

Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame

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Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Hall of Fame Finalists

Media Conference



MATT WINER: Great to have you out there. Welcome to Salt Lake City. Good to have you watching out there on NBA TV, NBA.com, the NBA App, everybody here in the room as well, live from Salt Lake City and All-Star Weekend 2023.

Almost 30 years to the day the NBA held All-Star Weekend right here in Utah. Quick recap. Harold Miner surprised everybody in the Dunk Contest. Mark Price shot his way to a 3-Point title, and on Sunday the West held off the East in overtime in what would be Michael Jordan's last NBA All-Star Game before retiring for the first time. It was the final All-Star appearance for Hall of Famer Isiah Thomas, and the very first, the All-Star debut, for Shaquille O'Neal. Utah's Hall of Fame duo John Stockton and Karl Malone were named co-MVPs.

One final noteworthy fact regarding that '93 All-Star Game, nine of the 10 starters that day are now members of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

All-Star Weekend always means a gathering of the game's greats, past and present, and there are many players and contributors of all kinds of significance in Salt Lake City, some of whom have graced us with their presence here in the room today. Welcome all.

Each and every one of you has made an impact on the game enough to be recognized by the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame, where the game lives forever.

But hanging out with hoop stars will have to wait for now because today is about breaking Hall of Fame news. Today we will learn the names of the Hall of Fame annual award winners to be recognized during this year's enshrinement along with the names of the Finalists for the Hall of Fame Class of 2023.

The one caveat is we will not announce today the Class of 2023 members from the Direct Elect committees. Those committees include Veterans, International, Contributors, and the Women's Veterans Committee. The class members chosen by those committees will be introduced

with the full class in April at the NCAA College Basketball Final Four in Houston.

The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame has the enormous responsibility to honor the game across all levels. Today's nominees from the Women's and North American committees reflect that effort.

With all that said, let's get to the Hall of Fame business at hand.

The Hall of Fame is proud to announce the winner of the 2023 Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award, the single greatest honor presented by the Hall of Fame outside of enshrinement.

Our first honoree spent more than 40 years as a fixture in gyms, summer camps and tournaments from Maine to Georgia. He was a soft-spoken high school basketball scout whose newsletter, the "High School Basketball Insider Report," was required reading for college coaches looking for insight about potential recruits.

Raised in Queens, he found his purpose and love for the game at age 14 when he first saw the legendary Connie Hawkins play during a summer league game. Displaying uncanny foresight on future NBA players like Bernard King, Kyrie Irving and Donovan Mitchell, his primary focus was creating opportunities for high school players at all levels of hoops.

He helped more people than anyone could list and impacted many young lives. Please join me in recognizing this year's recipient of the John Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award, Tom Konchalski.

The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame annually gives its Curt Gowdy Media Award to deserving members of the media, one for work in print, one for electronic or broadcast media, and the last for work in media that has inspired change.

Our first Gowdy winner is being honored for an unwavering 45-year commitment to college basketball. The network's March Madness slogan has been a fixture since 1982, the



same year freshman Michael Jordan made North Carolina's championship-winning shot.

In the four decades since, March Madness has delivered drama, inspiration, heartache, and unforgettable iconic moments: Christian Laettner's incredible buzzer-beater, Kris Jenkins' title winner at the horn, and volumes of Cinderella stories.

And while March Madness has become synonymous with college basketball, none of these televised thrills would have been possible without the talent and commitment of executives, producers, directors, crew, and announcers, including today's faces of the Final Four: Jim Nantz, Bill Raftery, Grant Hill, and Tracy Wolfson.

As important to the growth of the game as any dynasty, this team helped turn a tournament into a three-week national holiday.

Please join me in recognizing the 2023 Curt Gowdy Transformative Media Award winner, CBS Sports College Basketball.

BILL RAFTERY: On behalf of CBS Sports, thank you for this incredible honor. All of us at CBS Sports are thrilled to receive the Hall of Fame's Curt Gowdy Award for recognizing our commitment to college basketball for over four decades. Thank you so much. We are so appreciative and look forward to seeing all of you in August.

MATT WINER: That's Bill Raftery coming through under pressure. Onions.

Our award winner for print journalism has covered the NBA for more than two decades, including 18 NBA All-Star Games and NBA Finals. His early newspaper work includes stints at the Tulsa World, Los Angeles Daily News, and the Courier-Journal in Louisville.

He began covering the NBA as a Nuggets beat writer for the Denver Post. From there he moved to the Boston Globe, covering the Celtics, then Yahoo! Sports where, as the national NBA reporter, he earned recognition as an insider, breaking numerous stories covering the NBA and USA Basketball.

Today he is a contributor on various ESPN platforms and senior NBA writer for Andscape, featuring a sports and pop culture landscape used to create uplifting, diverse stories of Black identity.

Elected as the winner of the 2023 Curt Gowdy Award for Print Media, Marc J. Spears.

Our final Gowdy Award winner is an American journalist, sportscaster, and reporter. A Utah native, she graduated from the University of Utah with a degree in broadcast journalism. She got her start in broadcasting right here in Salt Lake, working as a local sports reporter and anchor.

Her career has since taken her to some of the nation's top television networks, including Fox Sports and ABC. Since 1998, she has been at ESPN serving various roles and covering a variety of sports. Currently, she's the lead sideline reporter for coverage of women's college basketball, the WNBA, and the Playoffs.

Known for getting the story and asking the tough question, she is the 2023 Curt Gowdy Award winner for Electronic Media, Holly Rowe.

Let's welcome to the stage our two Gowdy Award winners, both with us today, Holly Rowe and Marc J. Spears.

Congratulations to both.

HOLLY ROWE: Thank you. This is exciting. I started out pulling cable for the Utah Jazz broadcast in this building. So, to receive this award in this building now, that's really crazy.

MATT WINER: That is amazing.

HOLLY ROWE: I'm excited.

MATT WINER: What do you think of when you think of that young woman coming out of school on this path?

HOLLY ROWE: I think of just being fearless and not letting being a woman define what I was trying to do in basketball, and just trying a lot of different things: covering college football, covering college sports.

And I'm just really proud that I never gave up covering women's sports. A lot of people think they make it big and they stop covering women's sports, and so I'm still killing myself to be there and support our women and the WNBA, college sports, along with doing -- I have a game tomorrow, Baylor at Kansas, so everybody tune in.

MATT WINER: We appreciate you stopping by, delaying the schedule a little bit.

Marc, when you think about your career as a whole, which I imagine you have to do now at a moment like this, what are you proudest about?

MARC J. SPEARS: Well, thanks, Mr. [Jerry] Colangelo



and Mr. [John] Doleva of Hall of Fame.

I think what I'm proudest about is I wanted to play in the NBA, but I also realized that, one, I wasn't good enough; and, two, it was hard to get there.

So if I can't play in the NBA, the best thing to do is maybe figure out a way to be there. I figured out a way to be there as a sports journalist.

So to be able to do that and have covered the NBA since '99 and to get to the Hall of Fame this way is cool, man. I'm really appreciative.

MATT WINER: I mean, it's a dream for any of us who dreamed about playing in the NBA and realized that wasn't going to happen, to continue being involved in it. Can you describe what the game has meant to your life?

MARC J. SPEARS: It's allowed me to see the world, allowed me to get in here.

MATT WINER: That's pretty good.

MARC J. SPEARS: Yeah.

HOLLY ROWE: I thought I would be the one crying. I'm so shocked I didn't cry.

MATT WINER: You never know in these things. Holly Rowe, Marc J. Spears, congratulations to you both.

HOLLY ROWE: Thank you, everybody. This is a great honor. Thank you.

MATT WINER: Never know what kind of emotions are going to come out in these moments.

It's now time for today's big reveal as the Hall of Fame recognizes those who have given so much and helped grow the game.

The following 12 names are Finalists for the Hall of Fame Class of 2023. Let's start with nominees from the Women's Committee.

This Tennessee native was a high school standout who would go on to lead the Stanford Cardinal to the 1990 NCAA championship. She was named the tournament's Most Outstanding Player and later took home the Wade Trophy, given to the top player in the country.

After a brief playing career overseas, the 5-8 guard returned home as one of the founding members of the American Basketball League. After three seasons, the

ABL folded, which led her to the WNBA. Selected fifth overall by the Detroit Shock, she would finish her five-year WNBA career, leading all of her respective teams in minutes played.

Today she still stands as the league's career leader in three-point field goal percentage. Internationally, she was an Olympic and FIBA world champion, and in 2009 inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.

Today she is named a finalist by the Women's Committee as a player, Jennifer Azzi.

Our next honoree has spent over 40 years coaching the women's college game, winning more than 850 games, and leaving an indelible mark at every stop -- Louisiana Tech, Stephen F. Austin, Arkansas, and 19 years at Texas A&M.

When he retired in 2022, the Aggies had a streak of 16 straight 20-win seasons along with 15 consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances. To top it off, Texas A&M made the Sweet 16 eight times and the Women's Final Four in 2011, culminating in their first NCAA championship.

He is one of three Division I coaches to lead two separate women's programs to the NCAA Final Four and is currently enshrined in seven Halls of Fame, including the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.

Today he is named a finalist as a coach by the Women's Committee, Gary Blair.

This South Dakota native was named the state's High School Player of the Year her senior year. A prolific scorer, she headed to Colorado State University where she was named a three-time All-American. She graduated with many school records that still stand today and even passed the University of Utah's Keith Van Horn as the Western Athletic Conference's all-time leading scorer. Despite going undrafted, she quickly made her mark in the WNBA, leaving behind an incredible legacy.

Six-time All-star, two-time WNBA First Teamer, and a member of the WNBA's 15th, 20th, and 25th Anniversary Teams. She is also named a finalist by the Women's Committee as a player, Becky Hammon.

Our next honoree retired in 2004 after 31 seasons as the head women's basketball coach at the University of Kansas. During that span, the Jayhawks posted 17 20-win seasons, seven conference titles, six conference tournament championships, and twice reached the NCAA Tournament's Sweet 16.

In 1996, she became the first Black woman to coach on a U.S. Olympic basketball staff, helping lead Team USA to a gold medal.

Today she is named a finalist by the Women's Committee as a coach, Marian Washington.

Now on to the Class of 2023 finalists selected by the North American Committee. Simply put, he is considered the winningest coach in U.S. history. Over a 50-year career at Three Rivers Community College, he won an astounding 1,300 games. Among those wins, 36 National Junior College Athletic Association regional championships and two national titles. Oh, and he was twice named Coach of the Year.

He is currently enshrined in six sports Halls of Fame. Today he is named a finalist as a coach by the North American Committee, Gene Bess.

Before our next honoree arrived in the U.S., he was making a splash overseas, winning championships with the FC Barcelona under-18 national team. After a successful run in Spain, he declared for the 2001 Draft and was selected third overall. He would make an immediate impact, becoming the first non-American to win the NBA Rookie of the Year award.

After seven seasons in Memphis, he was traded to Los Angeles, where he played alongside the late great Kobe Bryant. Together they would win two more NBA titles.

In his prime, he was considered one of the top big men in the league, displaying a unique combination of skill and finesse. Today, the six-time All-Star is named a Finalist as a player by the North American Committee, Pau Gasol.

This legendary Amherst College head men's basketball coach holds the school record for wins in a single sport. During his storied 42-season career, he became the third coach in men's basketball history across all NCAA divisions to surpass the 800-win mark.

He led his teams to 20 Division III National Tournament appearances and seven trips to the Final Four, where two of his Lord Jeff teams would win the national championship. Twice named the National Association of Basketball Coaches Division III Coach of the Year, and today named a finalist as a coach by the North American Committee, David Hixon.

Our next nominee made a lasting impact on college basketball and especially Purdue University, where he remains the winningest coach in school history. A seven-time Coach of the Year, he would help lead the

Boilermakers to six Big Ten Championships and 22 postseason appearances over a 25-year career.

Today his legacy lives on with a blossoming coaching tree that includes Matt Painter, whose current Boilermakers team was recently ranked No. 1 in the country. Named a Finalist by the North American Committee as a coach, Gene Keady.

Raised in Germany, he is widely regarded as one of the greatest power forwards of all time. Drafted ninth by the Bucks [in 1998], he was immediately traded to the Mavericks. He spent his entire 21-year NBA career in Dallas, becoming the first player to ever play 21 years for a single franchise.

He was also a European pioneer, the first from the continent to start an All-Star Game or win the NBA's Most Valuable Player award.

His résumé also includes an NBA championship, a Finals MVP award, and a spot on the NBA's 75th Anniversary Team.

His signature one-foot fade-away is memorialized by a statue in Dallas, and today his name appears on the list of Hall of Fame Finalists. Named as a player by the North American Committee, Dirk Nowitzki.

Our next finalist grew up playing soccer in France, but after watching Michael Jordan during visits to his father in Chicago, he made a fortuitous decision to focus on hoops.

In the summer of 2000, he made an impression at the Nike Hoop Summit, a contest between American and European All-Stars. The San Antonio Spurs took notice, invited him to their summer camp, and later drafted the point guard with the 28th pick in the first round.

He quickly became a starter his rookie season, was named to the All-Rookie Team, becoming the first foreign-born guard to earn a spot.

There were more honors to come. Six All-Star appearances, four championships, and a Finals MVP were part of his 18-year NBA career, while internationally he was twice named had FIBA's Player of the Year and won the EuroBasket MVP award in 2013.

Now he is one step closer to an induction into the Naismith Hall of Fame. Named a Finalist as a player by the North American Committee, Tony Parker.

Sticking with the San Antonio theme, the next honoree's coaching career spans more than 50 years at the college

and pro level. He began his NBA journey in 1988 with stops as an assistant in San Antonio and Golden State before a return to the Spurs as their general manager and then head coach.

Nearly 30 years later he still stalks the Spurs' sideline as the longest tenured active coach in American sports history and the NBA's career leader in coaching wins.

He led the Spurs to winning records in his first 22 seasons to surpass Phil Jackson for the most winning seasons in NBA history. Along the way he has won five NBA titles, a championship résumé to which he added as U.S. Men's National Team coach with a gold-medal performance in Japan.

Today he is one step closer to a gold-plated induction into the Naismith Hall of Fame. Named a Finalist as a coach by the North American Committee, Gregg Popovich.

Our final honoree grew up sharpening his skills on the South Side of Chicago. After a successful career at Marquette, he became the fifth pick of the 2003 NBA Draft by the Miami Heat.

He would make an immediate impact in South Florida. His elite athleticism, dazzling crossovers, and acrobatic finishes earned him the nickname Flash by then teammate Shaquille O'Neal. In 2006, the two stars won an NBA Championship together with Wade earning Finals MVP.

Later, he teamed up with LeBron James and Chris Bosh to win back-to-back titles for Miami. An All-Star Game MVP, NBA Scoring Champion, three-time All-Defensive Team selection, and a member of the NBA's 75th Anniversary Team, and next up, a possible trip to Springfield, Massachusetts.

Named a Finalist as a player by the North American Committee, Dwyane Wade.

Before we wrap up today, let's hear from a couple of the finalists who are in attendance today. Dwyane Wade, Pau Gasol. Gentlemen.

Congratulations. Congratulations. Dwyane, you get home court here because you're with the Utah Jazz now.

DWYANE WADE: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

MATT WINER: What would a young Dwyane Wade have said about a moment like this 20 or 25 years ago?

DWYANE WADE: A young Dwyane Wade never thought that this moment would be here. Sometimes when you are

young and you have a dream, and a lot of people don't believe in your dream. It seems so far-fetched, but I've always been a dreamer, but I would be lying to you guys if I would say that I didn't want to quit on that dream many, many times, but I didn't.

So to be here, I've had many nights throughout this journey where I envisioned having that orange jacket. So I'm one step closer.

MATT WINER: One step closer. Pau, as a kid growing up in Spain, I don't know how much you thought about the NBA, let alone something like the Basketball Hall of Fame. To what do you owe this journey?

PAU GASOL: As a kid growing up in Spain, as you said, you don't -- you're unaware of certain things, many things in life. I definitely had a dream of playing in the NBA. That '92 Olympic team that came to Barcelona touched many kids' lives of my generation. So I was like, wow, these guys are incredible. I want to do that. You know?

But as Kobe said at one point, it's really about the journey. You know, these type of recognitions, which are an amazing honor, they come along when you do things very, very well for a long time and when you love what you do. I'm just privileged to have done -- played the game for so long at a high level with amazing people that have taught me so much, and I learned so much, and have amazing competitors as well as Dwyane here today and some of those finalists in T.P. and Dirk.

It's an honor to have Spencer [Haywood] and other great Hall of Famers here as well, so thank you, Jerry [Colangelo], thank you, Hall of Fame, for this amazing -- at least being a Finalist is already a huge honor. Thank you.

MATT WINER: I just rattled off your career résumés or at least part of your career résumés. What would you like people to remember about you as a player?

PAU GASOL: Usually what I like to say is that I'm a player that I played the right way. I played hard, competed, played to win. A player that made the right decisions on the court and tried to make my teammates better. That was one of the things. I didn't care about scoring points. I just cared about making the right play and knowing that I gave myself and the team the best chance to win.

DWYANE WADE: I would say that I felt I did it every day, and I did it in so many different ways. You know, some people are lucky enough to go through their career and get the ball in their hand, and that's how they can ride. My journey didn't start that way, and my journey did not end that way.

So to be able to find a way throughout the journey of basketball to become a complete basketball player, whether you're the No. 1 guy on the team or whether you are the guy that just has to make sure you're there before everybody gets there to be prepared to get your team ready as a scout player. I've done it all.

I felt that I gave the game everything that I had, and I did it every day. Along that journey there were so many people that helped me, that pushed me, that wouldn't allow me to give up on myself, wouldn't allow me to give up on that dream.

We all need that. We cannot do it alone. We all need so many individuals. Jerry, I needed you in the Olympics. I needed you to say I wasn't good enough, you know? I needed you to say, D., you've got to do more.

Spencer, we needed you. We needed you to be the first. We needed you to take that step. So many of us need so many people.

I definitely needed that to accomplish my dreams and my goal, but I did it every day.

MATT WINER: It's good to see the game giving something back to you today. Congratulations.

DWYANE WADE: Thank you.

MATT WINER: Dwyane Wade, Pau Gasol, finalists for the 2023 Hall of Fame class. Before we go, let's hear from another Hall of Famer with us today, the Chairman of the Naismith Hall of Fame, the aforementioned Jerry Colangelo.

JERRY COLANGELO: Guess I needed this.

MATT WINER: Hey, Jerry. Good to have you with us. There's often -- among the media folks out there, myself included, there's often an evaluation of a class of Hall of Famers. And we don't officially have a class yet, but this is a good one.

JERRY COLANGELO: I love the class. I think this is a loaded class. So when we take the next step, there are 18 votes that have to be yeses on the ballot to be inducted, and I think this is unique in that we have a lot of first-time people, and it's unusual when somebody makes it on the first ballot.

But this is going to be that unique a class because there could be four, five first-timers. So we're excited about it. There are great stories attached to each of the individuals

who are up for consideration, so we're looking for a big-time August event in Springfield.

We're excited about our building and all the things that have happened. You know, we did a major remodel. The technology is second to nothing. I think it's the most outstanding Hall of Fame in the country. So we're going to have a big party in August. Looking forward to it.

MATT WINER: It is an earlier date than it has been the last couple of years.

JERRY COLANGELO: Yeah. We've moved things around based on schedules. This time around we're going with August. It seems to fit in at the right time. September was a little bit more difficult because of competition.

So that's the next step on the agenda, and we're looking forward to the April Final Four where we will announce the actual winners, those who are going to move on and be inducted.

And by the way, there's a great party we have each year at the Final Four, and it's a special time for the new inductees because a number of Hall of Famers will be there to honor you, and you have an opportunity to really tell your story, and it's a great time.

So I'm excited about it. We're all excited about it, and we're happy for you.

MATT WINER: Jerry Colangelo, everybody. Thank you, sir. Great to see you as always. You can take that with you.

Thank you to Jerry. Thank you to our honorees here tonight and to all of you for watching on NBA TV, the NBA App, NBA.com as well. Thanks to all the Hall of Famers in the room here in Salt Lake City. A round of applause, please, for all of the 2023 Finalists for the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

Remember, being named a Finalist is a huge honor in and of itself. As Jerry mentioned, the 2023 class will be introduced Saturday, April 1, at the NCAA Final Four in Houston. Enshrinement 2023 will take place August 11th and 12th in Springfield, Massachusetts, at the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

We hope to see all of you in Springfield, the birthplace of hoops. Thanks to all of you for coming out today, everybody watching at home as well, and enjoy All-Star Weekend 2023 here from beautiful Salt Lake City, Utah.

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