the varsity basketball team. The summer before his junior year, he grew to 6-foot-3 and began his path to superstardom.

A Tar Heel at heart, the high school All-American attended the University of North Carolina. As a freshman, he played somewhat in the shadows of upperclassmen James Worthy and Sam Perkins. However, he shone in the spotlight of the NCAA championship game against Georgetown and another great freshman, Patrick Ewing, whom Jordan would foil future NBA championships for as well. Jordan scored 16 points, grabbed nine rebounds and made the winning basket on a 16-foot jumper with 18 seconds in the game for the 63-62 victory.

As a sophomore, he was named College Player of the Year by *The Sporting News*. As a junior, he received that award again as well as the Naismith and Wooden Awards. After his junior year he was chosen with the third overall pick in the 1984 NBA Draft by the Chicago Bulls.

The Houston Rockets selected 7-foot center Hakeem Olajuwon from the University of Houston with the No. 1 pick, which most expected. The Portland Trail Blazers, however, with the No. 2 pick chose 7-foot-1 center Sam Bowie from Kentucky, which was not as anticipated. Bowie had suffered several injuries while in college but the Blazers bypassed Jordan because just the year before the team selected another exciting shooting guard in Clyde Drexler. Although Drexler went onto to be a star.

MICHAEL JEFFREY JORDAN

Full Name: Michael Jeffrey Jordan
Born: 2/17/63 in Brooklyn, NY
High School: Laney (Wilmington, NC)
College: North Carolina
Drafted by: Chicago Bulls, 1984 (1962)
Height: 6-6
Weight: 216 lbs.
Nickname: Air Jordan
Honors: Six-time NBA champion (1991-93, 1996-98); NBA MVP (1988, '91, '92, '96, '98); 10-time All-NBA First Team (1987-93, 1996-98); All-NBA Second Team (1985); Defensive Player of the Year (1988); Nine-time All-Defensive First Team (1988-93, 1996-98); Rookie of the Year (1985); 14-time All-Star; All-Star MVP (1988, '96, '98); One of 50 Greatest Players in NBA History (1996); Two-time Olympic gold medalist (1984, '92); Basketball Hall of Fame Class of 2009.

1986 Playoffs: Bulls vs. Celtics, Game 1
 Michael Jordan has a huge night, but the Celtics pull together as a team to get the victory as time runs out on the clock.

SEARCH NEWS

GO

FEATURES

- NBA All-Star 2014
- @NBACOM
- Power Rankings
- Hang Time Blog
- All Ball Blog
- The Starters

HEADLINES

- Collins enters game as NBA's first openly gay player
- Commissioner Silver commends Collins on return to NBA
- Broken nose to keep James out vs. Bulls
- Collins signs 10-day contract with Nets
- LeBron to get fitted for mask to protect broken nose

LATEST VIDEOS

NBA STORE

Shop for NBA Gear Now!

Bowie was an injury prone player with a journeyman pro career.

Jordan, coming off a gold medal performance at the 1984 Olympics, prospered in the pro game with a fabulous first season, earning the NBA Rookie of the Year Award. He averaged 28.2 ppg, (third behind Bernard King and Bird) 6.5 rpg and 5.9 apg. He also was selected to the All-NBA Second Team. Perhaps more important, the Bulls improved to win 11 more games than in the season prior to his arrival and made it to the playoffs. Jordan averaged 29.3 ppg in the first round series, but to the Milw

OTHER FEATURES	NBA	EVENTS	NBA 101	ALL-ACCESS	24/7
Advertise on NBA.com	2013 All-Star	NBA Official	Member Center	NBA TV	
Career Opportunities	2012 Summer League	About The NBA	NBA LEAGUE PASS	RSS Feeds	
Closed Captioning	2012 NBA Finals	History	Audio LEAGUE PASS		
Contact Us	2012 Draft	Rules Of The Game	Fantasy Games		
NBATickets.com	Important Dates	Video Rulebook	Online Games		
NBPA	2012 Hall of Fame Induction	Hoopedia: Basketball Wiki	NBA Deals and Discounts		
NBA Cares	NBA Nation	Red on Roundball	Newsletters		
NBA Green	NBA Jam Van	NBA Guide	HOOP Magazine		
NBA FIT	Jam Session	NBA Register			
iHoops	Basketball Without Borders				
NBA City Restaurant	All-Star Vendor Diversity				
NYC Store					

In his first season, he did not have outstanding shooting range and was thought to roam too often on defense, resulting from playing trapping defenses in college according to his first NBA coach, Kevin Loughery. Yet, his medium game -- eight- to 15-feet from the basket was impressive as evidenced by his .515 field-goal shooting percentage and his steals tended to compensate for his less than stellar straight-up defense.

Improvement in both areas would come and he would ultimately be regarded as threat from anywhere on the floor and one of the best ever one-on-one defenders.

Even in the exhibition season before his rookie campaign, players and coaches were sure that the Rockets and Blazers would regret their picks. King, the eventual leading scorer for that upcoming season, seemed sure as well when he spoke to *Hoop* magazine after a 1984 preseason game.

"All I can say," King said, "is that the people in Chicago are in for a real treat."

Jordan's Personal Best

Relive the night Michael Jordan put up 69 points, his scoring record, against the Cavaliers.

He was right. Jordan's greatness and likeability was apparent in just his first season. Home attendance at the venerable Chicago Stadium and on the road rose dramatically. Fans of opposing teams were seemingly content to see their team lose if in return Jordan put on show.

Jordan's personal style was equally authentic and unique as his basketball skills. Nike signed him to a major shoe deal because of his anticipated appeal, but he surpassed even the loftiest of expectations. One version of the sneakers he wore in his first preseason was an unseen before blend of his team's red and black colors that the NBA initially considered in violation of the "uniformity of uniform rule." Subject to fines if he continued to wear them, he occasionally did and the demand for that version and others in the Air Jordan line was unprecedented.

He also had a clause in his contract that allowed him, unlike most other NBA players, to play basketball anytime in the off-season -- known as the "love-of-the-game clause."

He dangled his tongue out of his mouth -- picked up from observing his dad working on mechanical devices -- as he levitated toward the basket and it became one of his first trademarks in personal style. He continued to wear the shorts of his beloved North Carolina basketball uniform under his Bulls uniform. This may have led him to wear longer game shorts although he has said that the extra length allowed him to bend at the waist and tug at the hem for a good resting position. Either way, the trend toward the baggy shorts was started and the entire league and sport would follow.

1988 Dunk Contest Final

Relive the unbelievable Dunk Contest final between Michael Jordan and Dominique Wilkins.

The rookie's mesmerizing effect was even suggested to have extended to referees as it was said that he was getting veteran preferential treatment allowing him to take that additional step on route to the basket rather than being whistle for a travelling violation. Many assessed that he eluded defenders so easily that he had to be travelling. However, video break down established that his first step was just so quick and that he was not in violation of the rulebook.

Despite all the attention, Jordan retained a sense of humility. He did not ridicule the Blazers for not taking him. Early on in his first season, he told *Sports Illustrated*, "He [Bowie] fits in better than I would. They have an overabundance of big guards and small forwards." His self-effacement was more apparent when in that same article he said, "I'd like to play in at least one All-Star game."

That goal was quickly accomplished as later that season he was voted a starter to the 1985 All-Star East squad. There, he probably faced one of his first professional obstacles. The media ran with the idea that Eastern All-Star teammate Detroit Pistons' Isiah Thomas, had led a "freeze-out" of the golden rookie limiting his opportunities to score by not passing him the ball.

Jordan scored seven points in 22 minutes and was left to face questions concerning the alleged conspiracy. The affair grew a life of its own over the years, but Thomas refuted such accusations. The whole ordeal would come full circle when Thomas, as the coach of the 2003 East All-Star squad, persuaded Toronto Raptors' Vince Carter to relinquish his starting role to Jordan in his last midseason classic.

Three games into his second season, he broke a bone in his left foot. He was voted to the All-Star team but could not play as he was sidelined for 64 games. However, he came back late in the year to score a NBA playoff-record 63 points in a first-round game against the Celtics. The Bulls lost that game 132-131 in double-overtime and the series in a sweep, but Jordan averaged 43.7 ppg in the series. If there were any doubters to that point about Jordan's ability, surely there were no more.

Starting with the 1986-87 season he began a career-long onslaught on the NBA record book. That year saw him average 37.1 points in the first of seven consecutive seasons in which he led the league in scoring and topped 30 points per contest. Jordan scored 40 or more points in nine consecutive games and 23 straight in one game to set an NBA record. At the All-Star Weekend, he won the first of two consecutive Slam Dunk competitions. However, again, the Celtics swept the Bulls in the first round of the playoffs

'The Shot'

Michael Jordan sinks 'The Shot' over Craig Ehlo and the Cavs in Game 5 of the classic 1989 first-round series.

That offseason, the Bulls began assembling a championship caliber team by drafting power forward Horace Grant and acquiring the versatile small forward Scottie Pippen from tiny Central Arkansas in a draft day trade with the Seattle SuperSonics for former University of Virginia center Olden Polynice. In 1987-88, Jordan won every major award including MVP, Defensive Player of the Year and All-Star MVP. With the help of his teammates, Jordan led the Bulls to a first-round playoff win over the Cleveland Cavaliers before falling to the Pistons in five games in the conference semifinals.

The First Championship

Michael Jordan led the Chicago Bulls to the first of their six NBA championships in 1991.

The Pistons, known as the "Bad Boys" for their aggressive style of play, would defeat Jordan and the Bulls in the Eastern Conference finals in the next two seasons as well. Utilizing a defensive scheme developed by head coach Chuck Daly and his staff known as the "Jordan Rules", the Pistons dared Jordan to single-handedly win games with constant double and triple teaming. The Bulls, however, were nudging to a championship as each successive season the team would get closer.

In the 1988-89 season, perhaps Jordan's best statistical campaign, he led the league with 32.5 ppg, was 10th in assists with a career high 8.0 apg and had a career high 8.0 rpg. He also ranked third in steals with 2.89 per game. Jordan propelled the Bulls past the Cavs in the first round of the playoffs in the decisive Game 5, scoring the memorable buzzer-beater floating jumper over Craig Ehlo for a 101-100 victory.

Prior to the beginning of the 1989-90 season, *Sports Illustrated* published an article on Jordan's emerging golf game and his thoughts about joining the PGA Tour after his NBA career was over. Chicago management, however, was making other moves.

That offseason, the Bulls let go head coach Doug Collins and hired Phil Jackson. Under Jackson's leadership, the Bulls instituted the triangle offense - a fluid passing and cutting system that created opportunities for all five players on the floor to score. But when the play broke down and the shot clock waned, Jordan had free reign to create his own shot.

The Bulls went 55-27 that season, the franchise's best record since 1971-72. Jordan set his career game-high in points with 69 against the Cavs in a 117-113 overtime win. He also emerged as a 3-point threat, posting a .376 percentage -- 100 percentage points above his previous best. However, the Pistons defeated the Bulls in a tough seven-game series in the 1990 Eastern Conference finals.

Jordan: '92 Finals

Michael Jordan and the 1992 Chicago Bulls defeat the Portland Trail Blazers for another NBA Championship.

That third consecutive playoff defeat to the Pistons prompted many to think out loud that a scoring champion like Jordan could not lead his team to a title.

Were they ever wrong. The next year, Jordan led the Bulls as the team waltzed through the postseason, losing only twice en route to the franchise's first NBA title. The redemptive blow was the sweep of the Pistons in the conference finals. And after losing the first game at home to the Los Angeles Lakers in the NBA Finals, the Bulls stormed back to win four straight to end the last remnants of the "Showtime" Lakers as Magic Johnson would retire before the beginning of the next season. Jordan averaged 31.4 ppg, 6.4 rpg and 8.4 apg, earning the first of six NBA Finals MVP awards.

1993 NBA Finals: Bulls vs. Suns - Game 6

Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls win their third straight championship defeating regular season MVP Charles Barkley and the Phoenix Suns.

Jordan, who by now shaved his head completely bald, triggering another trend and making him recognizable by just the dark rounded silhouette of his head, was now known as a champion. He was also known to be ultra-demanding of his teammates, ruffling more than a few feathers with his critiques. But winning was the soothing elixir. The Bulls would go on to successfully defend their title for two consecutive seasons, defeating both Drexler and the Blazers and the Charles Barkley-led Phoenix Suns in six games.

By the end of that three-year run, Jordan had eclipsed stardom and approached folk hero status. Early into his

career, he drew Peter Pan-like admiration for his gravity defying leaps and belief that he would remain youthful forever. However, during the three-peat, players and teams seemed to concede that the title was Jordan.

In the 1992 Finals, Jordan opened up Game 1 with a record setting 35-point first-half performance to lead the Bulls to a 122-89 rout. Jordan seemed unstoppable as he drained several 3-pointers over Blazer defenders and after one made three he shrugged his shoulders as if to say, I don't even know what's going on here. The Blazers bounced back and seemed poised to force a Game 7 as they took a 79-64 lead into the fourth quarter of Game 6. However, [the Bulls roared back for a 97-93 series-clinching win.](#)

That summer, Jordan was the key figure in forming the Dream Team that competed in the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, Spain. The 12-member roster, full of the era's best players, were respected as basketball royalty by its opponents, whom they outclassed on the way to the gold medal and idolized like pop icons by the world's fans.

The Double Nickel

Five games into his 1995 comeback tour, Michael Jordan dropped 55 on the Knicks in the famed 'double-nickel game' in New York.

In 1993, Jordan led the Bulls past the Patrick Ewing-led Knicks for the fourth time in five postseasons -- this time in the Eastern Conference finals in six games without the home court advantage. Jordan scored 54 points in a 105-95 Game 4 win. And in the series' turning point that was Game 5, Jordan recorded a triple-double (29 points, 10 rebounds and 14 assists). But the crucial play was the Bulls' successive blocks of putback attempts by the Knicks' Charles Smith in the final seconds that allowed the Bulls to escape the Garden with a 97-94 win. The Bulls sealed the series with a 96-88 victory in Game 6.

In the Finals, Jordan set a Finals record as he posted a 41.0 ppg average in the six-game series victory over the Suns. In the decisive Game 6, the Bulls again stormed back to overcome a fourth-quarter deficit. This time, Jordan scored nine straight points down the stretch, leading to John Paxson's game-winning 3-pointer with 3.9 seconds on the clock for a 98-97 victory.

But trouble was brewing. Jordan was under scrutiny for what was thought to be poor decisions with respect to his gambling endeavors. But that paled in comparison to the loss of his father who was murdered during an armed robbery. His father was Jordan's main confidant whom could be seen with his son on a regular basis as he climbed the ladder of success.

Emotionally drained and seeking new challenges, just one day before the start of training camp, Jordan stunned the basketball world by announcing his retirement.

After much speculation about his plans, Jordan returned to the spotlight in a baseball uniform. Attempting to fulfill a dream inspired by his father, the younger Jordan set his sights on Major League Baseball. He spent the 1994 baseball season playing for the Birmingham Barons, an affiliate of the Chicago White Sox in the Class AA Southern League.

He was a competent if unspectacular performer. But Jordan's hope of reaching the big leagues seemed dim, and with Major League Baseball embroiled in a labor dispute as the 1995 season neared, he focused his competitive fire back on the NBA. Late in the 1994-95 NBA season, he came out of retirement with the succinct statement: "I'm Back."

Michael Jordan: 1995-96 MVP

Michael Jordan won the MVP award for the season, Finals and All-Star Game in 1995-96.

He was back, albeit with the unorthodox No. 45 as he wanted to leave No. 23 behind, and attempted to carry the Bulls to another title. Jordan averaged 26.9 points in 17 regular-season games, which the Bulls played to a record of 13-4.

The most memorable game of the initial comeback occurred six games in when he scored 55 points against the Knicks in the Garden. That game, dubbed "Double Nickel," was extraordinary in that a new Jordan emerged. Robbed of his youthful bounce at age 32, he turned primarily to fadeaway jump shots and spinning layups. And in the waning moments of a tie game, he drew attention as he dribbled around the perimeter and passed to a wide-open Bill Wennington under the basket for the winning points in a 113-111 victory.

Michael Jordan's Epic Game 5

Michael Jordan leads the Chicago Bulls to a win in the 1997 Finals, despite being plagued by flu symptoms.

His coach, Jackson, in the aftermath

said, "It's rare that players can live quite up to New York. I've seen a lot of them fall flat on their faces because of the pressure to perform there. But he had the whole evening in the palm of his hand. Sometimes the game just seems to gravitate into his grasp."

In the playoffs, he poured in 31.5 ppg. But despite Jordan's presence in the lineup, the Bulls didn't have quite enough to get past the Orlando Magic in the conference semifinals. Chicago lost to the Shaquille O'Neal-led Magic in six games.

Jordan's championship quest was fulfilled the following season with almost a whole new band of players than in his first title runs. He began the season with his old No. 23 uniform but only his sidekick Pippen remaining from the first three championship teams. The Bulls added Dennis Rodman, an enigmatic player but a rebounding and defensive phenom.

The team enjoyed one of the most remarkable years ever posted by any club. Jordan led the NBA with 30.4 ppg as the Bulls charged to a record 72 victories during the regular season, then stormed through the playoffs with a 15-3 record ending in a six-game Finals win over the Sonics.

Poignantly, Jordan recaptured the title on Father's Day and cradled the ball after the decisive game in a heap on the floor of the United Center, which replaced Chicago Stadium during his retirement, unabashedly crying. The emotional impact of the moment was overwhelming.

Along the way, Jordan captured the MVP awards for the regular season, All-Star Game and Finals, joining Willis Reed (1970) as the only men to win all three honors in the same season.

Although he had relinquished the MVP award to Karl Malone in 1996-97, Jordan was awarded MVP in 1997-98 and again led the Bulls to the NBA championship with a satisfying six-game victory over Malone's Utah Jazz. Despite a horrible case of stomach flu in a critical Game 5, he would not let his team lose. He scored 38 points and the Bulls won the game and then [the title at home in Game 6](#). He was also named the NBA Finals MVP for the fifth time.



The 1998 Championship

The final shot Michael Jordan took in a Chicago Bulls uniform was perhaps his most memorable moment.

The Bulls duplicated the three-peat in 1997-98 with another six-game series win over the Jazz. Jordan with his team down three points at the close of Game 6, scored on driving move to the basket. And on the next Jazz possession, he stole the ball from Malone in the post to set up his game-winning jump shot. The shot over Bryon Russell with 6.6 seconds left on the clock is etched in many fans mind and photographic history.

After labor negotiations were resolved leaving a shortened season in 1999, Jordan left the game saying, "Right now I don't have the mental challenges that I have had in the past to proceed as a basketball player." Despite not playing for three seasons during his second retirement, Jordan was still probably the most recognizable athlete in the world.

However, after assuming an ownership and team executive role with the Washington Wizards in 2000, he returned to play the game he loves, after being visibly frustrated in the owners' box with the team's performance. On Sept. 25, 2001, he signed a two-year contract with the Wizards for the veteran's minimum.

Jordan brought in his old Bulls coach Doug Collins and tried mightily to revive a once accomplished franchise that had sunken to moribund levels. But the Wizards, although an attendance draw around the league, failed to make the playoffs in Jordan's two years. However, moments of the great Jordan were apparent such as scoring 40 points a few days after his 40th birthday in the 2002-03 season.



Wizards Comeback

Three years after retiring for a second time, Michael Jordan made a comeback with the Wizards.

He left as a player to return to an ownership and executive role with the belief that with the cluster of young stars, the NBA was in fine shape.

Above all, Jordan recognized his place in the game. In his book, "For The Love of The Game: My Story," Jordan wrote: "There is no such thing as a perfect basketball player, and I don't believe there is only one greatest player either. Everyone plays in different eras. I built my talents on the shoulders of someone else's talent. I believe greatness is an evolutionary process that changes and evolves era to era. Without Julius Erving, David Thompson, Walter Davis, and Elgin Baylor there would never have been a Michael Jordan. I evolved from them."

At the turn of the 21st century, ESPN conducted an expansive survey of media members, athletes and others associated with the sports world to rank the 20th century's greatest athletes. Jordan topped the list above Babe Ruth and Muhammad Ali -- substantiating his link to those earlier cultural icons.