



My Drift

Title: Top 16 White NBA Players

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As I write this article, the 2024 NBA finals are going on between the Boston Celtics and the Dallas Mavericks. The Celtics are big favorites, but the Mavericks may very well have the best player on the floor in Luka Dončić, a white player. We know that black players have been the most dominant NBA players over the last 50 years or so. In fact, over the last 54 years, only 8 white players have won the NBA Finals Most Valuable Player award. See complete list below – I have highlighted the white players in yellow.

The Bill Russell NBA Finals Most Valuable Player award (formerly known as the NBA Finals Most Valuable Player award) is an annual National Basketball Association (NBA) award given since the 1969 NBA Finals.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Winner</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Team</i>
2023	Nikola Jokić	Center	Denver Nuggets
2022	Stephen Curry	Guard	Golden State Warriors
2021	Giannis Antetokounmpo	Forward	Milwaukee Bucks
2020	LeBron James	Forward	Los Angeles Lakers
2019	Kawhi Leonard	Forward	Toronto Raptors
2018	Kevin Durant	Forward	Golden State Warriors
2017	Kevin Durant	Forward	Golden State Warriors
2016	LeBron James	Forward	Cleveland Cavaliers
2015	Andre Iguodala	Forward/Guard	Golden State Warriors
2014	Kawhi Leonard	Forward	San Antonio Spurs
2013	LeBron James	Forward	Miami Heat
2012	LeBron James	Forward	Miami Heat

2011	Dirk Nowitzki	Forward	Dallas Mavericks
2010	Kobe Bryant	Guard	Los Angeles Lakers
2009	Kobe Bryant	Guard	Los Angeles Lakers
2008	Paul Pierce	Forward	Boston Celtics
2007	Tony Parker	Guard	San Antonio Spurs
2006	Dwyane Wade	Guard	Miami Heat
2005	Tim Duncan	Forward/Center	San Antonio Spurs
2004	Chauncey Billups	Guard	Detroit Pistons
2003	Tim Duncan	Forward/Center	San Antonio Spurs
2002	Shaquille O'Neal	Center	Los Angeles Lakers
2001	Shaquille O'Neal	Center	Los Angeles Lakers
2000	Shaquille O'Neal	Center	Los Angeles Lakers
1999	Tim Duncan	Forward/Center	San Antonio Spurs
1998	Michael Jordan	Guard	Chicago Bulls
1997	Michael Jordan	Guard	Chicago Bulls
1996	Michael Jordan	Guard	Chicago Bulls
1995	Hakeem Olajuwon	Center	Houston Rockets
1994	Hakeem Olajuwon	Center	Houston Rockets
1993	Michael Jordan	Guard	Chicago Bulls
1992	Michael Jordan	Guard	Chicago Bulls
1991	Michael Jordan	Guard	Chicago Bulls
1990	Isiah Thomas	Guard	Detroit Pistons
1989	Joe Dumars	Guard	Detroit Pistons
1988	James Worthy	Forward	Los Angeles Lakers
1987	Magic Johnson	Guard	Los Angeles Lakers
1986	Larry Bird	Forward	Boston Celtics
1985	Kareem Abdul-Jabbar	Center	Los Angeles Lakers

1984	Larry Bird	Forward	Boston Celtics
1983	Moses Malone	Center	Philadelphia 76ers
1982	Magic Johnson	Guard	Los Angeles Lakers
1981	Cedric Maxwell	Forward	Boston Celtics
1980	Magic Johnson	Guard	Los Angeles Lakers
1979	Dennis Johnson	Guard	Seattle SuperSonics
1978	Wes Unseld	Center/Forward	Washington Bullets
1977	Bill Walton	Center	Portland Trail Blazers
1976	Jo Jo White	Guard	Boston Celtics
1975	Rick Barry	Forward	Golden State Warriors
1974	John Havlicek	Forward/Guard	Boston Celtics
1973	Willis Reed	Center/Forward	New York Knicks
1972	Wilt Chamberlain	Center	Los Angeles Lakers
1971	Lew Alcindor	Center	Milwaukee Bucks
1970	Willis Reed	Center/Forward	New York Knicks
1969	Jerry West	Guard	Los Angeles Lakers

So, all this got me thinking about my picks for the best white NBA players ever.

Here is my list:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Larry Bird | 9. John Stockton |
| 2. Bill Walton | 10. John Havlicek |
| 3. Pete Maravich | 11. Kevin McHale |
| 4. Nikola Jokić | 12. Steve Nash |
| 5. Jerry West | 13. Bob Pettit |
| 6. Luka Dončić | 14. Bob Cousy |
| 7. Rick Barry | 15. Pau Gasol |
| 8. Dirk Nowitzki | 16. George Mikan |

(See below for additional information about each player)



Number 1
Larry Bird

Born: Dec 7, 1956

Career Stats:

Games: 897

Points: 24.3

Rebounds: 10.0

Assists: 6.3

General Info

- **Birthplace:** French Lick Township, Indiana
- **Team:** Boston Celtics
- **Position:** Small forward
- **Height/Weight:** 6'9" 220lbs
- **Years Played:** 1979-80 to 1991-92 (13 Seasons)

Larry Bird, a veritable NBA legend, revolutionized the sport with his exceptional court vision and natural basketball instincts. A 12-time All-Star, three-time MVP, and three-time NBA champion with the Boston Celtics, Bird was known for his shooting ability and fiery competitiveness, earning him the nickname "Larry Legend."

My Comments: The 1979 NCAA championship game was played where I played my college basketball - The Special Events Center at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, Utah. Michigan State with Magic Johnson beat Indiana State with Larry Bird 75-64.



Number 2
Bill Walton

Born: Nov 5, 1952

Died: May 27, 2024

Career Stats:

Games: 468

Points: 13.3

Rebounds: 10.5

Assists: 3.4

General Info

- **Birthplace:** La Mesa, California
- **Teams:** Portland Trail Blazers, Boston Celtics, Los Angeles Clippers
- **Position:** Center
- **Height/Weight:** 6'11" 210lbs
- **Years Played:** 1974-75 to 1986-87 (13 Seasons)

Hall of Famer Bill Walton's exceptional blend of size, skill, and basketball IQ made him a dominant force in the NBA during his relatively short yet impactful career. After claiming two NBA championships, an MVP award, and a Finals MVP, Walton's legacy is solidified.

My Comments: In high school, Bill was the best player in the state of California (33-0 record with 29 points and 25 rebounds a game). In college, UCLA went 86-4 and won two national championships with Walton. He was one of the best players in the NBA until he injured his foot and back.



Number 3

Pete Maravich

Born: Jun 22, 1947

Died: Jan 5, 1988

Career Stats:

Games: 658

Points: 24.2

Rebounds: 4.2

Assists: 5.4

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Aliquippa, Pennsylvania
- **Teams:** Boston Celtics, Utah Jazz, Atlanta Hawks, New Orleans Jazz
- **Position:** Shooting guard
- **Height/Weight:** 6'5" 200lbs
- **Years Played:** 1970 to 1980 (10 Seasons)

Pistol Pete Maravich was a true innovator in the world of basketball, captivating fans with his flashy ball-handling, seemingly limitless range, and unorthodox scoring prowess. A five-time All-Star and NBA scoring champion in 1977, Maravich's imprint on the game is still apparent today, as players like Steph Curry and Kyrie Irving emulate his showmanship and skill.

My Comments: At LSU, Pistol Pete was and still is the greatest scorer in college history averaging 44.2 points a game. Knee problems plagued Maravich for most of his NBA career. Maravich collapsed and died of heart failure at age 40 while playing in a pickup basketball game.



Number 4

Nikola Jokić

Born: Feb 19, 1995

Career Stats:

Games: 675

Points: 20.9

Rebounds: 10.7

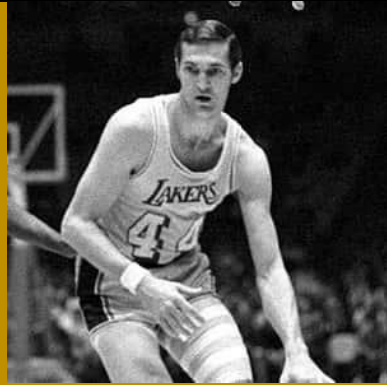
Assists: 6.9

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Sombor, Serbia
- **Teams:** Denver Nuggets
- **Position:** Center
- **Height/Weight:** 6'11" 284lbs
- **Years Played:** 2012 to present

The Serbian phenom Nikola Jokić has already made a colossal impact on the NBA landscape, earning a reputation as one of the most versatile and skilled big men in league history. With an NBA Championship and two league MVP awards under his belt, Jokić's extraordinary playmaking ability and ambidextrous post moves have shattered traditional conventions for centers in the modern NBA.

My Comments: Nicknamed "the Joker", he is regarded as one of the greatest players and centers of all time and I think he is currently the best player in the NBA.



Number 5 Jerry West

Born: May 28, 1938

Career Stats:

Games: 932

Points: 27.0

Rebounds: 5.4

Assists: 6.7

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Chelyan, West Virginia
- **Teams:** Los Angeles Lakers
- **Position:** Point Guard
- **Height/Weight:** 6'3" 175lbs
- **Years Played:** 1960-61 to 1973-74 (14 Seasons)

Affectionately known as "The Logo" due to his silhouette being featured in the NBA logo, Jerry West's indelible mark on the sport is timeless. As an explosive scorer and tenacious defender, West earned 14 All-Star selections, an NBA championship, and a Finals MVP award with the Los Angeles Lakers. His unwavering commitment to greatness and legendary clutch performances have solidified his place among the pantheon of NBA greats.

My Comments: Jerry West is only a couple of years older than me, and I watched him play college ball at West Virginia and pro ball with the Lakers. Here is a little known fact: I patterned my shooting style after Jerry West.



Number 6 Luka Dončić

Born: Feb 28, 1999

Career Stats:

Games: 400

Points: 28.7

Rebounds: 8.7

Assists: 8.3

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Ljubljana, Slovenia
- **Teams:** Dallas Mavericks
- **Position:** Shooting Guard
- **Height/Weight:** 6'7" 230lbs
- **Years Played:** 2018-19 to present (6 Seasons)

The Slovenian sensation, Luka Dončić has rapidly ascended the NBA ranks, establishing himself as one of the game's premier talents. With his herculean scoring ability, silky smooth playmaking, and innate feel for the game, Dončić possesses an uncanny aptitude for willing his team to victory. Drawing comparisons to legends such as Magic Johnson and Larry Bird, the sky's the limit for this young phenom as he continues to leave his mark on the NBA landscape.

My Comments: 25 year old Luka Doncic is already one of the best players in the NBA. Nobody can stop him! Because of Luka and Kyrie Irving playing together for the Mavericks, I'm betting on them to beat the Celtics.



Number 7
Rick Barry

Born: Mar 28, 1944

Career Stats:

Games: 1020

Points: 24.8

Rebounds: 6.7

Assists: 4.3

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Elizabeth, New Jersey
- **Teams:** Golden State Warriors, Houston Rockets, New Jersey Nets, San Francisco Warriors
- **Position:** Small forward
- **Height/Weight:** 6'7" 205lbs
- **Years Played:** 1965-66 to 1979-80 (14 Seasons)

Barry took the NBA by storm with his scoring ability and underhanded free-throw shooting technique. As an eight-time All-Star, NBA champion, and Finals MVP, his fearless playstyle garnered the respect of fans and players across the league. Known for leading the league in scoring during his prime and finishing his career with an impressive 89.3% free-throw percentage.

My Comments: I really liked watching Barry play ball and his scoring ability. Like Rick, I could shoot a high free-throw percentage underhanded (and also left-handed), but I shot them right-handed in games.



Number 8
Dirk Nowitzki

Born: June 19, 1978

Career Stats:

Games: 1522

Points: 20.7

Rebounds: 7.5

Assists: 2.4

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Würzburg, Germany
- **Teams:** Dallas Mavericks
- **Position:** Power forward
- **Height/Weight:** 7'0" 245lbs
- **Years Played:** 1999 to 2019 (20 Seasons)

Dirk Nowitzki redefined the power forward position in the NBA with his unique blend of size, skill, and offensive versatility. The 14-time All-Star and former MVP led the Dallas Mavericks to their first-ever NBA championship in 2011, further cementing his status as one of the greatest players of all time. Nowitzki's signature one-legged fadeaway jump shot became an iconic move, widely emulated by fellow players, proving that his influence on the game transcends borders and generations.

My Comments: Dirk was one of the first European big men who were great shooters.



Number 9 John Stockton

Born: Mar 26, 1962

Career Stats:

Games: 1504

Points: 13.1

Rebounds: 2.7

Assists: 10.5

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Spokane, Washington
- **Team:** Utah Jazz
- **Position:** Point guard
- **Height/Weight:** 6'1" 170lbs
- **Years Played:** 1984-85 to 2002-03 (19 Seasons)

John Stockton's name is invariably mentioned as an exemplar of excellence at the point guard position. Throughout his illustrious career, Stockton was renowned for his incredible passing racking up a record-breaking 15,806 career assists. His pick-and-roll partnership with Karl Malone remains iconic, and Stockton's tenacious defense and scrappy mentality earned him five selections to the NBA All-Defensive team.

My Comments: I grew up in Utah and the Utah Jazz were the only pro team in the state. So, they are my favorite NBA team. They would have won the NBA championship if not for Michael Jordan's push-off on Jazz forward Bryon Russell, and then hitting the winning jump shot.



Number 10 John Havlicek

Born: Apr 8, 1940

Died: April 25, 2019

Career Stats:

Games: 1270

Points: 20.8

Rebounds: 6.3

Assists: 4.8

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Martins Ferry, Ohio
- **Team:** Boston Celtics
- **Position:** Small forward
- **Height/Weight:** 6'5" 205lbs
- **Years Played:** 1962-63 to 1977-78 (16 Seasons)

John "Hondo" Havlicek's relentless hustle and unparalleled stamina make him an enduring symbol of hard work and dedication in the annals of NBA history. As an eight-time NBA champion and 13-time All-Star, Havlicek's tenacious defense and clutch scoring ability played an essential role in the storied success of the Boston Celtics throughout the 1960s and '70s. Widely remembered for his iconic steal in the 1965 Eastern Conference Finals.

My Comments: Havlicek won all eight NBA Finals in which he participated. In five of these, he played with the great Bill Russell who won a record 11 NBA championships during his 13-year career.



Number 11
Kevin McHale

Born: Dec 19, 1957

Career Stats:

Games: 971

Points: 17.3

Rebounds: 7.3

Assists: 1.7

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Hibbing, Minnesota
- **Team:** Boston Celtics
- **Position:** Power forward
- **Height/Weight:** 6'10" 210lbs
- **Years Played:** 1980-81 to 1992-93 (13 Seasons)

McHale was one of the most skilled post players in NBA history. His extensive array of low post moves and defensive prowess made him an integral part of the legendary Boston Celtics "Big Three" alongside Larry Bird and Robert Parish. McHale's seven All-Star selections and three NBA championships solidify his status as an all-time great in the league.

My Comments: McHale was the first player in NBA history to shoot 60 percent from the field and 80 percent from the foul line in the same season. Defensively, McHale's long arms (8-foot wingspan) helped him earn All-Defensive First Team honors three times.



Number 12
Steve Nash

Born: Apr 8, 1940

Career Stats:

Games: 1270

Points: 20.8

Rebounds: 6.3

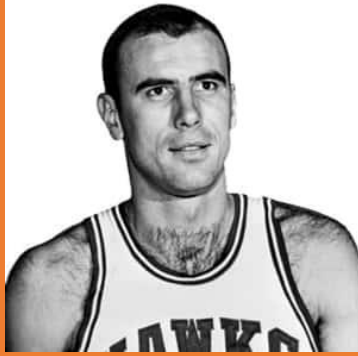
Assists: 4.8

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Johannesburg, South Africa
- **Team:** Dallas Mavericks, Phoenix Suns, Los Angeles Lakers
- **Position:** Point Guard
- **Height/Weight:** 6'3" 178lbs
- **Years Played:** 1962-63 to 1977-78 (16 Seasons)

Steve Nash mastered the art of playmaking during his tenure in the NBA. The two-time MVP and eight-time All-Star dazzled fans with his no-look passes, behind-the-back assists, and scintillating dribble moves, setting the blueprint for the modern point guard. Nash ran the Phoenix Suns' iconic 'Seven Seconds or Less' offense with superlative efficiency.

My Comments: Steve Nash holds an impressive record for his shooting accuracy. He achieved remarkable shooting percentages of 49.0% from the field, 42.8% from beyond the arc, and 90.4% from the free-throw line.



Number 13

Bob Pettit

Born: Dec 12, 1932

Career Stats:

Games: 792

Points: 26.4

Rebounds: 16.2

Assists: 3.0

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- **Team:** St. Louis Hawks, Milwaukee Hawks
- **Position:** Power forward
- **Height/Weight:** 6'9" 205lbs
- **Years Played:** 1954-55 to 1964-65 (11 Seasons)

As one of the true pioneers of the NBA, Bob Pettit's dominant post play and remarkable rebounding ability earned him a place among the league's all-time greats. A two-time MVP and 11-time All-Star, Pettit's relentless work ethic and commitment to excellence laid the foundation for future generations of power forwards.

My Comments: Pettit was playing in the NBA at the same time I was playing in high school and college. He is considered one of the greatest power forwards of all time. He is one of only 4 players who has been named to all 4 NBA anniversary teams along with Bob Cousy, George Mikan, and Bill Russell.



Number 14

Bob Cousy

Born: August 9, 1928

Career Stats:

Games: 924

Points: 18.4

Rebounds: 5.2

Assists: 7.5

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Manhattan, New York, NY
- **Team:** Boston Celtics
- **Position:** Point Guard
- **Height/Weight:** 6'1" 175lbs
- **Years Played:** 1950-51 to 1969-70 (14 Seasons)

The Houdini of the Hardwood Bob Cousy set the standard for point guards with his deft ball-handling, dazzling passes, and sharp playmaking skills. A perennial All-Star with 13 selections and six NBA championships to his name, Cousy was the driving force behind the Boston Celtics' early success.

My Comments: Cousy's style and reputation made the Celtics a popular draw and helped keep the NBA alive during its infancy. Little known fact: Cousy could not dribble with his left hand.



Number 15

Pau Gasol

Born: July 6, 1980

Career Stats:

Games: 1220

Points: 17.0

Rebounds: 9.2

Assists: 3.2

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Barcelona, Spain
- **Team:** Portland Trail Blazers, Los Angeles Lakers, Chicago Bulls, San Antonio Spurs
- **Position:** Power forward
- **Height/Weight:** 7'0" 250lbs
- **Years Played:** 2001-02 to 2018-19 (18 Seasons)

Pau Gasol carved out an illustrious career in the NBA with his remarkable skill set and basketball acumen. The Spanish standout claimed two NBA championships alongside Kobe Bryant on the Los Angeles Lakers, garnering six All-Star selections in the process. As one of the best passing big men in league history, Gasol's court vision and basketball IQ set him apart from his contemporaries.

My Comments: Gasol grew up speaking Catalan, Spanish, English and taught himself Italian and French. He and Kobe spoke Spanish to each other during games.



Number 16

George Mikan

Born: Jun 18, 1924

Died: Jun 1, 2005

Career Stats:

Games: 439

Points: 23.1

Rebounds: 13.4

Assists: 3.2

General Info

- **Birthplace:** Joliet, Illinois
- **Team:** Minneapolis Lakers
- **Position:** Center
- **Height/Weight:** 6'10" 245lbs
- **Years Played:** 1949-50 to 1956-57 (7 Seasons)

The NBA's first true superstar, George Mikan's unprecedented dominance and revolutionary playstyle laid the groundwork for the modern big man. As a four-time All-Star, five-time league champion, and the first-ever recipient of the NBA Most Valuable Player award, Mikan's place in league history is undisputed.

My Comments: Mikan was one of the first big men to run the floor and finish with force. He was voted the greatest player in the first half century by the Associated Press. After playing in Minneapolis for twelve seasons, the Lakers moved their franchise to Los Angeles in 1960.

Over the years I have written eight other articles about the NBA and its players.

Here is the list:

The Utah Jazz – 30 Apr 2008

Wilt Chamberlain – 13 Mar 2013

NBA MVP Players - 22 May 2015

Rick Barry - 5 Apr 2017

Bill Walton - 15 Apr 2017

Larry Bird - 25 Apr 2017

Michael Jordan - 10 Jul 2017

LeBron James - 30 Mar 2019

(All of my articles are available on my website)

Enjoy the NBA Finals!

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