

# NBA Legends Awards

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**Moderator Bob Costas**



BOB COSTAS: I guess close to everybody's here. Some people are still scarfing down their bento boxes and they'll fill in those seats out there.

But we welcome you to the 26th annual NBA Legends Awards from the YouTube Theater here in Inglewood. We're here for a celebration of the Legends of Basketball and their contributions both on and off the court.

Yesterday, as most of you saw, some great performances at All-Star Saturday. Miami Heat forward Keshad Johnson won the Slam-Dunk Contest.

The father-son team of Rick and Jalen Brunson, along with Karl-Anthony Towns and Allan Houston, won the Kia Shooting Stars. And it was Dame Time once again as Damian Lillard won his third three-point shooting contest. We're looking forward to some great competition at tonight's All-Star Game as well under the new format.

To tip off the show this morning, it's now my pleasure to bring to the stage NBA Commissioner Adam Silver.

(Applause.)

ADAM SILVER: Thank you, Bob. And thanks to the Legends of Basketball for hosting this ceremony, one of the staples of All-Star weekend.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the first NBA All-Star Game. Bob Cousy, now 97 years old, played in that first game, which took place in Boston. And I called him earlier this week to ask about any memories from the game.

He said he didn't recall much about the game itself, but what he did remember was that that was the season that his team, the Celtics, drafted the first Black player in the NBA, Chuck Cooper.

(Applause.)

ADAM SILVER: That 1950-'51 season also featured the first Black player to sign an NBA contract, Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton.

(Applause.)

ADAM SILVER: And the first Black player to play in an NBA game, Earl Lloyd.

(Applause.)

ADAM SILVER: The courage of these three pioneers helped shape the character and values of today's league. As part of a season-long celebration of that milestone, we are honored to have their family members here in attendance today.

(Applause.)

ADAM SILVER: This morning we recognize another trailblazer who carried that legacy forward, a legend of Los Angeles basketball: three championships at UCLA, six NBA titles, six MVPs, and 19 All-Star selections.

But Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's impact transcends even those extraordinary accomplishments. For decades, Kareem has used his voice to push for meaningful change, to speak out on issues that matter. And he has shown that true greatness is measured not only in championships, but in character. His is a life's work that is more than deserving of our Lifetime Achievement Award.

Let's roll the video.

(Video.)

(Applause.)

ADAM SILVER: It is my honor to present the Lifetime Achievement Award to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

(Cheers and applause.)

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR: Thank you so much, everyone. It's really, for me, amazing to be here. I never thought this could happen.

I stand here deeply humbled, filled with gratitude for a league that gave me far more than a career. It gave me a home, a purpose, and a family. The NBA was a bridge that



connected me to extraordinary men whose greatness shaped my life.

You cannot reach the apex of the NBA without great coaches and teammates. So I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all my teammates, and especially coaches, and so many others whose names echo through the halls of this game.

To share the court, the locker room, the long nights, the laughter, and the battles with all of those people was a privilege beyond measure.

But the NBA also gave me something even more profound -- a platform to stand for something larger than myself. The work off the court to champion social justice efforts, the community programs, and the chance to speak for those who need a voice, those moments shaped me just as much as any championship or accolade.

I'm proud of the stands we took, the bridges that we built, and the young people we tried to lift along the way.

To be honored for a Lifetime Achievement Award in this league is to be reminded that greatness is not measured in points only, or wins, but in the impact that we leave behind. For that, and every soul who walked this journey with me, I offer my deepest thanks.

(Applause.)

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR: There's one coach that I really would like to thank. His name was Farrell Hopkins, and he's the one that told me that I had to learn how to score or I wasn't going to last too long in this game.

Thank you, Farrell. He's not with us anymore, but he told me the right thing at the right time.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: I've been lucky enough to do this for a long time across a wide variety of sports. That takes into account dozens and dozens of great athletes who you admire for their skills, and maybe you like them from the standpoint of personality.

And then there are a select few who transcend that, who you deeply respect for the person they are. That's Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: Here now to present the Pioneer Award is 12-time NBA All-Star, two-time All-Star Game MVP, and

three-time NBA MVP, Magic Johnson.

(Applause.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: First of all, good morning everybody, and what a blessed day it is. And I want to congratulate my captain on the Lifetime Achievement Award. We should clap for Kareem Abdul-Jabbar one more time.

(Applause.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: Because I definitely wouldn't have five championship rings without that man. So, man, what he's done for basketball is just truly amazing.

I also want to thank some of my heroes who are out here. Oscar Robinson, I saw in the back. Dr. J is here. All my guys, I tell you.

(Applause.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: Those are the guys who I looked to and idolized when I was growing up.

Now, this is a great thrill for me, being one of the owners of the Sparks, to present this woman with this year's Legend Pioneer Award. It's presented to one of the premier players that's ever played in the WNBA. I'm talking about Candace Parker. Let's give it up for her. Man, man.

(Applause.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: Candace is a seven-time WNBA All-Star and an All-Star Game MVP and a two-time WNBA MVP. Candace is the only player to win three -- three, now -- WNBA championships with three different teams. Isn't that amazing? Come on, clap for that.

(Applause.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: She's also the only WNBA player to win Rookie of the Year and MVP in the same season.

(Applause.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: Since her amazing career, since she has retired now, she is currently the president of women's basketball for Adidas. I want some. I hope I get some free Adidas, Candace. And her Candace Parker Foundation focuses on youth empowerment, equity in sports, and health care.

Let's take a look at Candace's amazing career.

(Video.)



(Applause.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: Yes. When we think about position-less basketball, I think the woman that started that is about to come up on this stage, and this is really my pleasure. Let's give it up for Candace Parker.

(Applause.)

CANDACE PARKER: Well, first, thank you so much for this tremendous honor. I want to kind of turn back the clock a little bit and go back to childhood.

I was a fan of a lot of you in this room. The man that just presented me this award, I used to go out in my driveway and try to throw no-look passes and tried to go up and be smooth like Dr. J. I mean, so I just look out in this room, and I'm just so humbled.

I was inspired as a kid because of the NBA. And in '97, I was able to look at the television and see people that look like me and try to emulate that when the WNBA started.

And so I'm just super grateful for what the NBA has done to give back to the game, what they continue to do to give back to the game.

Super grateful for all my teammates, my coaches, and my mentors. I think it takes someone to see something in you and to give confidence to you when you doubt yourself. And so I wouldn't be standing up here without all of my mentors, all of my coaches, especially the late, great Pat Summitt. She was super influential in my life. She taught me what it was like to be a professional, what it was like to carry myself in a way that I would be proud of.

And so I just think that I'm super grateful to be standing here because of all my co-workers. I mean, I'm on the broadcast side now, but just all my co-workers out there. Think about Jamal, D-Wade has been super influential in my career.

And then now just being a mom and a wife, understanding that, you know, we have the ability to impact the future. And I'm just so grateful for the game of basketball. It's taken me around the world. It's taught me so many different lessons.

But I think now seeing it through that childlike influence again, seeing that childlike joy. I'm going to go home and I'm going to watch the All-Star Game with my son, and I just hope that he's able to love basketball.

I mean, there's a little brainwashing, don't worry about that.

There's a little brainwashing. I'm throwing the ball to him a little bit.

But I just hope that he sees the way in which the former NBA players, WNBA players, and current carry themselves because I think it's the type of people that make this league so special.

So thank you so much for this tremendous honor. I'm still in awe and humbled just to be before you guys. So thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: Okay, here we go. This year, the NBA is celebrating the 75th anniversary of the pioneers of basketball. The courage and determination of these pioneers changed the course of NBA history.

Here's a look.

(Video.)

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: Among the many legends here today are also the families of these pioneers: Nat's daughter, JaTaun Robinson-Swopes --

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: -- Kevin Lloyd, and Chuck Cooper III. Thanks to all of you for being here.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: We also have some other special guests joining us. We'd like to recognize the kids and families of the Make-A-Wish Foundation. They're here somewhere. There we go.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: The Legends Award celebrates the members of the NBA family whose contributions both on and off the court have created indelible memories.

We're also here to honor the memories of those who passed away this past year. To help us honor the legends we've lost is four-time Grammy winner Kelly Rowland and six-time Grammy winner and member of Maroon 5, PJ Morton.

(In memorium performance.)



(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: Kelly and PJ, thanks so much.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: Next up is an NBA All-Star, four-time NBA champion, four-time NBA Finals MVP, and the Executive Director -- well, I got to amend that. I ran my fours together. It's enough. Four-time NBA champion, once NBA Finals MVP. Good enough. And the Executive Director of the NBA Players Association, Andre Iguodala. Andre.

(Applause.)

ANDRE IGUODALA: I knew I liked Bob for a reason. That was an amazing, before he fixed it, intro. I've been listening to Bob Costas my entire life through NBC, so it's amazing that we're back on NBC. It's been an incredible season to get us started off.

I'm honored to be here to speak on behalf of the National Basketball Players Association and the history that's come from that. And I'm going to speak about Chris Paul in a minute, but he said something that has always resonated with me. He said, We stand on the shoulders of the giants who led us to this point.

And we've been honoring all year Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton, Earl Lloyd, and Chuck Cooper. And I think with the league, with the Players Association, we must embrace our past to let us know where we're going to the future.

My young fella is here right now. It's incredible. He knows who I'm talking to. He's a top player in high school basketball. That's what it's about. Sitting right in front of Jamal Crawford. It's so powerful that you're here right now.

When we talk about brotherhood, when we talk about leadership, we talk about community, that's what it's about. And so as you look forward to lead the next wave, everything that you do, how you represent -- it's not about you representing yourself, but you're representing our community, you're representing our brotherhood.

And, you know, heavy is the head that wears the crown. And you got the crown, there's a lot that comes with it. You take that and you look at it as a blessing. You know, the good book says, He doesn't put more on you than you can handle. So everything that's coming your way, you can handle. And if you need us, we are here for you.

(Applause.)

ANDRE IGUODALA: Thank you. I also want to talk about my experience as the executive director. As most of you know, if you haven't, we have found an amazing successor to myself in David Kelly, who came from Chicago, South Side. Built a lot of great properties with the Golden State Warriors.

And we've been working together for the last year. He's been serving as a general counsel and as the managing partner. And it's been incredible learning from you. I feel like I've been working for you, all the expertise you've been giving me, the way you've been fighting for us, and what we're building, what we will continue to build. So really look forward to always being a part of the brotherhood.

But what I really wanted to speak to today was, first, another congratulations. I spoke about this at the Tech Summit, but to Chris Paul and the amazing career that he had.

(Applause.)

ANDRE IGUODALA: And Chris Paul had this spirit and this fight about him that drove the rest of the league insane. And when we talk about sport, we talk about competition. It drives that competitive edge that can drive a wedge between the brotherhood.

And if you can't -- I've been reading Brene Brown's book, "Strong Ground," and it talks about locking in. And as athletes, we're locked in 99 percent of our lives, and we never understand how to lock through, which is to mean to turn off that switch, become one with ourselves.

It could be breath work. It could be mindfulness. And as we continue to go into AI, as we continue to use all this data, as we continue to use our community -- the community is the most powerful part of that. We're just being the arms for one another to lean on to get us to lock through and to get us to understand how we can turn off that competition and we can come back as brothers.

And one thing I want to say about Chris Paul was he was able to lock through in his service as the president of the Players Association. I was one of those individuals who I saw Chris Paul in the lens of someone I was competing against as my foe. But when we spent time -- I was his vice president of the PA for 10 years -- he became my brother.

When I saw how he dedicated his time, his free time, he could have been spending the summer with his kids, the sacrifices he made for his family, all of the things he fought for, for our players, for the greater good, I said this is exactly how I'm going to run everything that I do.

His approach and the way he thought about things was just so thoughtful. And that time, I'm learning how to lock through, through my brother, who I've been taught to compete and beat every single night. I mean, the Warriors-Clippers rivalry was something else. We were in the back locker rooms almost ready to kill each other.

But that's the essence of the Legends Awards. I'm looking at Baron Davis. He was the first one in Silicon Valley through his time with the Warriors that really connected that tech and that basketball and that influence.

He was the first content creator too. No one knows about that. But I've been watching you my entire career, and I really appreciate you showing us the way. And I was able to -- they gave me credit for things that you were doing early on.

(Applause.)

ANDRE IGUODALA: Yes, yes, yes. And one of my favorite players of all time is being honored tonight, Candace Parker. I just learned she has a special birthday. She and my wife share a birthday, April 19th.

And so I was always wondering. I'm like, Why is there something there where your game, your spirit, the way you play -- she was mad at me. I connected her game to Lamar Odom. And I had to teach her on how good Lamar Odom was because I said, This is the ultimate compliment. But, you know, not just the men, but the women as well coming together and celebrating one another, past, present, and future.

I want to thank Mr. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. He taught me something very, very important. Very thoughtful, very well-spoken, well-read. And he said something to me one time. I was reading an article, and you said, Always keep up with current times, even though it may not be something that you're interested in.

So I think you were mentioning, like, reality TV, and you were saying reality TV can give you an understanding of the current generation, because you have to be able to speak to and get through to them as well. So taking yourself -- taking time to see something from another person's lens so you can communicate with them, like, just always stood out to me. That was 15 years ago, I want to say.

So just being able to embrace one another, just being able to not talk about the old times in terms of our game, but talk about how we connect. No one understands the life of an athlete, the trauma that we go through.

You miss that camaraderie. Everything that goes away when you leave the game, that's what the community's for, for us to come back, to connect to one another, to lock through with one another.

And so I've just been honored to spend my last two years trying to complete that task, but also hand it off to the next guy to do the same. And been working with the RPA, which has been incredible, and we want to be always at arm's length to our -- the young people call it the uncs now.

And so with all that being said, it's just truly an honor speaking to you all the last few years. And with that being said, I want to pass it off to the Executive Director for the Retired Players Association, Antonio Davis.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ANTONIO DAVIS: Thank you. Good morning. Good morning to everybody. I'd like to start by thanking the NBA, the NBPA, the WNBA, Harlem Globetrotters, and the ABA, and my distinguished Board of Directors led by our Chairman, Charles "Choo" Smith, for sharing a commitment to honoring the players who have built this game and supporting the mission of the National Basketball Retired Players Association, now known as the Legends of Basketball.

(Applause.)

ANTONIO DAVIS: Our mission is to ensure legends continue to thrive with dignity, purpose, and connection beyond the court. This morning is about gratitude, gratitude for the players whose excellence and love for the game built professional basketball to the global force that it is today.

But our appreciation extends far beyond championships and unforgettable moments on the court. We honor you for who you are as people, as leaders, as mentors, as advocates, as parents, and pillars of our communities.

The game has always been more than basketball. It has been a platform for unity, resilience, and opportunity. Long after the final buzzer sounds, the values learned in locker rooms and arenas continue to shape lives and neighborhoods across this diverse community. That ending impact is your legacy.

As president of Legends of Basketball, I have the privilege of representing an organization with a singular focus centered around legends at the heart of everything we do.

Our mission is rooted in a single belief that those who help build this game deserve to thrive with dignity, wellness, and purpose long after their playing days are over.

We build community to continue to combat isolation, ensuring legends remain connected to one another. We provide health and wellness and financial education tailored to the realities of post-playing life. We help create pathways to new careers and renewed purpose.

We support families through resources and scholarships that create generational impact. And we partner with leagues and teams and stakeholders to reshape how legends are seen, not as part of the game, but as an essential part of the future of this game.

When legends are supported in the way where they don't have to worry about endurance, I think they thrive, they lead, they give back, they continue to transform the basketball community and the society at large.

To all my legends here today, each and last one of you, thank you. Thank you for shaping the game, for lifting our communities, for continuing to inspire us all. This celebration is not just about what you achieve, but about who you are and all that you still have to give.

I'm glad to be your president, and I hope to make you proud. Thank you.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: Thank you, Antonio. And now, here to present the Bob Lanier Community Impact Award is a six-time All-Star, two-time NBA champion, and the inaugural recipient of the Bob Lanier Community Impact Award, Pau Gasol. Pau.

PAU GASOL: Good morning, everybody. What an honor to be in front of all of you, NBA family. Congratulations to the awardees. What an amazing accomplishment and amazing example you are for all of us.

So the Bob Lanier Community Impact Award recognizes outstanding legends who have shown unparalleled commitment to making a difference in the lives of the members of their community. The award is named in the honor of a man whose impact on the NBA community was felt around the world, Bob Lanier. This year's -- yes, please, give it up for Bob.

(Applause.)

PAU GASOL: This year's recipients are Clipper legends Baron Davis and Jamal Crawford.

(Applause.)

PAU GASOL: Baron played 13 years in the NBA, was a two-time NBA All-Star, and twice led the league in steals. In 2016, Baron founded the Black Santa Company to celebrate diversity through storytelling. His Rising Star of America Foundation works with inner-city youth here in Los Angeles to provide mentorship through clinics and camps combined with educational and life skills workshops.

(Applause.)

PAU GASOL: Jamal. Jamal Crawford played 20 years in the NBA. How about that? Unbelievable.

(Applause.)

PAU GASOL: And was a three-time Sixth Man of the Year Award winner. Jamal is the only player to score 50 points with four different teams, and is the oldest player to score 50 at age 39.

(Applause.)

PAU GASOL: His Jamal Crawford Foundation was started in his hometown, Seattle, to support youth with experiences to strengthen both their minds and bodies. The foundation supports Seattle public schools, local Boys & Girls Clubs, and summer basketball camps.

Jamal has built and maintained basketball courts as well as providing heart defibrillators for various schools. These days, he's an analyst for the NBA on NBC.

(Applause.)

PAU GASOL: I mean, how incredibly lucky we are to have a platform to be able to have a positive impact on our communities, on our world, and how important that is. You know, with success comes responsibility. I think we all are very much aware of that.

So continue to use your platform, continue to use your lives to have increased positive impact in all our communities. And Baron, Jamal, thank you for being great examples of that. I was the first recipient of the Bob Lanier Award, and it's an honor to present this award to both of you.

So now let's roll the video and take a look at Baron's and Jamal's careers and work.

(Video.)

(Applause.)



PAU GASOL: Well, let's have Baron and Jamal come up and receive the award.

(Applause.)

BARON DAVIS: Thank you. My voice is a little shot, and I got like 15 different beards on that highlight reel. So, thank you NBA for this. Thanks Pau.

I'm from Los Angeles, South Central, the East Side. And in L.A. the game doesn't change by decades, it changes by the block, by schools, by access. Every era tells a different story.

I grew up in South Park Elementary, dunk courts, where basketball taught us more than the game. It taught us survival, pride, responsibility. Community was the lesson.

Then off to Crossroads, and it felt like stepping into an entirely different world, a different L.A. that I'd never seen. It was the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air with no Uncle Phil and no Bel-Air.

I had to go back to this side. No real guidebook, no safety net. That's when I truly saw the distance between privileged and unprivileged. Same city; different realities. And once you see the gap, you cannot unsee it.

So it became my mission to be the bridge, a bridge that allowed movement across the city, a bridge that created exits. That meant investing in youth, in leagues, AAU teams, players, coaches, foundations, entrepreneurs. Your community, my community. My responsibility.

Sometimes you have to leave home to come back stronger, and I had to travel to tech, to investing, film, TV to build new bridges so I can bring those opportunities back to the kids here who would look at me and say, If B.D. could do it, I could do it way better than him. That's what my kids do right now.

My game got me here, but it was the prayers and the beliefs of others that made it happen. I never ran, I never will. So tonight I'm grateful to stand in the gap between the past and the present.

History makes us who we are. Bob Lanier showed us that legacy isn't about how loud your name is. It's about how long your impact is. He showed up, he stayed, he built.

To my guy right here. I love this dude right here. Your work is part of the game's living history. You continue to inspire and add chapters. We know there's kids watching all over America not just how you play, but how you give

back and how you carry that torch.

The history of the game is not finished. It is still being written every time, every time someone chooses to come back to invest, mentor, or to build. That's responsibility. That's the privilege. And that's the standard that Bob Lanier left us.

Thank you, Bob Lanier, and thank you to all the pioneers, recognized, unrecognized. I accept this award for all of us. Thank you.

(Applause.)

BARON DAVIS: And to my kids, you are my compass in my next chapter in telling the history of the game in love and life. I love y'all boys.

(Applause.)

JAMAL CRAWFORD: First off, thank you. This honor truly means a lot to me. I feel so blessed because this isn't something you seek recognition for. You do what feels right to uplift as many people as possible, especially those who need it most.

I had the privilege of being surrounded by so many incredible people -- my grandparents, my mom, my dad, my sisters, coaches, barbers in the community who are making a difference in young people's lives.

Specifically, I saw how their care for young people provided a sense of protection, belonging, and a belief in themselves.

I'll never forget an experience from my time at the University of Michigan. One day I went to grab a pizza, and with my last \$50, I paid for the pizza. It was \$12; I walked out with \$38 change. I handed the entire \$38 to someone who was outside the restaurant on the streets. I didn't know where my next money was coming from, but I said don't worry about it, do the right thing, God got you.

Basketball has blessed me in so many ways, and I've had the privilege to play the game at the highest level. I can't believe the legends in here, by the way. I'll get to that in a second.

But long before the NBA, I was just a kid from Seattle with a dream, and I've never forgotten that. No matter what moves I've made in my life, I've always stayed connected to the kid who was simply chasing his dream.

Where I come from shaped who I am. Growing up in Seattle, I learned the value of community, resilience, and

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

staying connected to your roots. I live by a simple motto: If you can help someone, do it.

Throughout my journey, I've come to understand how important it is for young people to have opportunities and guidance and a belief in them. It gives them a certain fuel they need to succeed. I know it did it for me, and it changed how I view life.

Please remember this: It's not about the ball player that's always been most important to me. Off the court tells a lot more about who you are. Helping others is bigger than anything I've done on the court. Giving back has never been about recognition, it's been about responsibility.

Through the youth basketball camps, after-school programs, attendance incentives, my goal has always been to create spaces where kids feel supported, inspired, and motivated to chase their dreams.

Basketball brings us together, but the lessons extend far beyond the game. If I can be that example for even one kid, then everything I've done has been worth it.

I share this award with my family. I get a lot of credit for my community work, but without them there's no way this is possible. Even my young kids, I'm making sure that they're passing out stuff and doing the right thing as well so they can see what it feels like. This belongs to them just as it does to me. So thank you, guys.

(Applause.)

JAMAL CRAWFORD: There's so many legends in this room today. Baron Davis is somebody I watched in high school, and he actually made me a better dribbler because he ripped me twice at the Pump Camp.

And it was embarrassing. I'm like, Man, give me that ball back. And he ripped me again. I went home and I said, I'm never going to feel like that on the court again. So, Baron, thank you for some of my handles, I appreciate it.

I see the other best handler in here in Kyrie Irving. He's younger than me, but he's an inspiration. Everything he does on the court is second to what he does off the court, the way he uplifts people and the way he cares about people. I thank you for your inspiration as well.

(Applause.)

JAMAL CRAWFORD: The legend, the legend Dr. J. My first basketball and my best Christmas gift was a Dr. J hoop. It had his face on the backboard and a little yellow ball. So that caused inspiration as well. Thank you so

much for everything you do off the court.

(Applause.)

JAMAL CRAWFORD: I see the Big O here. I see Magic here. Kareem is right here. I was able to talk to Kareem the other day, and we talked about so many great things about investments in your community, and those type of conversations last a lifetime.

You're always giving jewels. We talk about the Hall of Fame and GOAT, but you're in your own separate section. So thank you for everything you do. I appreciate it.

(Applause.)

JAMAL CRAWFORD: And Candace Parker is here. And I work with Candace, and I always told her, I'm like, You're the blueprint. You're the blueprint of what it looks like on the court, off the court. Everything you do is with class. It's always about other people, and you're inspiring to us.

Even my young daughters are like, That's Candace Parker. I'm like, Yeah, that is Candace Parker.

And congrats on the Hall of Fame nomination. You are the greatest women's player I've ever seen. So thank you.

(Applause.)

JAMAL CRAWFORD: And I won't be long-winded. NBA, Adam Silver, thank you so much for always honoring the legends and keeping them first. There's no us without them, and we know that. They are the most important thing about this game. So thank you so much. Thank you, NBA, for the award.

(Applause.)

(Video.)

BOB COSTAS: And in just a moment we're going to welcome to the stage three guys who played Olympic basketball, but before we do, Jamal briefly mentioned Julius -- and we got to look at him; he's seated here in the front row -- but I think it's appropriate, especially this week, to mention that a terrific documentary chronicling the history of the ABA just dropped this past week, a couple of days ago.

The ABA only lasted for nine years, but it had a huge impact on the history of basketball -- the three-point shot, the slam dunk contest, a more wide-open style of play, and all the terrific Hall of Fame-level players who came from the ABA and joined the NBA.

But no one personified the league more than Dr. J, one of the greatest players in the history of basketball and the greatest player in the history of the ABA, Dr. J, Julius Erving.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: And, now, please welcome back five-time Olympian -- that's right, five times -- on the Spanish Olympic basketball team and current member of the Athletes' Commission of the IOC and flag-bearer from Spain, Pal Gasol.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: Next, the co-captain of the 1992 U.S. Olympic Dream Team, Magic Johnson.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: And, finally, the co-captain of the undefeated 1960 U.S. Olympic Team, the Big O, Oscar Robertson.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: Okay, so a bit of conversation here. Let's talk about your preparation for the Olympics. It was a lot different, Oscar, in 1960, the Olympics in Rome. What did you have to do in preparation, or what were you doing?

OSCAR ROBERTSON: Well, they selected eight teams to go out to Denver, and you played a game every night. And if you won the championship there, your top five players got to go to the Olympics.

BOB COSTAS: I heard that you were working out -- fill me in on this. You were working out at LaGuardia Airport?

OSCAR ROBERTSON: No.

BOB COSTAS: No?

OSCAR ROBERTSON: No, no, no, no.

BOB COSTAS: I got notes here that says that's true.

OSCAR ROBERTSON: Well, I had gotten married. My wife was going to Columbia University getting her post-degree. And so I worked at the LaGuardia Airport at a hotel there, working on -- putting in sidewalks and et cetera. That's how that came up.

But I thought you meant when we actually got our team

together to go out and play in Denver to see who could make the team. Because during those years, the AAU was very, very strong, and they were totally against any college player making the team.

BOB COSTAS: From 1936 to 1988, the U.S. never lost an Olympic basketball game. But some people think, before the Dream Team came along, that that 1960 team that included you and Jerry West and Walt Bellamy and some others was the best amateur team that we ever sent to the Olympics.

OSCAR ROBERTSON: Well, we had a pretty good team, but I think the team that Russell played on in Australia --

BOB COSTAS: Bill Russell in '56, right?

OSCAR ROBERTSON: That's a pretty good team as well. But we went undefeated. I mean, what else can you do?

(Laughter.)

BOB COSTAS: They won by an average of, like, 42 points a game. By the way, folks, I think I'm allowed to say this. Oscar has a little bit of trouble getting around. You see the brace on his knee. But this man is 87 years old. Does he look great or what?

(Applause.)

OSCAR ROBERTSON: Well, now, let me explain this. Sometimes when you grow old, you get foolish. I was lifting weights. I was trying to see how much weight I could get up over my shoulders, and I strained my damn leg.

(Laughter.)

BOB COSTAS: You know, Magic, after the U.S. lost in 1988, well, we couldn't have that. The U.S. is not supposed to lose in the Olympics. So there's a solution here. Let's put together the Dream Team. And there are people who say to this day that that's the greatest sports team, any sport, ever put together.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Well, it was an amazing team. Coach Daly really made sure we understood the mission and the goal. And probably the thing that really turned everything around for us and had us really focused was Coach Daly said, Michael Jordan's going to be the captain of the team. And Michael Jordan said, no, Larry Bird and Magic should be the captain of the team.

And when that happened, everybody had to leave their ego at the door, and it was about just winning basketball games. And we were able to blow everybody out by about

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

42 points a game.

BOB COSTAS: Yeah.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Of course, my job was easy when you look to your right, there's Michael; look to your left, there's Scottie; look to your left, there's Karl Malone, Charles Barkley.

BOB COSTAS: Drexler, Stockton, Mullin.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Drexler, Stockton, Mullin, David Robinson, Patrick Ewing.

Woo. Easy job for a point guard, Kyrie. Easy job. I just (indicating)...

(Laughter.)

BOB COSTAS: They say that the scrimmages were better than any of the games, that the scrimmages were some of the best games anyone ever saw.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Yeah, because it was about our ego now, you know. And so I look -- and Coach Daly did the smart thing. He said, Okay, it's going to be the East versus the West. So Larry Bird, Jordan, Barkley, Ewing, all those, and Scottie Pippen, East team. And then we were the West team with Karl Malone, David Robinson, myself, John Stockton, Clyde Drexler, and Chris Mullin.

And when he threw that ball up, Bob, you thought they were our enemy because we went at it, and it was some great, great scrimmages. And I have to admit, you know, they got the best of us at the end of one game. But the trash talk was unbelievable.

BOB COSTAS: You know, we're going to see it today with the new format, USA players against international players, and the huge number of great players from outside the U.S. that are now all over the NBA. But this is really the beginning, David Stern's vision. This is really the beginning of emphasizing it and taking the NBA global.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Well, we had never seen players react to us like what happened in Barcelona. They were crying when they fouled us or just hugging us. They were so happy.

BOB COSTAS: Taking selfies like during the game, right?

MAGIC JOHNSON: During the game. It was unbelievable. And they said they never thought they would actually meet their heroes and then actually play against their heroes that they had on their wall. They had the

posters of us.

And so I remember that one time when -- this really blew me away, when the guy fouled Michael Jordan, and he just started bawling --

(Laughter.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: No, no, in the middle of the game, just, "I can't believe it, oh, my God."

(Laughter.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: And I said, Wow, this is unbelievable.

So, you know, it opened the floodgates for guys like this. And I think once the Dream Team was successful, then David Stern's real vision was to make sure international players came into the NBA, and that's what happened after that.

So what a blessing. I never thought I would play in the Olympics, and God blessed me with that opportunity. And so it was truly a dream come true for myself and the other Dream Teamers as well.

BOB COSTAS: Going to get to Pau in just a second, but I got to mention this. The dude from Angola, right? Now, everything's supposed to be cool and you're romping all the games, but Barkley treated it like it was something in a street game, right, a pickup game, and this little skinny dude from Angola got it, right?

MAGIC JOHNSON: We told Charles, Listen, man, we up 80. Let him go, you know, Charles. Charles threw him down on the ground, he -- and we were like, You're going to ruin our goodwill over here, right? We're supposed to be the goodwill ambassadors over here, and you're fouling the guy, and then standing over him too. But Charles dominated. I got to give him credit.

And before we move on to Pau, I just want to give this man some credit. It was two guys who not only did I want to play like him, but also Oscar was the first businessman outside of basketball too. So him and Dave Bing showed me that I could also be a businessman outside of basketball. So I wanted to give you your flowers and love while you sit here as well.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: And, you know, for a long time, you know, Bob Cousy in the early 1950s was very significant. For a long time, for generations, if you said, What's the all-time NBA back court? It's Oscar Robertson and Jerry West.

Before you come along and others come along, it's Oscar and Jerry West. No question about that.

Before we move to Pau, you were talking about Angola, right? So I'm hosting the Olympics in Barcelona, and Marv Albert is calling the games. And the score against Angola was 116 to 48.

So before the game starts, I throw it out to Marv, and I say, Well, it looks like this is a mismatch. And Marv says, Yes, Bob, I just got word that bookmakers in Luanda have taken this one off the board.

(Laughter.)

BOB COSTAS: Which was true.

All right. So, Pau, when the Olympics are in Barcelona, you grew up in Barcelona, you're 12 years old.

PAU GASOL: That's right.

BOB COSTAS: What do you remember about watching that?

PAU GASOL: Man, well, first of all, I just want to say thank you. Thank you, Magic. Thank you, Oscar. Thank you, everybody that came before me, because, I mean, that Dream Team, the work that the NBA has done over the years definitely put a bar that we've never seen really before to international basketball.

I mean, it must be pretty, pretty cool to walk into a tournament where players and opponents are just taking pictures and giving you hugs and kisses and stuff and you think this is easy money.

But, no, but you showed the world how basketball could be played. Obviously, from being from Spain, Europe, we watched NBA basketball, and we all had -- I had all the posters too, you know, in my room. I had a dream, and you guys gave me that dream, even make it more real.

So I just want to say thank you for the inspiration. Thank you for the motivation. Thank you for being great examples and ambassadors of the game because, you know, thanks to that, I was able to believe like, hey, I'm going to play with those guys. I want to play with those guys. I want to be with the best of the best. And I truly believed it.

So, you know, being a 12-year-old, having the Olympic Games in Barcelona was life-changing, you know, for me and many other kids around, around those ages, across all sports. So yeah.

And now all I'm trying to do is also give back to the game, give back to sports, give back to the Olympics, being an IOC member now. I'm going back to Milan tonight after the game.

So, you know, that's what it means to me. That's how much it means to me and how impactful sports are, how impactful the Olympics are, how impactful NBA basketball is. So just truly thankful.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Before Bob jump back in, did you hear what the man just said? I got to get back on the plane and go to Milan tonight. Let's give him a hand. Come on, now. That's dedication right there.

(Applause.)

BOB COSTAS: You got to take a tip from Mike Tirico. He called the Super Bowl on Sunday, and he was hosting from Milan on Monday. Got to be a workhorse.

Sometimes the Olympics would throw NBA teammates together. In 2008, if I recall correctly, you and Kobe went at it, right?

PAU GASOL: That's right, yeah. Yeah, I mean, I remember those Olympics. Obviously, a whole documentary on Netflix was made around it, "The Redeem Team" after having lost in 2002 in the world championships here in Indianapolis, 2004 in Athens.

BOB COSTAS: Yep.

PAU GASOL: And then 2006 in Japan.

So Kobe was a man in a mission. You know, he had a great group of young players around that time with LeBron, D-Wade, Melo, C.P. It was a lot of great, great talent that turned into great Hall of Fame players.

But Kobe came in, and he wanted to send a message. You know, we were the world champions in 2006. We were playing -- it was the first stage group, right? It was the first -- kind of first time that we faced each other. But he still -- he told his teammates, Hey, the first play of the game, I'm going to go run through Pau's chest, and I'm going to put him on his butt.

BOB COSTAS: And did he?

PAU GASOL: Yeah, he did, of course.

(Laughter.)



PAU GASOL: Yeah, he did. And I was like -- I could see him coming. I was like, Is he going to try to avoid me? No, no, right through that.

(Laughter.)

PAU GASOL: And we were teammates. We just had lost, you know, the finals against the Celtics in '08.

But he was sending a message. That's how much he wanted, that's how much he cared. That's how much he wanted his teammates to care as well.

So he set the bar, he set the tone. We faced him in the finals later on into the tournament. We had a much, much closer fight. And it was one of the greatest, I think, FIBA games that we've seen.

BOB COSTAS: Now, tell me if this story is true. They beat you in '08, and then training camp comes later in the year, and you open your locker, and what do you discover?

PAU GASOL: Well, it was an open locker. It was not that I opened the locker. When I walk into my locker first day of training camp, the gold medal -- the gold medal was in my locker, in my chair.

(Laughter.)

BOB COSTAS: Kobe's gold medal.

PAU GASOL: Kobe's gold medal. And he's just been waiting, I don't know for how long. He's just been waiting in his chair in the locker room. Like, you know, he's just been waiting, right, for me to get into the locker room.

So, and there's this gold medal. And I see it, and I was like, This is the Beijing gold medal. What is this? And I turn around, and I see him, and he's, like, looking at me. He's, like, staring at me. I'm like, What are you doing? Like, what do you want me to do? Congratulate you again?

(Laughter.)

PAU GASOL: And he's like, No, no. He said, Hey, we lost. You lost against the Celtics, we lost against the Celtics. You lost against us in Beijing. Let's not make it three times in a row this season, okay?

(Laughter.)

PAU GASOL: So he was just very determined and very intentional about messaging and about being on the same page. Let's not assume that you want to win and I want to

win. Let's just tell each other we want to win and we're going to win. So that's who he was.

BOB COSTAS: With that in mind, there's a famous or infamous story. Toni Kukoc was going to be a Bull. Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen were not happy that Jerry Krause, the GM, had given so much love and so much cash to Kukoc. So they decided that they were going to shut him down in the Olympics, right?

MAGIC JOHNSON: Bob, I had never seen -- you know, before we were on the bus ride, we were laughing, joking. But when we got on that bus ride for Croatia, and the look in Scottie's eyes and the look in Michael Jordan's eyes, and Michael said, I got him first.

And, I said, Whoa. They're serious to shut Toni down. You know, by the time we went out the game and we was up like 50, he only had four points.

BOB COSTAS: Yeah. He shot 2-for-11 and had seven turnovers in the first game.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Oh, my goodness. Michael Jordan, I mean, picked him up from baseline to baseline. Then Scottie Pippen said, Oh, it's my turn. Baseline to baseline.

It was just tremendous effort on both of the parts. Send a message to him, Welcome to the Bulls. But remember who runs the Bulls, okay? It's Scottie and I.

(Laughter.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: And so it was just unbelievable to see that in that game.

BOB COSTAS: That was an early-round game. And in fairness to Kukoc, who's a Hall of Fame player himself, you met again later on. Was it the championship game?

MAGIC JOHNSON: Yeah.

BOB COSTAS: And although you won easily, Kukoc had 16 and nine assists in that game, where they kind of said, all right, we'll play this straight up at that point.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Yeah. And also Coach Daly kind of pulled him aside: Hey, don't forget he's going to be your teammate.

(Laughter.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: So you might want to let up on him a little bit, right? But it was just a great, great moment for us. And, again, the Dream Team and the Olympics was

special.

But, again, we follow guys like Oscar. You know, I watched every Olympics. So it was great just to see just great basketball being played by men who were from the United States and that represented their country just like we all did.

And then I got to say something about Dr. J. I was trying to make a decision about turning pro. So I got his number, and I called him up and said, Doc, hey, what went into your decision to leave college early? Can you give me some advice?

Bob, you know what he told me? Yeah, I'm going to give you some advice, but I'm going to fly you to Philly. You're going to stay at my house for the weekend, and I'm going to talk to you about it there.

I'm a kid at Michigan State with no money, no nothing, and Dr. J going to fly me to Philly to his house?

So thank you, Julius. That was a turning point in my life, and I appreciate that. See, people don't realize these men set so many examples for all of us.

(Applause.)

MAGIC JOHNSON: So I appreciate that. I saw him sitting there; I just wanted to thank him for that moment.

BOB COSTAS: We only have a few more minutes left here, and then all of us will make our way over to the game.

But I'm wondering, we'll start with you, Oscar, you're at an Olympics, a lot of other stuff is going on. Do you have time to sightsee in Rome, and did you intersect with other athletes? Did you meet the young Cassius Clay who won the gold medal in Rome?

OSCAR ROBERTSON: Well, first of all, we took a train over to the Alps all night. Get in there at 8:00 o'clock in the morning, and so Pete Newell said, No, you can't go out. He said, Go in your room and get some rest because we got a game the next morning at 8:00 o'clock.

But the funny thing, I did meet Cassius Clay. And I knew him in Louisville when he first started boxing. And he would go around, and he said, you know, Man, can't nobody beat me, man. He said, I'm the greatest in the world.

I said, Cassius, You better be careful, man. You haven't seen some of these guys.

He said, Don't worry about it, O. He said, Tell them you're great too, by the way.

(Laughter.)

OSCAR ROBERTSON: I said, No -- but, you know, he was so -- the guy, wherever he went, there was a crowd around him all the time. It was unbelievable. They followed him all around, like all day long.

But he did, I mean, he did a great job in the Olympics, you know, for a guy being 17 years old.

BOB COSTAS: Yep.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Wow.

BOB COSTAS: For you youngsters out there, Muhammad Ali was -- until the mid-1960s, he grew up as Cassius Clay, and he was Cassius Clay when he won his Olympic gold medal in Rome in 1960.

Did you want to meet other Olympians outside your sport, and did you get a chance to?

PAU GASOL: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I think the beauty of the Olympics is bringing all these great athletes from all around the world coming together in one place, you know, intersecting at times in dining halls or, you know, around the Village and watching and kind of supporting each other, coming together as countries.

But coming together as a movement, you know, as a sport, you know, putting everything aside, all the differences and just competing and having a healthy, healthy competition.

So, yeah, I love meeting different athletes. I love different athletes to meet me. We're lucky enough to play a sport that a lot of athletes in the world look up to, basketball, and they recognize what we do, and they admire what we do.

So it's great to, again, connect with them there and share experiences, share a moment, and, you know, it's beautiful.

BOB COSTAS: So you would have had a chance to meet Usain Bolt, Michael Phelps, Simone Biles.

PAU GASOL: Yes, yeah, all of them.

BOB COSTAS: All of them?

PAU GASOL: All of them. All of them, and some more. So that's the beauty, again, the beauty of the Olympic movement, and that's why it still drives me to the day to be

a part of it, to recognize that, to protect that, to grow that as well.

BOB COSTAS: You know, this thought occurs to me, and this will have to be where we end it. The Olympics after the Dream Team in 1996 in Atlanta, Muhammad Ali lit the torch. One of the most goosebump-raising moments in the history of sports, any sport.

And then he stuck around and went to a number of events. And you're seeing some of the greatest athletes in the world, including the NBA players, like little kids huddling around him, wanting a picture with him.

There are some people -- we mentioned this about Kareem -- some people that just transcend what they did no matter how great what they did athletically was.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Oh, no question about it. I mean, when I first got to L.A., they were giving him a retirement party at the Forum right across the street. And I told him, I have to be there.

And one of the first fights I seen -- my father used to take us to the theater. It used to be on --

BOB COSTAS: Yeah, pay-per-view.

MAGIC JOHNSON: Pay-per-view. You had to go to the movie theater to watch it.

BOB COSTAS: In the theater, yeah.

MAGIC JOHNSON: So I watched him all the time with my dad, and now I'm going to get a chance to meet him. Oh, man, that was just the greatest moment of my life.

Then I called my father, and he was crying on the phone, knowing that I got a chance to meet his hero as well. And so what a great moment it was for me.

And then to go watch him fight in Vegas at Caesar's Palace, oh, it was great.

OSCAR ROBERTSON: You know, it's really ironic when you get to meet Ali, you're sitting down and talking to him, he's quiet as can be, until he starts telling jokes. He loved to tell you jokes all the time.

But other than that, you know, he said -- man, he said he did all this to build a gate up for himself. You know, I mean, and everyone thought that Joe, the guy from Philadelphia, Joe Frazier, Joe Frazier was a good friend of his. He used to lend Ali money a lot of times. When Ali was broke and didn't have any money, he went to see Joe

Frazier. But that was what he had to do.

I mean, people do not realize what he did for boxing and in the world. And he told me that -- he said he fought this one guy, and the guy kept calling him Cassius when he changed his name to Muhammad Ali. He said, Well, I'm going to whip him good. He said, I'm not going to knock him out right away --

BOB COSTAS: Ernie Terrell, right, wouldn't call him by his name?

OSCAR ROBERTSON: He said, I'm going to stand him up, boom, boom, boom. He said he kept hitting him, boom, boom. What's my name? Boom, boom. Boom, boom.

(Laughter.)

OSCAR ROBERTSON: He said, Don't fall down yet.

(Laughter.)

OSCAR ROBERTSON: But, I mean, he was such a great guy to be around. It's so unbelievable, you know. I mean, I remember the day he passed away, it was a sad day, but, you know, that's the way life is sometimes.

BOB COSTAS: An all-time hero. So many heroes here today. We're getting closer to game time, so it's time to bring the curtain down on this portion of All-Star Weekend. Thank you all for being here, Oscar, Magic, Pau, everybody else in attendance. Enjoy the game, everybody.

(Applause.)

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