

# NCAA 2026 Men's Basketball Championship

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Hinkle Fieldhouse

**Mark Fratto**

**Joey Crawford**

**Mike D'Antoni**

**Mark Few**

**Chamique Holdsclaw**

**Doc Rivers**

**Amar'e Stoudemire**

**Candace Parker**

Naismith Hall of Fame Press Conference

MARK FRATTO: Good afternoon everyone. We're joined right now by the 2026 class of Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. I want to congratulate everyone on the dais for their upcoming induction this year in the class of 2026.

We're going to go through each one of the inductees who we have present here on the dais. They're going to make a statement, and then we'll take questions for each inductee toward the end.

For 39 seasons this inductee of the 2026 class was one of the most recognizable and respected officials in professional basketball. He worked 2,561 regular season games, a record 374 playoff games, 50 NBA Finals games, including every Finals from 1986 to 2015.

He started as a high school basketball official at 16 years of age, never stopped competing at the highest level.

Member of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame class of 2026, Joey Crawford.

(Applause.)

JOEY CRAWFORD: Thank you very much. Thank you.

When I hear that, that last statement is actually what blows you away because, when you start refereeing, you don't



even think of anything like what happened to me. And us. It's just mind boggling.

My first game, I was a kid myself, and it was seventh and eighth grade, I'll never forget it, at St. Leonard's in Philadelphia. I had no idea what to do, no idea, and I'd been chased out of more gyms, people wanting to beat the hell out of me, and now I'm in the Hall of Fame.

I'm a very, very, very, very happy guy. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MARK FRATTO: Before pace and space became the language of the NBA, this individual was already fluent in it. His up tempo ball movement philosophy developed over eight seasons in Italy and refined in Phoenix helped reshape the modern game and how it's played, and he laid the ground work for the analytics era.

A two-time NBA coach of the year, he amassed nearly 1,200 career wins, and was recognized as one of the 50 greatest contributors in EuroLeague history, and now he's a member of the 2026 class of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

Please welcome Mike D'Antoni.

MIKE D'ANTONI: Again, thanks to the Hall of Fame, Jerry Colangelo, and congratulations to the other inductees. It's amazing to be with these people and be with them all weekend.

A lot of things go through your mind, and you could never dream as a kid, which you dream a lot from a small town in West Virginia, to be able to achieve certain things, but this is unimaginable to be here with these people and the road and the journey.

Then you start thinking of all the people that helped you along the way, you're overwhelmed with emotion. To be able to share with my family, my wife Laurel and my son Michael, is beyond anyone's human emotion capability.



Thank you. Thanks again to the Hall of Fame. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MARK FRATTO: This coach took a mid-major program in Spokane and turned it into one of the most consistent winners in college basketball history. He led Gonzaga to 26 consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances, two NCAA National Championship Game appearances and counting.

The winningest active coach by winning percentage, he's a two-time Naismith Coach of the Year, and recently an assistant on the gold medal winning 2024 U.S. Olympic team; now a member of the 2026 Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame class, Coach Mark Few.

(Applause.)

MARK FEW: I too want to thank the Hall of Fame and Jerry Colangelo. This is, like where I come from, a little tiny town in Oregon, it wasn't a dream come true. You couldn't even possibly dream about something like this happening.

The biggest emotion and feeling I've had is this incredible overwhelming flush of just gratitude for everybody every step of the way. As a coach, it always starts and ends with the players, just all the great players. I've had great staff members I've had.

I've got one that's going to be working in a couple hours here that I'm really, really proud of.

Just, man, when you're a coach, you have to have an incredible partner. My wife Marcy and our kids have had to sacrifice so much going on the road and doing all the stuff I do. I absolutely love them more than anything, and they were a huge part of it.

(Applause.)

MARK FRATTO: She arrived as the most decorated player in women's college basketball history, and she delivered immediately as a pro. She won three straight NCAA championships at Tennessee, was the first overall pick in the 1999 WNBA Draft, and won Rookie of the Year before becoming a six-time All-Star and the league's 2002 scoring champion.

An Olympic gold medalist and women's Basketball Hall of Famer, she's now a member of the 2026 class of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. Ladies and gentlemen, Chamique Holdsclaw.

CHAMIQUE HOLDSCLAW: Definitely, I'm just holding so much gratitude to be here amongst Legends, amongst Giants.

It's been such a journey from New York City, Queens, with dreams of being on the big stage, going to the University of Tennessee, and playing for Coach Pat Summitt.

To go into the Hall of Fame with my sister, my friend Candace Parker is, oh, my God, just an unbelievable thing.

Also, the '96 Olympic team. I was a kid chasing these women for autographs. I had their posters on my wall. So this is definitely a full circle moment for me. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MARK FRATTO: 27 seasons, nearly 1,200 regular season wins, one of the most respected coaching voices in professional basketball. He led the Boston Celtics to the 2008 NBA championship and has since built a career defined by leadership, player development, and resilience.

A former All-Star point guard during his playing days. He recently moved into sixth place on the NBA's all time coaching wins list. Now he's a member of the 2026 class of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame, Doc Rivers.

(Applause.)

DOC RIVERS: Just echoing what everybody else is saying. Number one, thing to the Hall, but just the gratitude and just knowing I'm here, but without the players that I've coached, without the coaches that I've coached with, I wouldn't be here.

None of us live in isolation. We all live and breathe with other people, and other people help us get to places we are. So just the gratefulness I have towards everyone else who helped me get here. It's just really an emotional day. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MARK FRATTO: He went straight from high school to the NBA and never stopped proving people wrong. He won Rookie of the Year in 2003, earned six All-Star nods, and became the heart of Phoenix's electrifying seven seconds or less offense.

He came back from microfracture surgery to post three straight 20-plus point seasons, and left the game as one of the most dynamic big men of his era. A member of the 2026 class of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame, Amar'e Stoudemire.

(Applause.)

AMAR'E STOUDEMIRE: Thank you. This is truly amazing. I want to thank the Naismith Family and the Hall of Fame, and all of the committee that voted for me. To be part of the Hall of Fame is a dream come true.

As a kid, you play basketball because you love the sport, and then you begin to try to chase your dreams of becoming the best player you can possibly be, but you don't really imagine being in the Hall of Fame. You just go for what you know and try to figure out how to be the best that you can be. To be now in the Hall of Fame is a dream come true. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

MARK FRATTO: Three championships, two MVPs, one of a kind, she's the only player in WNBA history to win Rookie of the Year and MVP in the same season, and she backed that up with a career that defines greatness: Three titles, finals MVP honors, defensive Player of the Year, and two Olympic gold medals.

She won back-to-back NCAA championships at Tennessee before becoming the face of the WNBA for a generation. Now she's headed to the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame with the class of 2026, Candace Parker.

(Applause.)

CANDACE PARKER: First, I want to congratulate everyone up here. I've been inspired by each and every one of you.

I think just in terms of the Hall of Fame in general, how many greats have worn that orange jacket and just extremely humbled to be standing and sitting before you. I'm really appreciative of the women that -- especially the women that carried the torch.

To my right, Chamique Holdsclaw. I was inspired by her and went to Tennessee because of her.

And all the men that uplifted our game before it was cool. So I'm just grateful for the opportunity that I got a chance to play basketball. So just continuing to lean in and pour into the game. I plan to come back for many years to come to continue to grow the game. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

MARK FRATTO: We have one group and one individual also being honored in the class of 2026 not able to be with

us today.

Two-time WNBA MVP who led the Washington Mystics to the 2019 WNBA title and a two-time first team All-American at the University of Delaware, plus she was a 2016 Olympic gold medalist, Elena Delle Donne will be part of this class as well.

And the 1996 U.S. women's national team, they put women's basketball on the map arguably in 1996. They went 8-0 in Atlanta, winning gold by an average margin of more than 30 points. Coached by Tara VanDerveer and featuring future Hall of Famers, Lisa Leslie, Sheryl Swoopes, Dawn Staley, Rebecca Lobo, and Katrina McClain, the 1996 U.S. Women's National Team will be inducted with this class in the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame.

Let's take a question for Candace first.

**Q. Candace, to watch what the game has become since you played, how does that make you feel to know that you helped lay the ground work for what the sport is now?**

CANDACE PARKER: Again, I think going in with the '96 team, they were Title IX babies. They were a product of Title IX babies. I think this generation right now is a product of the 2000s, the grind, the going overseas, and all that stuff.

It's a pleasure for me to see what we've always seen. We've been screaming from the rooftops that our game is exciting. Now that the world's tuning in, I think they're seeing greatness. I think they're seeing versatility. I think they're seeing hoopers. They're seeing women as hoopers now.

So I think I'm proud to have been a part of it but also proud now as a fan to be able to watch great basketball.

**Q. Candace, I wanted to ask you because Chamique had mentioned it, but many of those '96 basketball players became colleagues and competitors of yours. Who would you recognize or single out from that team?**

CANDACE PARKER: I got to be teammates with Lisa Leslie my rookie year, and I learned so much. We were nicknamed Smooth and Silk by Michael Cooper.

To be able to play with different generations, I feel very lucky because I got to play with the past and the present. I learned so much from her. Dawn Staley, obviously what she's done for the women's game.

I think women's basketball, honestly for a long time, has been playing for the love of it, and now you're seeing the recognition. I think the '96 team is just all of us that finally were able to breakthrough, and because of that, the WNBA exists.

**Q. Candace, we used to see you after Anthony's games at Bradley. Just talk about Anthony's impact and the girl that grew up in Naperville with a basketball in her hand for this moment and how much Anthony kind of paved the way for you and looking after a big brother?**

CANDACE PARKER: He's still my idol. I was the little sister that tagged along to all of his games, and honestly my whole motivation in dunking was to dunk before my brothers did at their age. That's all I wanted to do. So to have bragging rights at the dinner table.

I'm a proud little sister. My two older brothers, they didn't take it easy on me. They challenged me, but they loved me so hard.

I'm super proud watching what he's done, in terms of being on the court a skinny kid from Bradley to be drafted 21st, had the career he had overseas. I'm super proud of him. Yeah, still just little sis.

**Q. Candace, I know you just mentioned Dawn. As someone who's an ambassador for the women's game and also a Hall of Famer now, do you have any thoughts on what happened at the end of the UConn-South Carolina game where Dawn and Geno butted heads?**

CANDACE PARKER: I think in time you see people's colors over and over and over again, and there can be a separation of time with that, but the colors always come to light. I think the colors were shown yesterday on both sides, however you want to take that.

**Q. For Mike and Amar'e, going in together, sitting on the stage together, what does it mean to the two of you?**

MIKE D'ANTONI: Well, probably one of the bigger reasons I'm here is because of the man down there. So it's really special to be able to come in with Amar'e. He and Steve and Shawn and different guys on the team, we had a vision that the Colangelos and myself wanted a way to play, and then they carried it out.

A lot of coaches have already said, without great players, nothing good happens. I had some great players. But

really special to be here with him today, see where he came from. I was there his rookie year as assistant coach, and see the man he is today, pretty cool.

AMAR'E STOUDEMIRE: I would agree to that. I think going into the Hall of Fame with Coach D'Antoni, the way he changed the game, not only for us but for the NBA, and allowing us to really be able to play our full game and reach our full potential.

As basketball players, you always dream of being versatile and being able to express your game in a versatile way. To play that way for those years in Phoenix, because of Mike D'Antoni's innovative mindset for that type of play, allowed us to be very successful. Without that success, I wouldn't be here today.

So to go into the Hall of Fame with Coach D'Antoni is pretty cool.

**Q. Doc, you were an All-Star NBA player and an NBA championship coach. Is there a difference in your mind when you're getting recognized for your success as a player versus your success being a coach?**

DOC RIVERS: That's a good question. Yeah, there's an amazing difference. As a player, it's more like what you've worked on in your craft, and as a coach, the only way you can have success is by bringing a bunch of people together and being successful with them.

Both for me, obviously this is the top of the heap. It's just a big difference from winning as a coach. You have a team that you coached and that you touched, so it's a big difference for sure.

**Q. Congratulations, Chamique and everyone on the dais. Two people not present today, Pat Summitt and your grandmother. What would they say to you today?**

CHAMIQUE HOLDSCLAW: They would be just proud of me because both of them pushed resiliency and pushing through. I think that's been a story of my journey, so they're smiling down on me saying, way to go, girl.

**Q. Coach Few, you talked about how proud you were for Tommy Lloyd coaching his own team to the Final Four. Could you elaborate on that? Did you have an inkling that he was going to stay at Arizona despite all this pursuit from North Carolina?**

MARK FEW: Well, apple doesn't fall far from the tree, I don't think. We had 20 awesome years together. Our families grew up together. He started on my staff as basically a volunteer and kind of a grad aide. He was just

a relentless worker with a really positive spirit. He developed a great feel for the game.

As he progressed, there wasn't any doubt that he was going to be a great head coach. When he took the Arizona thing, I thought it was just a great move on their part to see that as an assistant, and I'm just so happy for him.

When they got over that game last weekend, the joy in our family was just incredible and feelings of pride.

**Q. That was actually going to be my question. I'm going to pivot, and I'm going to ask Joey. Your most memorable game or incident with any of the gentlemen here on stage with you?**

MARK FRATTO: We'll give you guys chances for rebuttals as well.

JOEY CRAWFORD: What do ya go six hours?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's got nothing on me.

JOEY CRAWFORD: It took me a few years to figure it out, but my first few years in the league, I was insane, hitting people with Ts and things like that.

As you get older, you get wiser. The people up here that I worked for, they really were not bad. I mean, Doc talked all the time, but he didn't give you like things to say, now, stop, Doc, and hit him with a T.

Mike would talk and he would go crazy occasionally, but he wouldn't really get over the top.

Amar'e, one day he took the ball to the basket, and he misses a dunk, which wasn't often. That's what he was known for. I'm looking at him, and he starts looking at me and starts screaming, and I said, nobody even touched you. He goes, yeah, I know nobody touched me, but the Coach doesn't know that. If I holler at you, then he'll holler at you and not me.

Those kinds of things during games, these guys, you know that it's competition. You really do. You know that it's competition, and it's not personal. It's not that big of a deal.

**Q. Amar'e, the way that bigs in the NBA have been used has kind of changed over the last decade or so. In terms of kind of what you just said about Coach D'Antoni, do you feel like it's more important for players going into the NBA, bigs, to kind of change their game to become more versatile, or do you feel like teams should kind of make a way to make players**

**fit no matter what their skill set is?**

AMAR'E STOUDEMIRE: I think be who you are, right? If you're a versatile player and you have that type of skill set, then try to be the best that you can at that skill set. Some bigs are 7-footers, and they're better in the paint than playing on the block, and some like myself was better as a versatile player.

So I think whatever your skill set is, try to really become the best at it and then see what happens.

**Q. Coach D'Antoni, congratulations. As someone who grew up watching your teams in the valley, I have many memories of your teams. I'm curious if you have any standout memories from your time in Phoenix or specifically in America West Arena from your time there?**

MIKE D'ANTONI: Everything. I mean, it just started there, the NBA did. Before in Italy, kind of experimented with what we wanted to do and it worked. I had some great players and owe a lot to that country.

But coming to Phoenix was a whole new experience. That place was rocking. Amar'e, it's funny -- just remembering back on Amar'e, so many times I would come to the timeout and just giggle. The rim is still shaking how hard he just dunked the basketball, and guys are like, they're stunned. I'm looking like, oh, my gosh. He was incredible.

And Steve, obviously who's a Hall of Famer and great player, he could throw anything to Amar'e, and he's scooping it up and dunking. Just those memories. Although we did lose against San Antonio a few times, playing those guys and Tim Duncan and the competition there.

But every night in the America West Arena was special, and living in Phoenix was special. I owe a lot to the fans and the team and obviously to the players.

**Q. Coach Rivers, looking at your list of accolades, obviously the 2008 NBA championship stands out. Can you reflect on what that moment was for your whole career and your accolades and especially doing it for an organization like the Boston Celtics?**

DOC RIVERS: I think, obviously, when you win a world championship, you feel like you're in the mob and you're a made man. That's how another coach told me.

But it's more -- Bill Parcells said something years ago about a blood transfusion that you have with your players. Once you do that, it's a connection that you have for the

rest of your life.

We use this word mbutu. It has a big meaning, which I'm not going to get into, but whenever I see people from that time, they always start out with, hey, Coach, mbutu. So you're connected for life.

Yeah, that group and that championship and doing it with the Boston Celtics, who hadn't done it in 17 years at that point, crystallized my career for sure.

**Q. Chamique Holdsclaw, you're a scorer, rebound, passer, could defend multiple positions. What has it been like to see your influence on the next generation of women's basketball, players who can do a lot of those things today?**

CHAMIQUE HOLDSCLAW: It's so humbling because even yesterday when we were up in Phoenix, we had some of the current players come up to me. They're kind of hanging around, and I'm turning around like, oh, my God, Jackie, you're such a great player. She's like I know who you are. Like I wanted to come to Tennessee.

Then just talking to Nneka Ogwumike, and them just showing love to us, that kind of paved the way.

It's just been great watching these young ladies shine, go out there and take up space and fight for what's theirs. I sit back, and I'm just a proud auntie, as I say.

**Q. Amar'e, of course you've done so much in the NBA, but this is the Basketball Hall of Fame, and you had a great career in basketball in general, and you also went to play in Israel and such. When you look back at that career as a whole, what are you most proud of?**

AMAR'E STOUDEMIRE: Wow, great question. I would say I'm most proud of my willingness to persevere because when you're playing in the NBA or basketball in general, it presents challenges. The way you handle those challenges is what shows character.

When you persevere and you're attacking your recovery, you're focusing on becoming better, you're listening to the training staff, you're watching film, you're dedicated to the game of basketball, you're sacrificing for the game of basketball, I think that is what I'm most proud of is just having that willingness to say, you know what, I'm going to do whatever it takes to get back to 100 percent.

I'm going to do whatever it takes to be in the best shape before training camp to get off to a good start to compete for a championship.

All these things adds up, and it's the end result.

**Q. I'm going to ask Joey, most people like to be liked, but generally you're the least liked guy in the arena.**

JOEY CRAWFORD: Thank you.

**Q. How were you able to deal with that, or did it bother you at times?**

JOEY CRAWFORD: I'd be lying if I said it didn't bother me. Yes, it did, but it's the job. When you walk out on the court, half are going to like you, half are going to hate you, and you've just got to take that particular game, go out, call the plays, do it to the best of your ability, stay in shape.

My father was a baseball umpire, and he said to me when I first started doing the NBA games, he said, listen, I don't know anything about your sport, nothing. He said, but just go out there and work hard. These guys know when you work hard, and they'll look the other way if you're working hard.

But you understand that as a pro ref that most people are going to dislike you. But like I said before, I think it's just -- it's a professional link, and that's the greatest thing about it. They know us; we know them. So usually when the 48 minutes are over, it's over. Now you go to the next game because everybody's got a next game in the NBA.

Great question, by the way.

**Q. For Mike and Doc, do you have a favorite interaction with Joey story from your time on the sidelines?**

MIKE D'ANTONI: Joey said, I think he said two years and then you medaled out. I was like, yeah, okay.

JOEY CRAWFORD: Maybe it was 22.

MIKE D'ANTONI: He forgot the zero (laughter).

You knew with Joey, especially if you were away from home, you had a chance to win because he's going to call the game the way it should be called, whether it's home or away.

Not one specific time -- probably have a couple that I can't really say here, but he's right. I had a referee one time where he was refereeing a game of mine and we were playing Golden State at Golden State.

The guy throws the ball back in bounds, and he was out of bounds six feet. He touched the ground, grabbed the ball,

and he's out six feet. He's sitting on the baseline looking right at it. He doesn't call it.

Obviously we went ballistic and went crazy and all that. Two or three days later, he comes up to me in another game and goes -- he's refereeing. He goes, Mike, I'm really sorry I blew that call. I had no idea. I go that was you? Like you have no idea. With Joey, you go mad, you go crazy, next day you have no idea who that referee was that you got mad at.

It's been a great relationship, great guy. You know what, it's people like him that makes this game great. He's a big personality and a big reason that the NBA is flourishing.

DOC RIVERS: I agree with Mike about the two years and mellowing out. I don't remember that part. I'm fortunate because I had Joey as a player and as a coach.

I remember one thing as a player, one thing that's hilarious, it was Michael's rookie year, Joey.

JOEY CRAWFORD: Were you guarding him?

DOC RIVERS: I was guarding him, and I thought that he traveled, and I made the comment to you.

JOEY CRAWFORD: NBA refs don't call that.

DOC RIVERS: Exactly.

JOEY CRAWFORD: That's a joke.

(Laughter).

DOC RIVERS: I said, you didn't give me that call when I was a rookie, and Joey says, you were not that good, and it shut me up completely. I had nothing else to say.

I thought Joey was fantastic about understanding the room and the person he was dealing with and how to get out of a situation. You got out of that situation because I had no rebuttal. I enjoyed you.

MIKE D'ANTONI: One quick story. We're in Phoenix, and Joey's refereeing. And my brother who is a rookie sitting on my bench, coached Marshall for a long time. So Joey, my brother says something to him, Dan, he says something to Joey, and Joey goes over and goes, Bam, Ts him up, turns to the table and goes, technical foul on -- on -- on Mike's brother.

(Laughter).

My brother still tells that story.

JOEY CRAWFORD: That wasn't good.

**Q. You, Jerry Colangelo, so many people had so much to do about the basketball culture in Arizona growing. How have you seen the basketball culture grow in Phoenix?**

MIKE D'ANTONI: Phoenix has always had a great culture, first of all. Jerry Colangelo is a big part of that, huge part. Through Danny Ainge, Paul Westphal, they had some great teams, Barkley, I could go on and on.

I came in and it was a little bit down. We drafted Amar'e, and for whatever reason -- oh, Dallas gave us Steve Nash. They've done that a couple times in their career, giving people away.

(Laughter).

Just a little bit. It just happened together. You plan on it, but you're surprised when it happens that fast that good.

I would go in with Bryan Colangelo, who was a fantastic GM for me, and I would go in -- we started off 31-4. I had to convince Amar'e to play the center. I had to convince Shawn to play the 4. They weren't the happiest campers in the world.

I had coaches telling me you're going to destroy their career. You're going to lose. Come January you're going to run their legs out, and you're going to be the laughing stock. It's like, well, that's just the way it's going to be then.

I would go in. We started at 31-4, and we just looked at each other in his office and just go, wow, this is amazing. We didn't know that. We hoped it.

Again, just reiterating, great players do great things, and we just let them play, and they do great things.

MARK FRATTO: We want to thank and congratulate members of the 2026 Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. Thank you for joining us, everybody.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports