

# DECADES OF THE NBA



*Paul Dey*



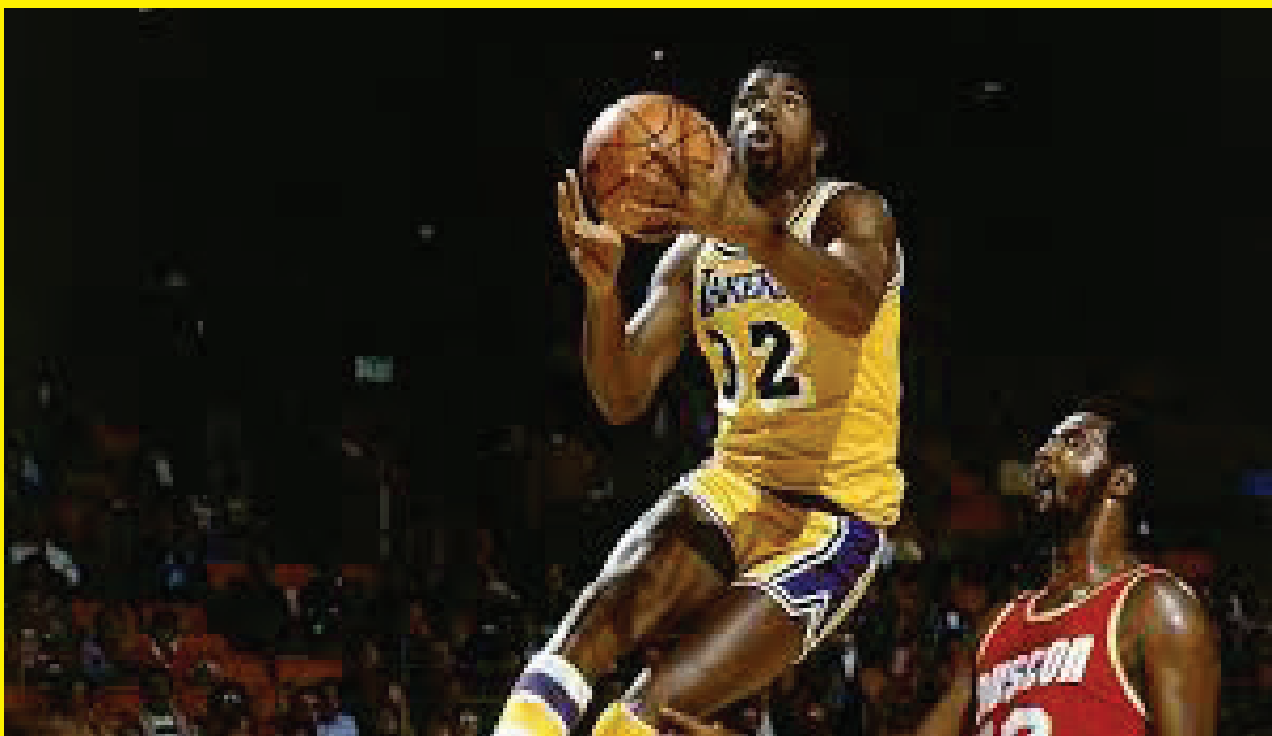
Dr. J was and is a great ambassador for the league. At a time when the league was struggling with its image, Dr. J stepped up to be the Superstar role model face of the league that was needed. “He was an ambassador for the game at a time when the NBA faced a serious image problem owing partly to the off-the-field behavior of its players. Although stars Larry Bird and Magic Johnson often would be credited with “saving” the NBA when they arrived, Erving certainly deserves credit for being an important figure when the league was in dire need of role models” (“Julius Erving”). Dr. J was even the first NBA player to get a shoe deal with a major sports gear company. He was signed with Converse, who cornered the market in the 70s.



Julius Erving, or Dr. J, was Michael Jordan Before Michael Jordan. He introduced the high-flying style of basketball that is played today. He was the first of players like George Gervin, James Worthy, Dominique Wilkins, Clyde Drexler, and of course, Michael Jordan. He was the catalyst for flashy, exciting dunks. The way he would glide through the air a whole head above everyone else and flush it on someone was like no other. “He wasn’t just good; he was distinctive. He developed a reputation for an ‘above the rim’ style of play, meaning an ability to leap, pass, glide, and dunk in the air with an explosiveness and grace few had seen. During his time at Rucker Park, his nickname, Dr. J, stuck” (“Julius Erving”). Here in this photo is Julius Erving at Rucker Park, the most famous basketball court on earth. The court where many basketball legends are born. Rucker Park legends are revered by New Yorkers just as much as NBA legends, and Julius “Dr. J” Erving was both.



Ervin “Magic” Johnson was a performer on the court. He was the engine of the “Showtime Lakers”. This was the team that ran NBA in the 80s along with the celtics, but they prioritized putting on a show and making the game fun to watch just as much as winning and it worked. Magic is arguably the greatest point guard and passer to ever play in the NBA. “His no-look passes and baseline-to-baseline rushes to the basket became his trademark. He proved emphatically that basketball could be dominated from the point-guard position” (Brown). Before players like Magic, basketball was dominated by centers. Point guards were one of the least important positions. The game we see today is partially due to Magic’s play in the 80’s.

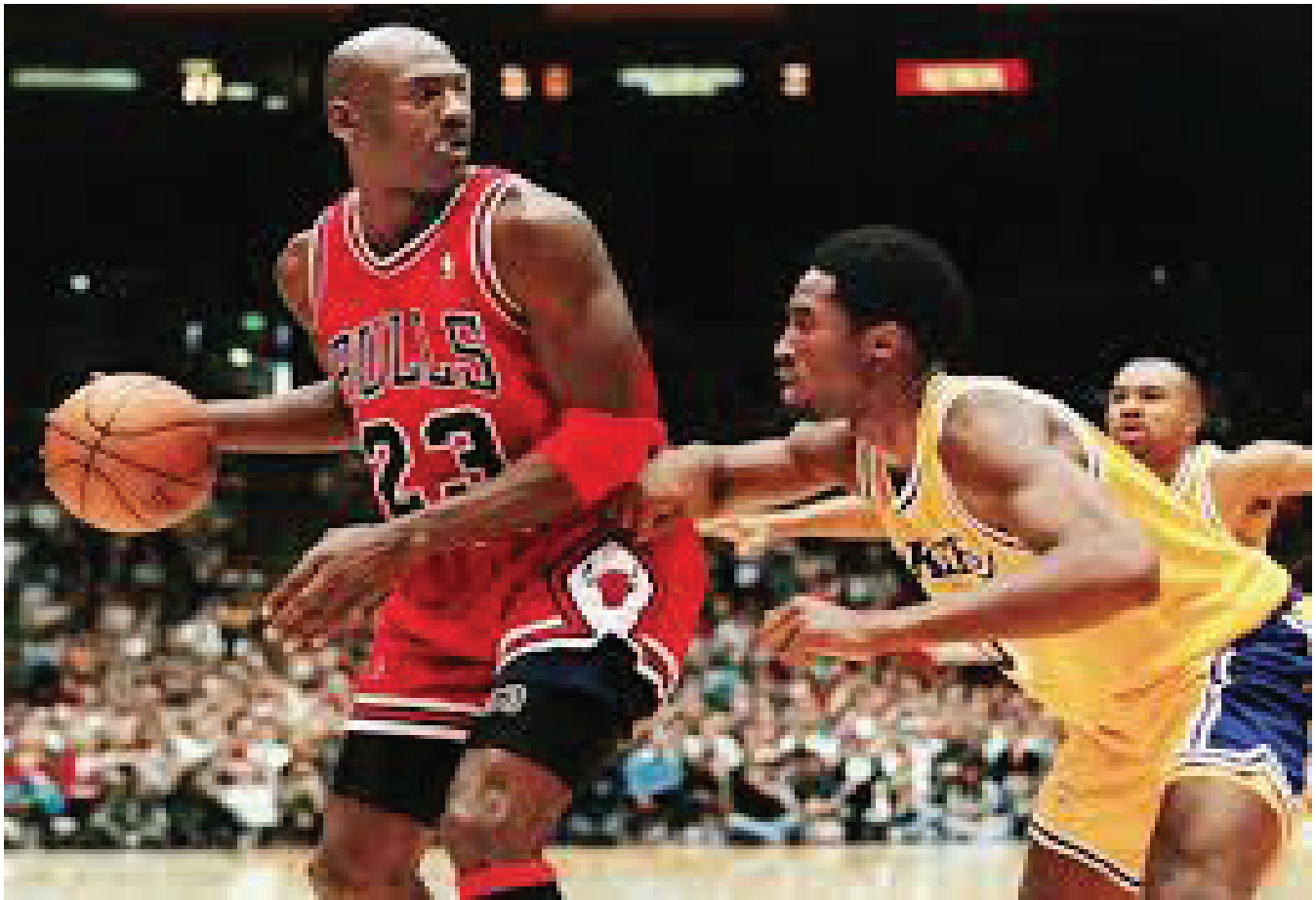






What the NBA is today is a sum of its players throughout history. It has been changed time and time again by players that bring something different, something never seen before that changes the dynamics of the NBA. Even players that aren't on this list have been huge influencers on the game. Players like Pete Maravich, who was Kyrie Irving before Kyrie Irving, just a few inches bigger. Players like Dirk Nowitzki, who was the first stretch big, or Kareem Abdul Jabbar, who introduced the most unstoppable move to ever reach the NBA, the skyhook. Whatever these players do influence the culture and the way the NBA is. The NBA is like water; it has no shape. It changes for the group of players that occupy it. Every generation is different and finds a way to make its mark on the league as it grows and changes.

Magic was the first of the big guards or "Point Forwards". He set the stage for players like LeBron James, Giannis Antetokounpo, Penny Hardaway, Shaun Livingston, Ben Simmons and others. He and his rivalry with Larry Bird Stemming back to their college days was one of the major things that helped to globalize NBA basketball.



Michael Jordan even today is the top dog off the court. He runs the shoe industry with his classic Jordan basketball shoes. He has thirty-three different shoes, excluding the casual shoes and side projects. If he doesn't create any more shoes for ten years, he would still be the leading shoe brand ever. His first thirteen shoes alone still dominate the shoe industry. They are used as basketball shoes and casual shoes, meaning non-basketball players wear them too at a high rate. These twelve shoes are so popular that each year he just makes new colorways and recycles old colorways and the sales never drop. Although the Jordan brand is a branch of Nike, it could very well stand on its own. That's the difference between Jordan and every other athlete with their own shoe.

“The obvious connection between Jordan and the NBA's younger generation is his Jordan Brand sneaker line, which is as popular as ever around the league. Whether the Jumpman logo is seen on players' feet, clothing or on the uniforms of MJ's Charlotte Hornets, the iconic symbol still goes hand-in-hand with the game of basketball” (Harris).

Michael Jordan, otherwise known as Black Jesus, is probably the biggest sports Icon of all-time. He dominated in almost every field; we can't forget about those terrible years on the baseball field. He was a huge part in making basketball a global sport. He dominated on the court, and now he dominates in the shoe industry. He runs the shoe and sportswear industry similar to how he ran the court. Michael Jordan is the greatest player of all-time too and his legacy is untouchable. He had two "three-peats"; many believe that if he never would have retired, he would have won 8 straight titles. Michael Jordan was the first player to make use of his big name as brand. He was one of the first to do commercials and Movies like Space Jam.







Off the court, Iverson made an even bigger impact. Iverson has his fingerprints all over the culture of the NBA. Everybody wanted to be like Iverson. Before Iverson and post Dr. J, NBA players were expected to not express themselves and say what the media wanted to hear and put on a face for the fans and the league. Iverson gave the world one hundred percent of himself; everything about him was real. Iverson refused to wear a suit before and after games as was customary. He was famous for wearing sweatsuits. He was persecuted for how he considered dressing how guys from where he was from dress. He's the reason that players like Russell Westbrook can wear what they wear and act how they do towards the media without getting an onslaught of criticism; because he took the bullet for them. "His stylistic outfits with the baggy clothes that all the rappers wore, even his braids brought a more urban culture to a really old fashioned NBA at that time. He was also a rapper making commercials with Jadakiss. People like Mike Eric Dyson went as far as saying that Iverson was the Tupac on her basketball court and people said stuff like this because his influence was so persuasive" (Kumar).



Allen Iverson is the most influential player from the 2000s. More than Kobe, LeBron, Tim Duncan, or Dwyane Wade. Allen Iverson is one of the especially unique players that was able to make his impact on the game both on and off of the court. On the court, Iverson impacted the league with his tough mentality and unbelievable “ball on a string” handles. He was known for his deadly crossover specifically. Every person that stepped up to guard him was asking to be a victim of ankle robbery. Even Michael Jordan is included in the long list of people that have been made a fool of by Allen Iverson’s crossover. “Just watching Iverson put countless players in his mixtape with the crossover, and watching a guard who is 6 foot averaging 30 points in the modern day era with the Giants was just unheard of” (Kumar).





He Is the engine of the Golden State warriors, a revolutionary team that influenced the rest of the NBA to start shooting threes at a much higher clip before, which bred his current rival team, the Houston Rockets. The Rockets are a team that decided to only shoot the most efficient shots in basketball, threes and layups. “The three point shot is no longer a sideshow but an integral part of the game as when Curry shoots it has to be respected and valued. Curry has demonstrated for the 1st time in NBA history the actual realized full value of the three point shot” (Henriques). The NBA started out as a crude league of 14 teams that was in competition with another professional league called the ABA. Eventually the NBA took over, but the league we are used to seeing today is very different then how it was when it all started. In the beginning, there was no three point line or defensive three seconds. In every decade, there is a set of new rules that is added that drastically changes the league. This is why every old basketball fan can’t relate to the current culture and rules of the NBA.



Stephen Curry is the most influential player of the 2010s and his impact is being felt as we speak. Curry is the greatest shooter to ever play in the NBA. Standing 6'3" he is a point guard, which forces him to shoot a good percentage of his threes off the dribble. He shoots them off the dribble with an accuracy that has never been achieved before. On top of that, because of his accuracy, people guard him further out, causing him to have to shoot from further out. This doesn't stop him though, He shoots with more accuracy from further out than anyone before. "According to NBA.com, teams are shooting more three-pointers than ever, with the number of attempts taken in the NBA rising from about 44,000 in 2010 to over 52,000 in 2015, and Curry is leading the charge as the best shooter in the league. Like it or not Steph Curry is changing the NBA, and his impact will be seen for years to come" (Henriques).



# Annotated Bibliography

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This source talks about Michael Jordan or 'Black Jesus' and his profound impact on the NBA. It talks about how his impact is still strong and even more relevant than some players today even though he hasn't stepped foot on an NBA court with a jersey on in 15 years. It talks about how he has made his stamp on the shoe industry and opened doors for other athletes.

Henriques, Joao. "Stephen Curry's Impact on Basketball." Fox Sport Stories, 28 May 2018.

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