

A Tribute

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Special Edition
**Shaquille
Says Good-Bye**

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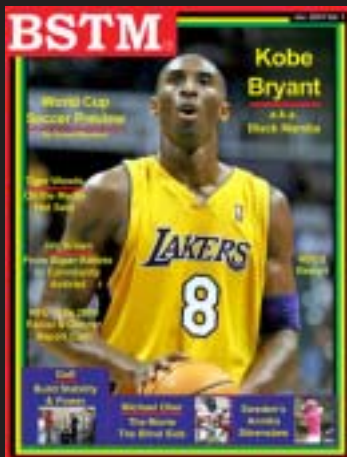


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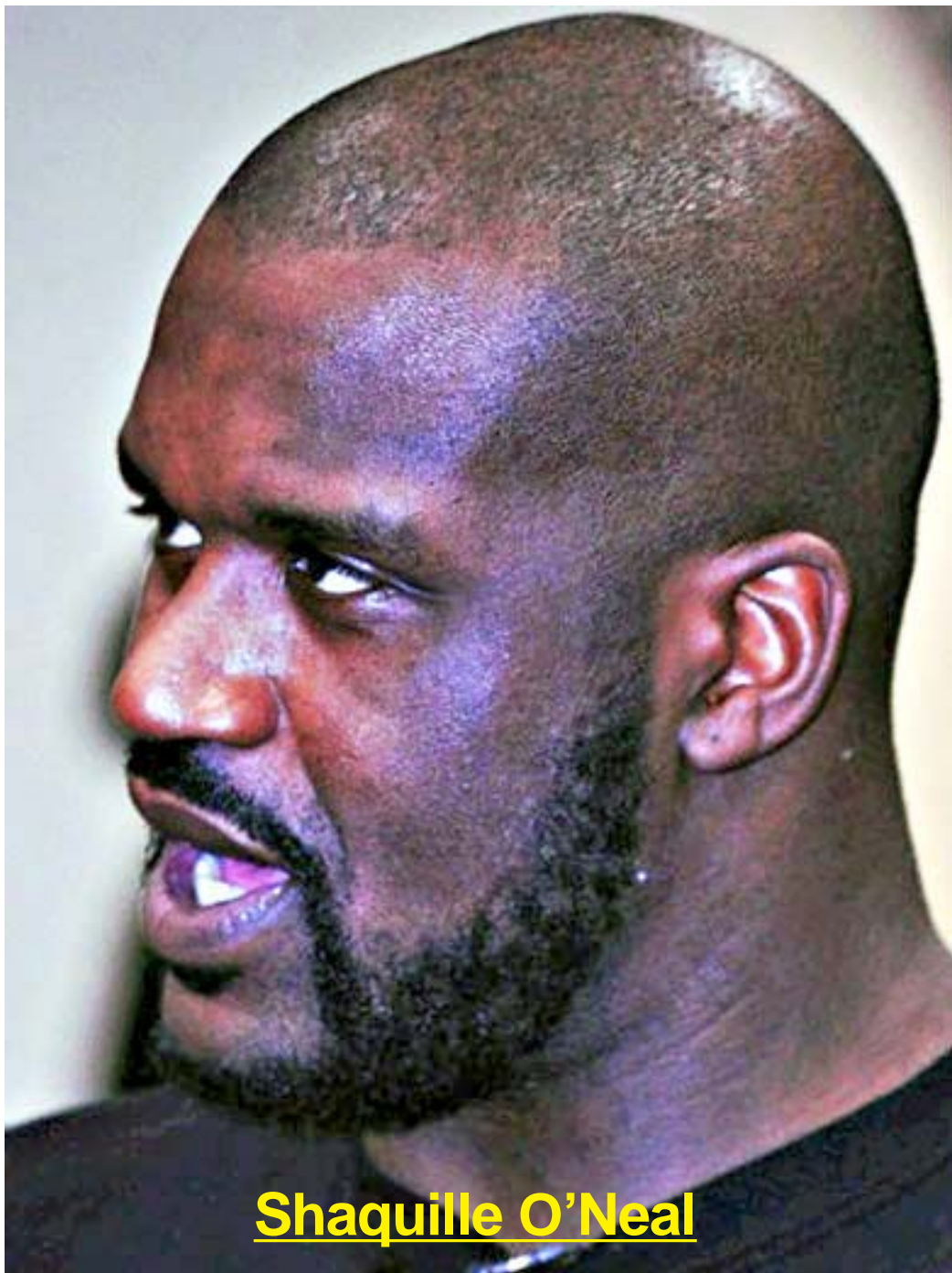
Shaquille “Shaq” O’Neal

The Beginnings

Shaquille “Shaq” O’Neal was born in Newark, New Jersey. He remains estranged from his biological father, Joseph Toney of Newark. Toney, who was once an All-State guard in high school, who was offered a basketball scholarship to play at Seton Hall, struggled with drug addiction and was, by 1973, imprisoned for drug possession when O’Neal was an infant. Upon his release, Toney did not resume a place in O’Neal’s life and instead, agreed to relinquish his parental visitation rights to O’Neal’s stepfather, Phillip A. Harrison, a career Army Reserve sergeant, and his mother, Lucille (O’Neal). O’Neal and Toney have never spoken, and O’Neal has expressed no interest in establishing a relationship. On his 1994 rap album, *Shaq Fu: The Return*, O’Neal voiced his feelings of disdain for Toney in the song “Biological Didn’t Bother”, referring to Harrison with the verse, “Phil is my father.”

O’Neal credits the Boys and Girls Club of America in his hometown of Newark, New Jersey, with giving him a safe place to play and keeping him off the streets. “It gave me something to do,” he said. “I’d just go there to shoot. I didn’t even play on a team.” He led his Robert G. Cole High School team, from San Antonio, Texas, to a 68–1 record during his two years there, and helped the team win the State championship during his senior year. His 791 rebounds during the 1989 season remains a State record for a player in any classification.

After graduating from high school, O’Neal studied business at Louisiana State University (LSU). He had first met Dale Brown, LSU’s men’s basketball coach, years earlier in Europe. O’Neal’s stepfather was stationed on a U.S. Army base at Wildflecken, West Germany. His godfather, a First Sergeant, was at Brooke Army

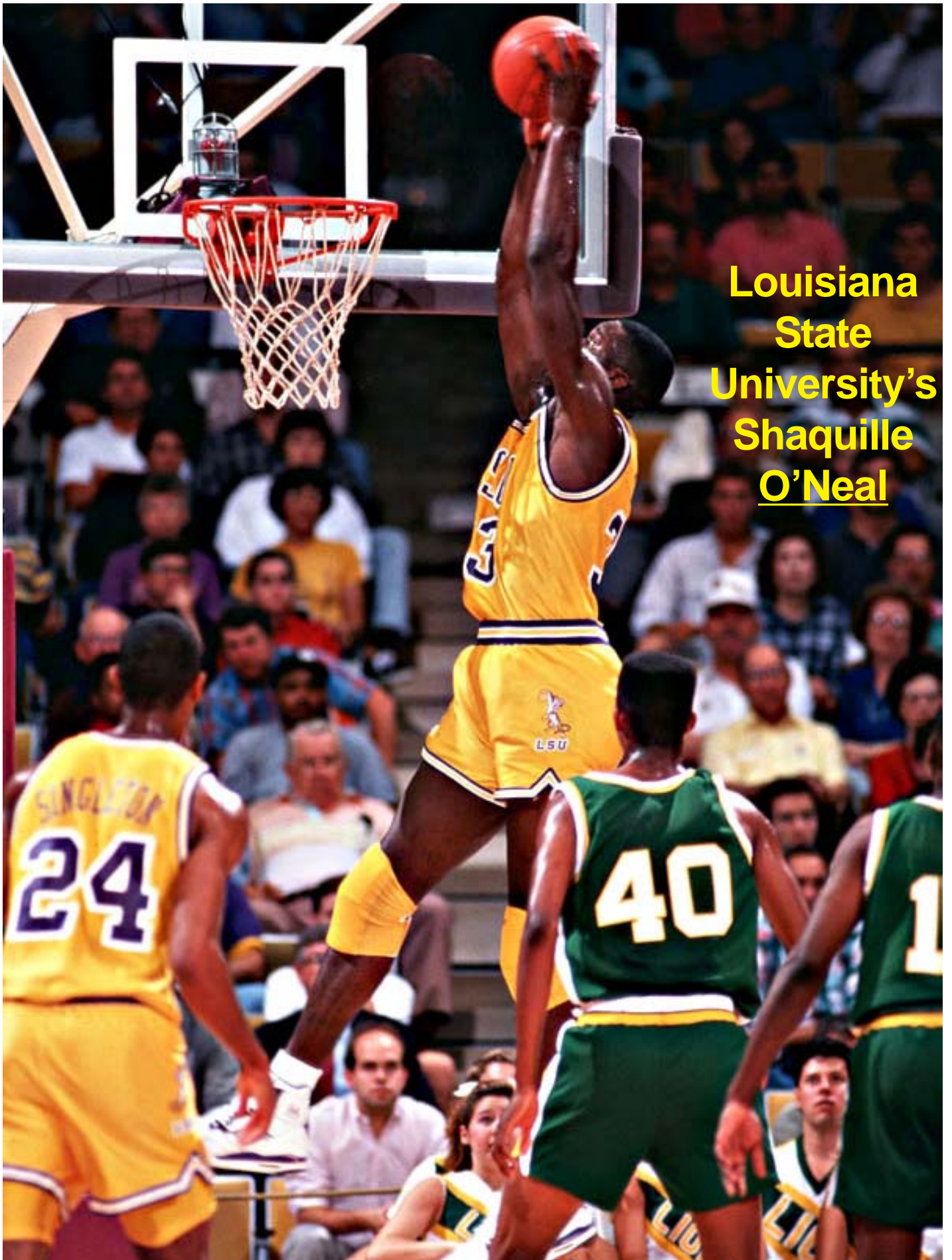


Shaquille O’Neal

Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, where O’Neal attended Fulda American High School.

While playing for Brown at LSU, O’Neal was a two-time All-American, two-time Southeastern Conference (SEC) Player of the Year. He received the Adolph Rupp Trophy as NCAA Men’s Basketball Player of the Year in 1991.

O’Neal left LSU early to pursue his NBA career, but returned to school in 2000. He received a Bachelor of Arts in General Studies. He was later inducted into the LSU Hall of Fame.



Louisiana
State
University's
Shaquille
O'Neal

Shaquille “Shaq” O’Neal

Regular Season and Playoffs Career Statistics

Shaquille O’Neal, nicknamed “Shaq,” stands 7 feet 1 inch tall and weighs approximately 325 pounds. He was one of the heaviest players ever to play in the NBA. Throughout his 19-year career, O’Neal used his size and strength to overpower opponents for points and rebounds.

Following a standout career at Louisiana State University, O’Neal was drafted by the Orlando Magic with the first overall pick in the 1992 NBA Draft. He quickly became one of the top centers in the league, winning Rookie of the Year in 1992–93, and later leading his team to the 1995 NBA Finals. After four years with the Magic, O’Neal signed as a free agent with the Los Angeles Lakers. He won three consecutive championships, playing alongside Kobe Bryant, in 2000, 2001, and 2002. His relationship with Bryant eventually declined into a feud. He was traded to the Miami Heat in 2004, and his fourth NBA Championship followed in 2006. Midway through the 2007-2008 season, he was traded to the Phoenix Suns. After a season-and-a-half with the Suns, O’Neal was traded to the Cleveland Cavaliers, where he played alongside LeBron James in the 2009–10 season. He played for the Boston



O’Neal’s Regular Season Career Statistics

Legend

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|-----|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| GP | Games played | GS | Games started | MPG | Minutes per game |
| FG% | Field-goal percentage | 3P% | 3-point field-goal percentage | FT% | Free-throw percentage |
| RPG | Rebounds per game | APG | Assists per game | SPG | Steals per game |
| BPG | Blocks per game | PPG | Points per game | Bold | Career high |

Regular season

| Year | Team | GP | GS | MPG | FG% | 3P% | FT% | RPG | APG | SPG | BPG | PPG |
|----------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| 1992–93 | Orlando | 81 | 81 | 37.9 | .562 | .000 | .592 | 13.9 | 1.9 | .7 | 3.5 | 23.4 |
| 1993–94 | Orlando | 81 | 81 | 39.8 | .599 | .000 | .554 | 13.2 | 2.4 | .9 | 2.8 | 29.3 |
| 1994–95 | Orlando | 79 | 79 | 37.0 | .583 | .000 | .533 | 11.4 | 2.7 | .9 | 2.4 | 29.3 |
| 1995–96 | Orlando | 54 | 52 | 36.0 | .573 | .500 | .487 | 11.0 | 2.9 | .6 | 2.1 | 26.6 |
| 1996–97 | L.A. Lakers | 51 | 51 | 38.1 | .557 | .000 | .484 | 12.5 | 3.1 | .9 | 2.9 | 26.2 |
| 1997–98 | L.A. Lakers | 60 | 57 | 36.3 | .584 | .000 | .527 | 11.4 | 2.4 | .6 | 2.4 | 28.3 |
| 1998–99 | L.A. Lakers | 49 | 49 | 34.8 | .576 | .000 | .540 | 10.7 | 2.3 | .7 | 1.7 | 26.3 |
| 1999–00 | L.A. Lakers | 79 | 79 | 40.0 | .574 | .000 | .524 | 13.6 | 3.8 | .5 | 3.0 | 29.7 |
| 2000–01 | L.A. Lakers | 74 | 74 | 39.5 | .572 | .000 | .513 | 12.7 | 3.7 | .6 | 2.8 | 28.7 |
| 2001–02 | L.A. Lakers | 67 | 66 | 36.1 | .579 | .000 | .555 | 10.7 | 3.0 | .6 | 2.0 | 27.2 |
| 2002–03 | L.A. Lakers | 67 | 66 | 37.8 | .574 | .000 | .622 | 11.1 | 3.1 | .6 | 2.4 | 27.5 |
| 2003–04 | L.A. Lakers | 67 | 67 | 36.8 | .584 | .000 | .490 | 11.5 | 2.9 | .5 | 2.5 | 21.5 |
| 2004–05 | Miami | 73 | 73 | 34.1 | .601 | .000 | .461 | 10.4 | 2.7 | .5 | 2.3 | 22.9 |
| 2005–06 | Miami | 59 | 58 | 30.6 | .600 | .000 | .469 | 9.2 | 1.9 | .4 | 1.8 | 20.0 |
| 2006–07 | Miami | 40 | 39 | 28.4 | .591 | .000 | .422 | 7.4 | 2.0 | .2 | 1.4 | 17.3 |
| 2007–08 | Miami | 33 | 33 | 28.6 | .581 | .000 | .494 | 7.8 | 1.4 | .6 | 1.6 | 14.2 |
| 2007–08 | Phoenix | 28 | 28 | 28.7 | .611 | .000 | .513 | 10.6 | 1.7 | .5 | 1.2 | 12.9 |
| 2008–09 | Phoenix | 75 | 75 | 30.0 | .609 | .000 | .595 | 8.4 | 1.7 | .6 | 1.4 | 17.8 |
| 2009–10 | Cleveland | 53 | 53 | 23.4 | .566 | .000 | .496 | 6.7 | 1.5 | .3 | 1.2 | 12.0 |
| <u>2010–11</u> | <u>Boston</u> | <u>37</u> | <u>36</u> | <u>20.3</u> | <u>.667</u> | <u>.000</u> | <u>.557</u> | <u>4.8</u> | <u>0.7</u> | <u>.4</u> | <u>1.1</u> | <u>9.2</u> |
| Career | | 1,207 | 1,197 | 34.7 | .582 | .045 | .527 | 10.9 | 2.5 | .6 | 2.3 | 23.7 |
| All-Star | | 12 | 9 | 22.8 | .551 | .000 | .452 | 8.1 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 1.6 | 16.8 |



**Shaquille
O'Neal**

Celtics in the 2010–11 season before retiring.

O'Neal's individual accolades include the 1999–00 Most Valuable Player (MVP) Award, the 1992–93 NBA Rookie of the Year Award, 15 All-Star game selections, three All-Star Game MVP Awards, three Finals MVP Awards, two scoring titles, 14 All-NBA Team selections, and three NBA All-Defensive Team selections. He is one of only three players to win NBA MVP, All-Star game MVP and Finals MVP Awards in the same year (2000). The other players are Willis Reed in 1970 and Michael Jordan in 1996 and 1998. He ranks 5th all-time in points scored, 5th in field goals, 12th in rebounds, and 7th in blocks.

O'Neal established himself as an overpowering low post

presence, putting up career averages of 23.7 points on .582 field goal accuracy, 10.9 rebounds and 2.3 blocks per game (as of April 2011).

At 7 feet 1 inch, approximately 325 pounds and shoe size 23, he became famous for his physical stature. His physical frame gave him a power advantage over most opponents. His "drop step," (called the "Black Tornado" by O'Neal) in which he posted up a defender, turned around and, using his elbows for leverage, powered past him for a very high-percentage slam dunk, proved an effective offensive weapon. In addition, he frequently used a right-handed jump hook shot to score near the basket. The ability to dunk contributed to his career field goal accuracy of .582, the second highest field goal percentage of all time. He led the NBA in field goal percentage 10 times, breaking Wilt Chamberlain's record of nine.

Opposing teams often used up many fouls on O'Neal, reducing the playing time of their own big men. His imposing physical presence inside the paint caused dramatic changes in many teams' offensive and defensive strategies.

O'Neal's primary weakness was his free-throw shooting, with a career average of 52.7%. He once missed all 11 free throws in a game against the Seattle SuperSonics on December 8, 2000, a record. In hope of exploiting his poor foul shooting, opponents often committed intentional fouls against him, a tactic known as "Hack-a-Shaq." He was the third-ranked player all-time in free throws taken, having attempted 11,252 free-throws in 1,207 games through the 2010–11 season. On December 25, 2008, O'Neal missed his 5,000th free throw, becoming the second player in NBA history to do so, along with Chamberlain.

On his own half of the hardwood, O'Neal was a capable defender, named three times to the All-NBA Second Defensive Team. His presence intimidated opposing players shooting near the basket, and he averaged 2.3 blocked shots per game over the course of his career.

The Los Angeles Lakers announced plans to retire his number, 34, possibly before his first NBA Hall of Fame ballot. On June 1, 2011, O'Neal announced his retirement via social media.

O'Neal's Playoffs Career Statistics

Playoffs

| Year | Team | GP | GS | MPG | FG% | 3P% | FT% | RPG | APG | SPG | BPG | PPG |
|--------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| 1994 | Orlando | 3 | 3 | 42.0 | .511 | .000 | .471 | 13.3 | 2.3 | .7 | 3.0 | 20.7 |
| 1995 | Orlando | 21 | 21 | 38.3 | .577 | .000 | .571 | 11.9 | 3.3 | .9 | 1.9 | 25.7 |
| 1996 | Orlando | 12 | 12 | 38.3 | .606 | .000 | .393 | 10.0 | 4.6 | .8 | 1.2 | 25.8 |
| 1997 | L.A. Lakers | 9 | 9 | 36.2 | .514 | .000 | .610 | 10.6 | 3.2 | .6 | 1.9 | 26.9 |
| 1998 | L.A. Lakers | 13 | 13 | 38.5 | .612 | .000 | .503 | 10.2 | 2.9 | .5 | 2.6 | 30.5 |
| 1999 | L.A. Lakers | 8 | 8 | 39.4 | .510 | .000 | .466 | 11.6 | 2.3 | .9 | 2.9 | 26.6 |
| 2000 | L.A. Lakers | 23 | 23 | 43.5 | .566 | .000 | .456 | 15.4 | 3.1 | .6 | 2.4 | 30.7 |
| 2001 | L.A. Lakers | 16 | 16 | 42.3 | .555 | .000 | .525 | 15.4 | 3.2 | .4 | 2.4 | 30.4 |
| 2002 | L.A. Lakers | 19 | 19 | 40.8 | .529 | .000 | .649 | 12.6 | 2.8 | .5 | 2.5 | 28.5 |
| 2003 | L.A. Lakers | 12 | 12 | 40.1 | .535 | .000 | .621 | 14.8 | 3.7 | .6 | 2.8 | 27.0 |
| 2004 | L.A. Lakers | 22 | 22 | 41.7 | .593 | .000 | .429 | 13.2 | 2.5 | .3 | 2.8 | 21.5 |
| 2005 | Miami | 13 | 13 | 33.2 | .558 | .000 | .472 | 7.8 | 1.9 | .4 | 1.5 | 19.4 |
| 2006 | Miami | 23 | 23 | 33.0 | .612 | .000 | .374 | 9.8 | 1.7 | .5 | 1.5 | 18.4 |
| 2007 | Miami | 4 | 4 | 30.3 | .559 | .000 | .333 | 8.5 | 1.3 | .2 | 1.5 | 18.8 |
| 2008 | Phoenix | 5 | 5 | 30.0 | .440 | .000 | .500 | 9.2 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 2.6 | 15.2 |
| 2010 | Cleveland | 11 | 11 | 22.1 | .516 | .000 | .660 | 5.5 | 1.4 | 0.2 | 1.2 | 11.5 |
| 2011 | <u>Boston</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>6.0</u> | <u>.500</u> | <u>.000</u> | <u>.000</u> | <u>.0</u> | <u>.5</u> | <u>0.5</u> | <u>.0</u> | <u>1.0</u> |
| Career | | 216 | 214 | 37.5 | .563 | .000 | .504 | 11.6 | 2.7 | .5 | 2.1 | 24.3 |

Shaquille “Shaq” O’Neal

NBA Career

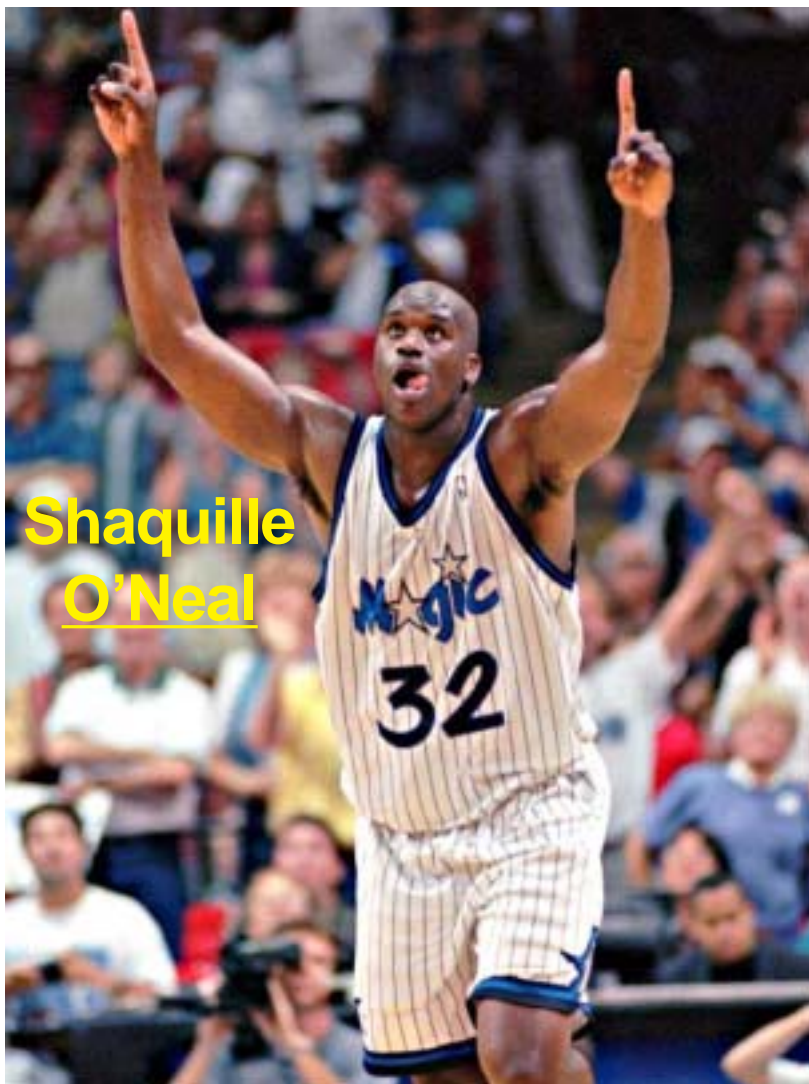
Orlando Magic (1992–1996)

The Orlando Magic drafted O’Neal with the 1st overall pick in the 1992 NBA Draft. During that summer, prior to moving to Orlando, he spent a significant amount of time in Los Angeles under the tutelage of Hall of Famer Magic Johnson. During his rookie season, O’Neal averaged 23.4 points on 56.2% shooting, 13.9 rebounds, and 3.5 blocks per game for the season. He was named the 1993 NBA Rookie of the Year and became the first rookie to be voted an All-Star starter since Michael Jordan in 1985. The Magic finished 41–41, winning 20 more games than the previous season. However, the team ultimately missed the playoffs by virtue of a tie-breaker with the Indiana Pacers.

In his second season, Brian Hill was the coach. O’Neal improved his scoring average to 29.4 points (second in the league to David Robinson), while leading the NBA in field goal percentage at 60%. On November 20, 1993, against the New Jersey Nets, he registered the first triple-double of his career, recording 24 points to go along with career highs of 28 rebounds and 15 blocks. He was voted into the All-Star game. He also made the All-NBA 3rd Team. Teamed with newly-drafted Anfernee “Penny” Hardaway, the Magic finished with a record of 50–32, and made the playoffs for the first time in franchise history. In his first playoff series, O’Neal averaged 20.7 points and 13.3 rebounds in a losing effort as the Magic lost every game to the Indiana Pacers.

In his third season, O’Neal’s 29.3 point average led the NBA in scoring. He finished second in MVP voting to David Robinson. He was voted into his third straight All-Star Game along with Hardaway. They formed one of the league’s top duos, and helped Orlando to a 57–25 record and the Atlantic Division crown. The Magic won their first ever playoff series against the Boston Celtics in the 1995 NBA Playoffs. They then defeated the Chicago Bulls in the conference semi-finals. After beating Reggie Miller’s Indiana Pacers, the Magic reached the NBA Finals, facing the defending NBA Champion Houston Rockets. O’Neal played well in his first Finals appearance, averaging 28 points on 59.5% shooting, 12.5 rebounds, and 6.3 assists. Despite this, the Rockets, led by future Hall-of-Famers Hakeem Olajuwon and Clyde Drexler, swept the series in four games.

O’Neal was injured for a great deal of the 1995–96 season, missing 28 games. He averaged 26.6 points and 11 rebounds per game, made the All-NBA 3rd Team, and played in his 4th All-Star Game. Despite his injuries, the Magic finished with a regular season record of 60–22, second in the Eastern conference to the Chicago Bulls, who finished with an NBA record 72 wins. Orlando easily defeated the Detroit Pistons and the Atlanta Hawks in the



Shaquille
O’Neal

first two rounds of the 1996 NBA Playoffs. However, they were no match for Jordan’s Bulls, who swept them in the Eastern Conference Finals.

Los Angeles Lakers (1996–2004)

O’Neal became a free agent after the 95–96 NBA season. In the summer of 1996, he was named to the United States Olympic Basketball Team. He was later part of the Gold Medal winning team at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia. On the team’s first full day at the Olympics in Atlanta, it was announced that O’Neal would join the Los Angeles Lakers on a seven-year, \$121 million contract.

The Lakers won 56 games during the 1996–97 season. O’Neal averaged 26.2 points and 12.5 rebounds in his first season with

Los Angeles. However, he again missed over 30 games due to injury. The Lakers made the playoffs, but were eliminated by the Utah Jazz in five games.

The following season (1997-98), he averaged 28.3 points and 11.4 rebounds. He also led the league with a 58.4 field goal percentage, the first of five consecutive seasons in which he did so. The Lakers finished the season 61–21, first in the Pacific Division, and were the second seed in the Western Conference during the 1998 NBA Playoffs. After defeating the Portland Trail Blazers and Seattle SuperSonics in the first two rounds, the Lakers again fell to the Jazz, this time in a 4–0 sweep.

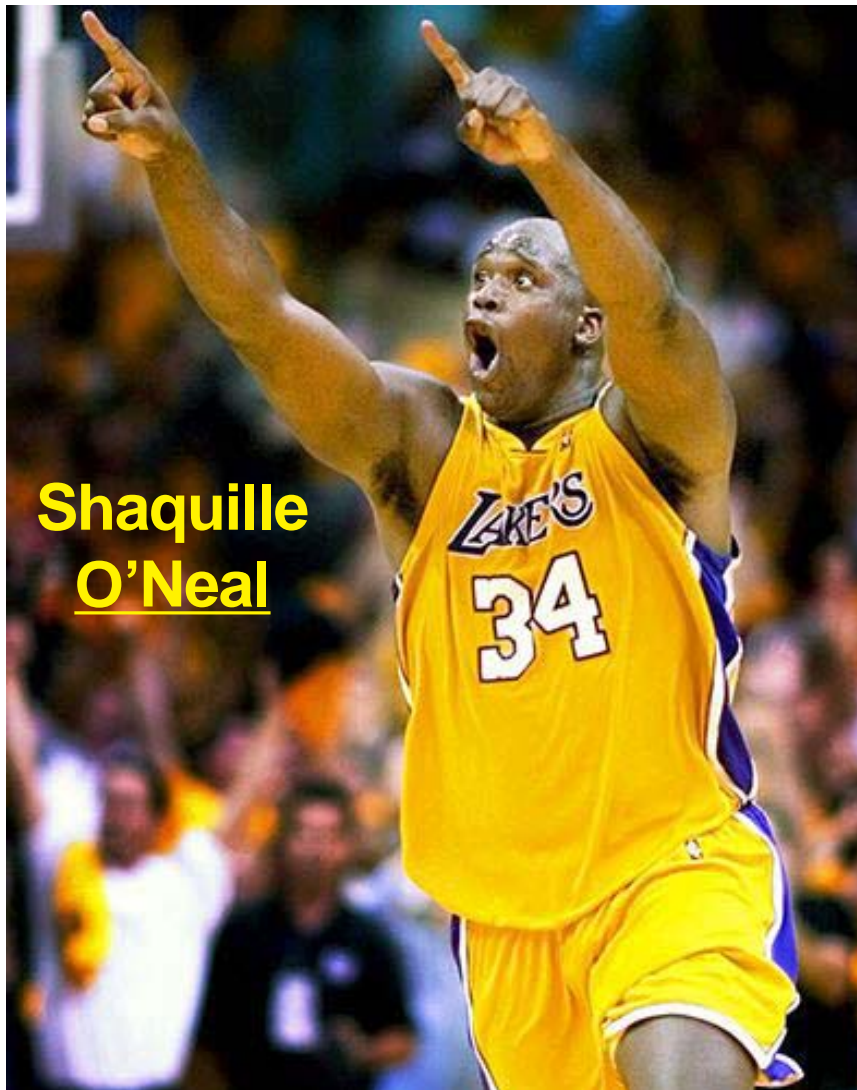
With the tandem of O’Neal and teenage superstar Kobe Bryant, expectations for the Lakers increased. However, personnel changes were a source of instability during the 1998–99 season. Long-time Laker point guard Nick Van Exel was traded to the Denver Nuggets. His former backcourt partner, Eddie Jones, was packaged with backup center Elden Campbell for Glen Rice to satisfy a demand by O’Neal for a shooter. Coach Del Harris was fired, and former Lakers forward Kurt Rambis finished the season as head coach. The Lakers finished with a 31–19 record during the lockout-shortened season. Although they made the playoffs, they were swept by the San Antonio Spurs, led by Tim Duncan and David Robinson in the second round of the Western Conference playoffs. The Spurs would go on to win their first NBA Title that year.

In 1999, the Lakers hired Phil Jackson as head coach, and the team’s fortunes soon changed. Using Jackson’s triangle offense, O’Neal and Bryant enjoyed tremendous success, leading the Lakers to three consecutive titles (2000, 2001, and 2002). O’Neal was named MVP of the NBA Finals all three times, and had the highest scoring average for a center in NBA Finals history.

He was also voted the 1999–2000 regular season Most Valuable Player, one vote short of becoming the first unanimous MVP in NBA history. O’Neal also won the scoring title, while finishing second in rebounds and third in blocked shots. Jackson’s influence resulted in a new found commitment by O’Neal to defense, resulting in his first All-Defensive Team selection

(Second-Team) in 2000.

In the 2001 NBA Finals against the 76ers, O’Neal fouled out in Game 3 backing over Dikembe Mutombo, the 2000–2001 Defensive Player of the Year. “I didn’t think the best defensive player in the game would be flopping like that. It’s a shame that the referees buy into that,” O’Neal said. “I wish he’d stand up and play me like a man instead of flopping and crying every time I back him down.



A month before the 2001–02 season’s training camp, O’Neal had corrective surgery for a claw toe deformity in the smallest toe of his left foot. He was ready for the start of the regular season, but the toe frequently bothered him. For the season, he averaged 27.2 points and 10.7 rebounds, excellent statistics but below his career average. After the season, he told friends that he did not want another season of limping and being in virtually constant pain from his big right toe. His trademark mobility and explosion had been absent. The corrective options ranged from reconstructive surgery on the toe to rehabilitation exercises with more shoe inserts and anti-inflammation medication. He was already wary of the long-term damage his frequent consumption of these medications might have. He did not want to rush a decision with his

career potentially at risk.

O’Neal missed the first 12 games of the 2002–2003 season recovering from toe surgery. The Lakers started the season with a record of 11–19. After the Lakers fell to the fifth seed and failed to reach the Finals in 2003, the team made a concerted off-season effort to improve its roster. They sought the free-agent services of forward Karl Malone and aging guard Gary Payton, but due to salary cap restrictions, could not offer either one nearly as much money as they could have made with some other teams. O’Neal assisted in the recruitment efforts and personally persuaded both men to join the squad. Ultimately, both signed, each forgoing larger salaries in favor of a chance to win an NBA Championship, which neither had accomplished in his career.

At the beginning of the 2003–04 season, O’Neal wanted a contract extension with a pay raise on his remaining three years for \$30 million. The Lakers had hoped O’Neal would take less money

due to his age, physical conditioning, and games missed due to injuries. It is widely believed that there was also concern about O'Neal's relationship with Kobe Bryant, as the two had exchanged public barbs during the off-season. With Bryant scheduled to become a free agent at the end of that season, many believed he would not choose to remain with the Lakers as O'Neal's sidekick.

The Lakers lost to the Detroit Pistons in the 2004 NBA Finals. After the series, O'Neal sought a trade. The Miami Heat showed interest and eventually the two clubs agreed.

Miami Heat (2004–2008)

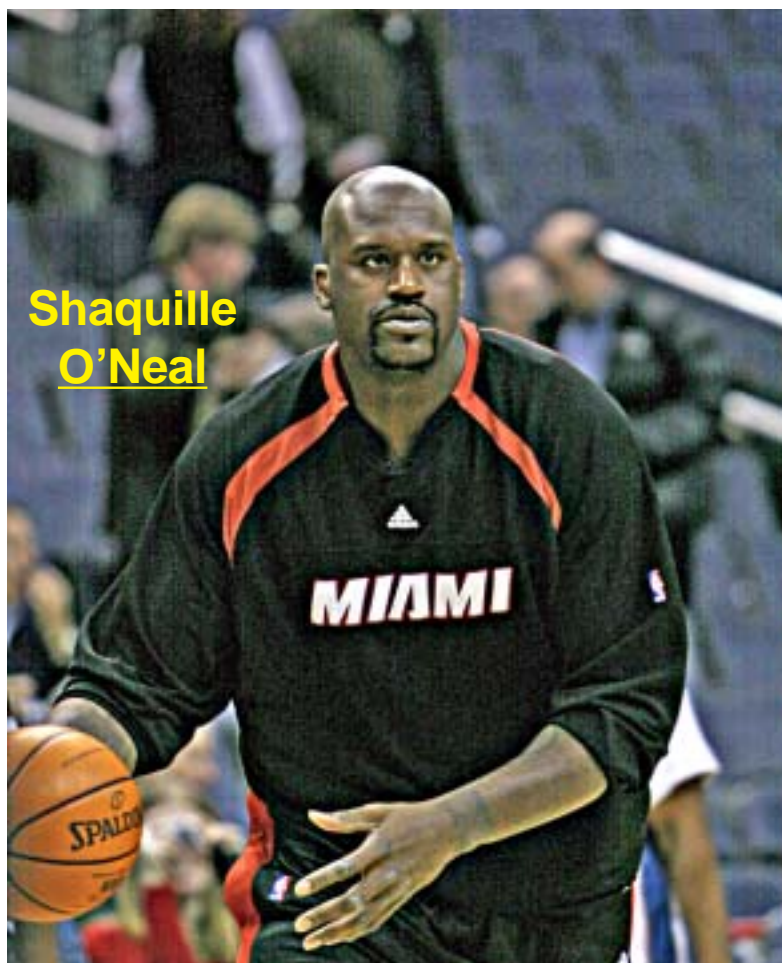
On July 14, 2004, O'Neal was traded to the Miami Heat for Caron Butler, Lamar Odom, Brian Grant and a future first-round draft choice. He reverted from (his Lakers jersey) number 34 to number 32, which he had worn while playing for the Magic. Upon signing with the Heat, O'Neal promised the fans that he would bring a championship to Miami. He claimed that one of the main reasons for wanting to be traded to Miami was because of their up-and-coming star, Dwyane Wade. With him on board, the new-look Heat surpassed expectations, claiming the best record in the Eastern Conference. He averaged 22.9 ppg and 10.4 rpg, made his 12th consecutive All-Star Team, and made the All-NBA 1st-Team. Despite being hobbled by a deep thigh bruise, O'Neal led the Heat to the Eastern Conference Finals and a Game 7 against the defending champion Detroit Pistons, losing by a narrow margin. Afterwards, O'Neal and others criticized Heat head coach Stan Van Gundy for not calling enough plays for O'Neal. He also narrowly lost the 2004–05 MVP Award to Phoenix Suns guard Steve Nash in one of the closest votes in NBA history.

In August 2005, O'Neal signed a 5-year-extension with the Heat for \$100 million. Supporters applauded O'Neal's willingness to take what amounted to a pay cut and the Heat's decision to secure O'Neal's services for the long term. They contended that he was worth more than \$20 million per year, particularly given that lesser players earned almost the same amount.

In the second game of the 2005–06 season, O'Neal injured his right ankle and subsequently missed the following 18 games. Upon his return, Van Gundy resigned, citing family reasons, and Pat Riley assumed head coach responsibilities. Many critics stated that Heat coach Riley correctly managed O'Neal during the rest of the season, limiting his minutes to a career low. Riley felt doing so would allow him to be healthier and fresher come playoff time. Although O'Neal averaged career lows (or near-lows) in points, rebounds, and blocks, he said in an interview "Stats don't matter. I care about winning, not stats. If I score 0 points and we win, I'm happy. If I score 50, 60 points, break the records, and we lose, I'm pissed off. 'Cause I knew I did something wrong. I'll have a hell of a season if I win the championship and average 20 points a game." During the 2005–06 season, the Heat recorded only a .500 record without O'Neal in the line-up.

O'Neal finished the season as the league leader in field goal percentage.

In the 2006 NBA Playoffs, the Miami Heat won their first NBA Championship. Led by both O'Neal and eventual Finals MVP Dwyane Wade, the 2nd seeded Heat defeated the defending Eastern Conference Champion and top-seeded Detroit Pistons



**Shaquille
O'Neal**

in a rematch of the 2005 Conference Finals. They then defeated the Dallas Mavericks in the 2006 NBA Finals.

O'Neal put up considerably lower numbers compared to those he recorded during the 2005–06 regular season, but he twice delivered dominant games in order to close out a playoff series: a 30 point, 20 rebound effort in Game 6 against the Chicago Bulls in the first round, and a 28 point, 16 rebound, 5 block effort in Game 6 against the Pistons. It was his fourth title in seven seasons. He fulfilled his promise of delivering an NBA Championship to Miami.

In the 2006–07 season, O'Neal missed the next 35 games after an injury to his left knee in November required surgery. The Heat struggled during O'Neal's absence, but with his return won seven of their next eight games. Bad luck still haunted the squad, however, as Wade dislocated his left shoulder, leaving O'Neal as the focus of the team. Critics doubted that O'Neal, now in his mid-thirties, could carry the team into the playoffs. The Heat went on a winning streak that kept them in the race for a playoff spot, which they finally secured against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

In a rematch of the year before, the Heat faced the Bulls in the first round. Although O'Neal put up reasonable numbers, he was not able to dominate the series. The Bulls outplayed their opponents, resulting in a sweep. It was the first time in ten years that O'Neal did not advance into the second round.

In the 2006–07 season, O'Neal reached 25,000 career points, becoming the 14th player in NBA history to accomplish that milestone. However, it was the first season in O'Neal's career that his scoring average dropped below 20 points per game.



Shaquille O'Neal

O'Neal experienced a rough start for the 2007–08 season, averaging career lows in points, rebounds and blocks. His role in the offense diminished, as he attempted only 10 field goals per game, versus his career average of 17. In addition, he was plagued by fouls, and during one stretch fouled out five consecutive games. His streak of 14 straight All-Star appearances ended that season.

Phoenix Suns (2008–2009)

The Phoenix Suns acquired O'Neal from the league-worst, 9–37 Heat, in exchange for Shawn Marion and Marcus Banks. In 28 regular-season games, O'Neal averaged 12.9 points and 10.6

rebounds, good enough to make the playoffs. One of the reasons for the trade was to limit Tim Duncan in the event of a post-season matchup between the Suns and the San Antonio Spurs, especially after the Suns' six-game elimination by the Spurs in the 2007 NBA Playoffs. O'Neal and the Phoenix Suns did face the Spurs in the first round of the playoffs, but they were once again eliminated, lasting five games. O'Neal averaged 15.2 points, 9.2 rebounds and 1.0 assists per game.

The 2008–09 season improved for O'Neal, who averaged 18 pts, 9 rebounds, and 1.6 blocks through the first half (41 games) of the season, leading the Suns to a 23–18 record and 2nd place in their division. He returned to the All-Star Game in 2009, and emerged as co-MVP along with ex-teammate Kobe Bryant.

On February 27, 2009, O'Neal scored 45 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, his 49th career 40-point game, beating the Toronto Raptors 133–113.

The 2009 NBA Playoffs was the first time since his rookie season in 1992–93 that he did not participate in the playoffs.

He was named as a member of the All-NBA Third-Team.

Cleveland Cavaliers (2009–2010)

On June 25, 2009, O'Neal was traded to the Cleveland Cavaliers for Sasha Pavlovic, Ben Wallace, \$500,000 and a 2010 second round draft pick. Upon arriving in Cleveland, O'Neal said, "My motto is very simple: Win a Ring for the King," referring to LeBron James.

On Friday, February 25, 2010 O'Neal suffered a severe right thumb injury while attempting to go up for a shot against Glen Davis of the Boston Celtics. He had surgery on the thumb on March 1st and returned to play on April 17th in the first round playoff game against the Chicago Bulls.

O'Neal averaged career lows in almost every major statistical category, taking on a much less significant role than in previous years. His presence in the post was not as significant as in years past. After the retirement of Lindsey Hunter on March 5th, he became the NBA's oldest active player. He returned to the starting line-up in time for the 2010 NBA Playoffs. The Cavaliers swiftly defeated the Chicago Bulls in the first round, yet Cleveland became the first team in NBA history to miss the NBA Finals after laying claim to the NBA's top playoff seed for two consecutive seasons. On May 13th, the Cavaliers were eliminated from the playoffs, losing to the Boston Celtics 4–2 in the Eastern Conference semi-finals.

Boston Celtics (2010–2011)

On August 4, 2010, the Celtics announced that they had signed O'Neal. The contract was for two years at the veteran minimum salary for a total contract value of \$2.8 million. The Atlanta Hawks and the Dallas Mavericks also expressed interest, but had stalled on O'Neal's salary demands. He was introduced by the Celtics on August 10, 2010, and chose the number 36.

He insisted he did not care whether he started or substituted for the Celtics, but expected to be part of the second unit. O'Neal



**Shaquille
O'Neal**

missed games throughout the season due to an assortment of ailments to his right leg, including knee, calf, hip, and Achilles injuries. The Celtics traded away center Kendrick Perkins in February partially due to the expectation that O'Neal would return to fill Perkins' role. The Celtics were 33–10 in games Perkins had missed during the year due to injury, and they were 19–3 in games that O'Neal played over 20 minutes. He returned April 3rd after missing 27 games due to his Achilles, but he played only five minutes due to a strained right calf. It was the last regular season game he would play that year. He missed the first round of the 2011 playoffs, and he was limited to 12 minutes in two games in the second round against the Heat, who eliminated the Celtics from the playoffs.



Shaquille O'Neal (r)

On June 1, 2011, O'Neal announced his retirement.



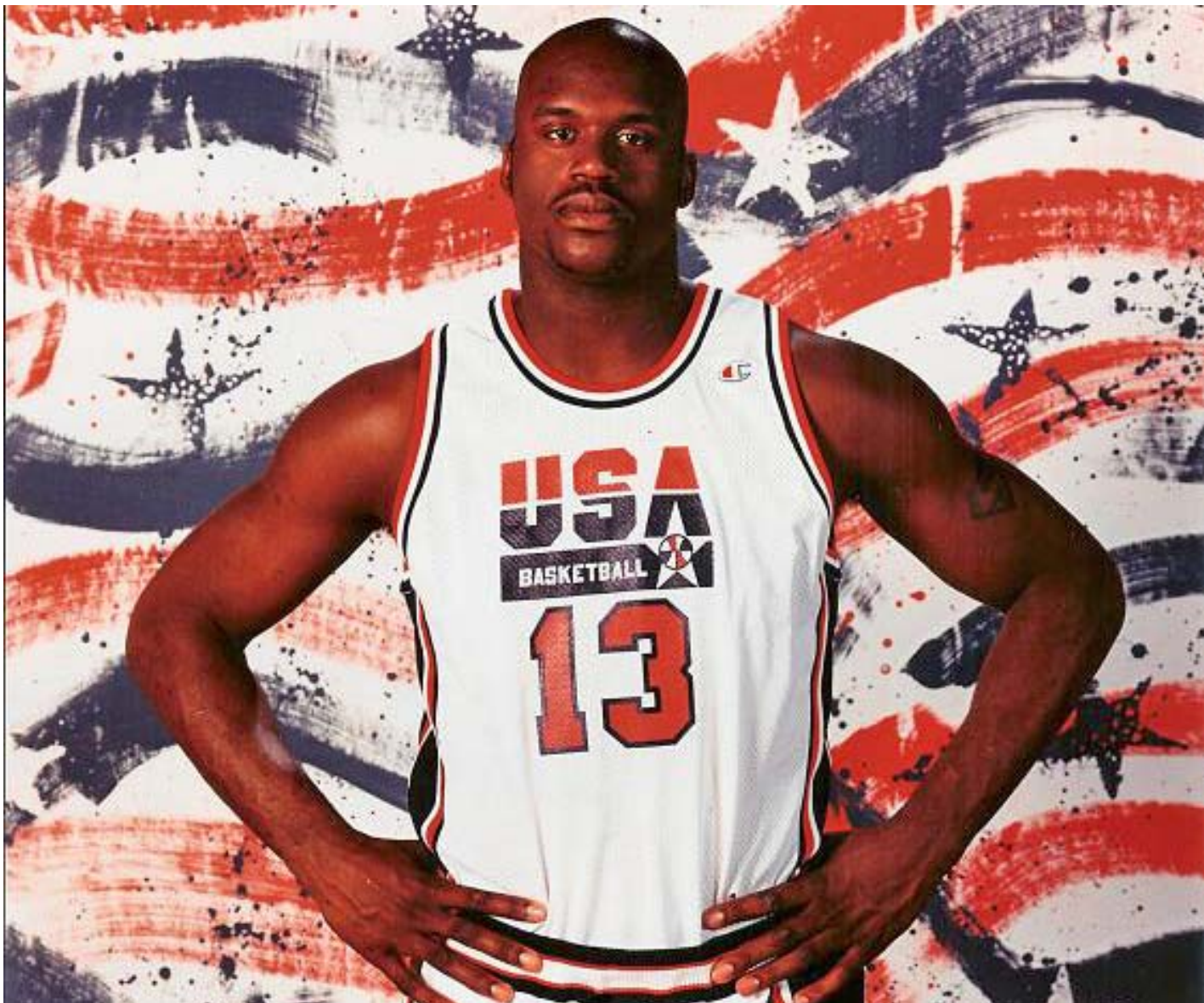
O'Neal and the Heat visit The White House



O'Neal and the Lakers visit The White House

Shaquille “Shaq” O’Neal

International Career



O’Neal’s international career began in the 1994 FIBA World Championship in which he was named MVP of the Tournament. While he led Dream Team II to the Gold Medal with an 8-0 record, he averaged 18 points and 8.5 rebounds and recorded two double-doubles. In four games, he scored more than 20 points. Before 2010, he was the last active American player to have a Gold from the FIBA World Championships.

He was one of two players (the other being Reggie Miller) from the 1994 roster to be also named to the Dream Team III. Due to more star-power, he rotated with Hakeem Olajuwon and David Robinson. He started 3 games. He averaged 9.3 points and 5.3 points with 8 total blocks. Again, a perfect 8-0 record landed him another Gold Medal at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia.

After his 1996 experience, he declined to play in international

competition. He was angered by being overlooked for the FIBA Americas Championship 1999 squad, saying it was a “lack of respect.” He turned down an opportunity to participate in the 2000 Olympics, explaining that two Gold Medals were enough. O’Neal also chose not to play in the 2002 FIBA World Championship. He rejected an offer to play in the 2004 Olympics, and although he was initially interested in being named for 2006-2008 U.S. preliminary roster, he eventually declined the invitation.

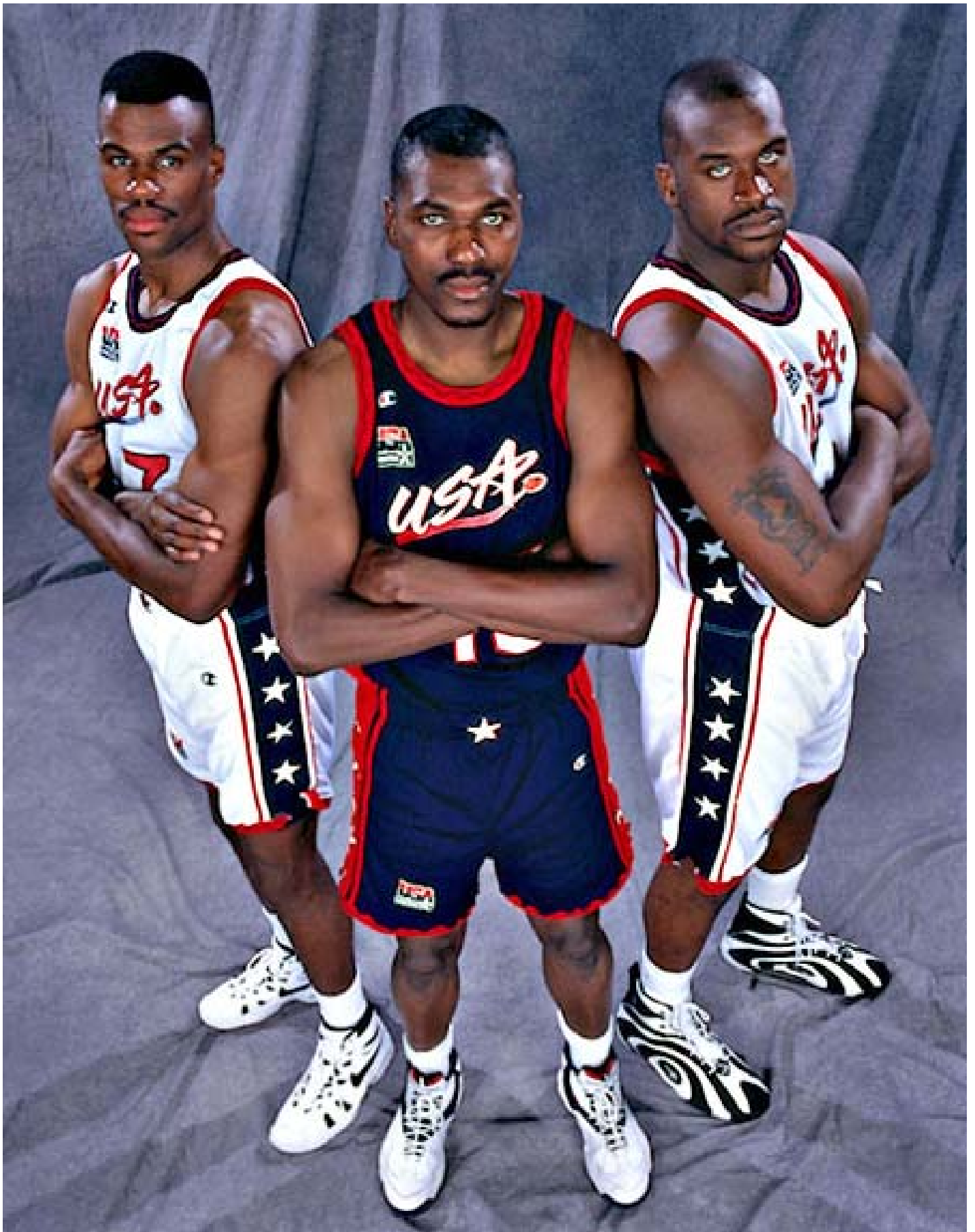
Medal Record

Olympic Games

| | | |
|------|--------------|---------------|
| Gold | 1996 Atlanta | United States |
|------|--------------|---------------|

World Championship

| | | |
|------|-------------|---------------|
| Gold | 1994 Canada | United States |
|------|-------------|---------------|



Shaquille O'Neal (r)

Shaquille “Shaq” O’Neal

Multi-Dimensional Talents

Media Personality

O’Neal called himself “The Big Aristotle and Hobo Master” for his composure and insights during interviews. Journalists and others gave him several nicknames including “Shaq,” “The Diesel,” “Shaq Fu,” “The Big Daddy,” “Superman,” “The Big Agave,” “The Big Cactus,” “The Big Shaqtus,” “The Big Galactus,” “Wilt Chamberneezy,” “The Big Baryshnikov,” “The Real Deal,” “Dr. Shaq” (after earning his MBA), “The Big Shamrock,” “The Big Leprechaun,” “Shaqovic,” and “The Big Conductor.” Although he was a favorite interview of the press, O’Neal was sensitive and often went weeks without speaking. He employed an interview technique where, sitting in front of his cubicle, he would murmur in his low pitched voice.

During the 2000 Screen Actors Guild strike, O’Neal performed in a commercial for Disney. He was fined by the union for crossing the picket line.

His humorous and sometimes incendiary comments fueled the Los Angeles Lakers’ long standing rivalry with the Sacramento Kings. He frequently referred to the Sacramento team as the “Queens.” During the Lakers 2002 victory parade, he declared that Sacramento would never be the capital of California, after the Lakers beat the Kings in a tough seven game series enroute to its third championship with O’Neal.

He also received media flak for mocking Chinese people when interviewed about newcomer center Yao Ming. O’Neal told a reporter, “you tell Yao Ming, ching chong yang, wah, ah so.” He later said it was locker-room humor and he meant no offense. Yao believed that O’Neal was joking, but he said a lot of Asians would not see the humor. Yao joked, “Chinese is hard to learn. I had trouble with it when I was little.”

During the 2005 NBA playoffs, O’Neal compared his poor play to Erick Dampier, a Dallas Mavericks center who had failed to score a single point in one of their recent games. The quip inspired countless citations and references by announcers during those playoffs, though Dampier himself offered little response to the insult. The two would meet in the 2006 NBA Finals.



Shaquille O’Neal

O’Neal was very vocal with the media, often jabs at former Laker teammate Kobe Bryant. In the summer of 2005, when asked about Kobe, he responded, “I’m sorry, who?” and continued to pretend that he did not know who Kobe was until well into the 2005–2006 season.

O’Neal also appeared on television on *Saturday Night Live*. In 2007, he hosted *Shaq’s Big Challenge*, a reality show on ABC, where he challenged Florida kids to lose weight and stay in shape.

When the Lakers faced the Heat on January 16, 2006, O’Neal and Kobe Bryant made headlines by engaging in handshakes

and hugs before the game, an event that was believed to signify the end of the so-called “Shaq–Kobe feud” that had festered since the center left Los Angeles. O’Neal was quoted as saying that he accepted the advice of NBA legend Bill Russell to make peace with Bryant.

Education

O’Neal left Louisiana State University (LSU) for the NBA after three years. However, he promised his mother he would eventually return to his studies and complete his Bachelor’s Degree. He fulfilled that promise in 2000, earning his Bachelor of Arts in General Studies. Coach Phil Jackson let O’Neal miss a home game so he could attend graduation. At the ceremony, he told the crowd “now I can go and get a real job.” Subsequently, he earned an MBA online through the University of Phoenix in 2005. In reference to his completion of his MBA Degree, he stated: “It’s just something to have on my resume for when I go back into reality. Someday, I might have to put down a basketball and have a regular 9-to-5 like everybody else.”

In 2010, he undertook a Doctorate Degree in Leadership and Education with a specialization in Human Resource Development at Barry University. His dissertation topic was “The Duality of Humor and Aggression in Leadership Styles.”

Law Enforcement

O’Neal maintained a high level of interest in the workings of police departments. He became personally involved in law enforcement. He went through the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Reserve Academy and became a reserve officer with the Los Angeles Port Police. He appeared in a commercial for ESPN in Miami Police garb climbing a tree to rescue LSU’s costumed mascot Mike the Tiger.

On March 2, 2005, he was given an honorary U.S. Deputy Marshal title, and named the spokesman for the Safe Surfin’ Foundation. He served an honorary role on the task force of the same name, which tracks down sexual predators who target children on the Internet.

Upon his trade to Miami, he began training to become a Miami Beach reserve officer. On December 8, 2005, he was sworn in, but elected for a private ceremony to avoid distracting attention from the other officers. He assumed a \$1 per year salary in this capacity. Shortly thereafter, in Miami, O’Neal witnessed a hate crime, and called Miami-Dade police, describing the suspect and helping police, over his cell phone, track the offender. His actions resulted in the arrest of two suspects on charges of aggravated battery, assault, and a hate crime.

Music Career

Beginning in 1993, O’Neal began to compose rap music. He released five studio albums and 1 compilation album. Although his rapping abilities were criticized at the outset, one critic credited him with “*progressing as a rapper in small steps, not leaps and bounds.*” His 1993 debut album, *Shaq Diesel*, received platinum certification from the RIAA. He was featured alongside Michael Jackson as a guest rapper on “2 Bad,” a song from Jackson’s 1995 album *HIStory*.



Shaquille O’Neal

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Birth name: | Shaquille Rashaun O’Neal |
| Born: | March 6, 1972 (1972-03-06) |
| Origin: | Newark, New Jersey |
| Genres: | Hip hop |
| Occupations: | Rapper |
| Years active: | 1993 to present |
| Labels: | Jive, Interscope, A&M, Trauma |
| Associated acts: | Lord Tariq and Peter Gunz, DJ Kayslay |

Acting

O’Neal starred in two movies, *Blue Chips* and *Kazaam*.

He appeared as himself on an episode of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, bedridden after Larry David’s character accidentally tripped him while stretching, and in two episodes each of *My Wife and Kids* and *The Parkers*. He appeared in the 311 music video for the hit single “You Wouldn’t Believe” in 2001, in P. Diddy’s video for “Bad Boys 4 Life,” the video for Aaron Carter’s “That’s How I Beat Shaq,” and the video for Owl City’s *Vanilla Twilight*. O’Neal appeared in the movie *CB4* in a small “interviewing” scene. He played John Henry Irons/Steel in a movie based on the popular superhero Steel. He appeared in a *SportsCenter* commercial dressed in his Miami police uniform. O’Neal was also a character in the movie *Blue Chips* with Nick Nolte.

He voiced animated versions of himself on several occasions, including the animated series *Static Shock* (“Static Shaq” episode) and in the *Johnny Bravo* (episode “Back on Shaq”).



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