

everyone why he was a starter. His incredible height made it almost impossible for the opposing team to penetrate their defense without getting their shot sent back and his light feet made him just as lethal a defender on the perimeter. Russell was so dominant on the defense that he had been responsible for the institution of new rules in the NCAA. Though Russell was the school's basketball star, he also participated in track and field events for the school. In 1956 he had even made himself the seventh-best high-jumper in the world.

Before his professional career had even begun, Russell had been invited to join the Harlem Globe-Trotters. Russell was upset, however, by the fact that the owner of the Globe-Trotters would only discuss matters with his coach and then communicate to him only with jokes. Because of this, he declined the offer and made himself eligible for the 1956 NBA Draft. Russell would've been selected with the number one pick, but the Rochester Royals, who had authority over the number one pick, refused to pay the \$25,000 (or \$243,000 today) signing bonus that Russell had requested. The second pick belonged to the St. Louis Hawks but they had their eyes on the center playing for the Celtics. Though they liked Russell, they agreed to let him go to the Celtics in the draft if they received Ed Macauley and Cliff Hagan in return. Reluctantly, the owner of the Celtics agreed and took Bill with the third pick. The Celtics also drafted his college teammate K.C. Jones with the 13th pick of the second round.

Bill Russell had been able to participate in the first half of the NBA season because he was selected as the Captain of the U.S. National Basketball team. The owner of the Celtics didn't like the idea of going half the season without his star player, but Russell insisted. He led the gold medal-winning basketball team to a win in the Summer Olympics and played his first NBA game on December 22, 1956. His college teammate K.C. didn't play his first game until 1958 since he went to serve in the military after being drafted.

Russell was a star at the collegiate level but that didn't change when he went to the next level. In the NBA he was sending back shots left and right. The exact number of his blocks that year is unknown because blocks and steals wouldn't be recorded until the 1973-74 season. Russell had an average of 8 blocks a game throughout the entirety of his career, even recording 17 in a single game. He led his team to their first title his rookie year and proceeded to win the next 7 in a row, that being the record for the most consecutive championships in NBA history. He wasn't exactly the best player on the offensive end of the floor, averaging 15.1 points and 4.4 assists per game.

Bill Russell was considered one of the greatest basketball players in the history of the game, not only because of his feats on the court but also because he did it all while facing extreme hatred and bigotry from both the fans and the league. The year of his draft, Russell had been the only black person on his team. This made him the subject of attacks from the fans daily. The racial slurs and vile comments never bothered him. Russell said "As far as I was concerned, I played for the Boston Celtics, the institution, and the Boston Celtics, my teammates. I did not play for the city or the fans." This is why Bill Russell is regarded not only as one of the best to ever have stepped foot on the court but also an icon for the entire sports world.

Michael J. Jordan was born on February 17, 1963, in Brooklyn, New York. He had proven himself to be quite competitive early on in his life. His family tells of how every activity played with him was an intense competition, and he would get upset at himself if he didn't win. This fighting spirit is what led Jordan to win achievements in both football and basketball in middle school.

Jordan loved the game of basketball and was determined to play it at whatever cost. That's why after he'd been cut from the varsity team during his sophomore year in high school for being too short (at 5'11), he made it a point to show his coach the mistake he'd made. Jordan worked day and night to push himself to get better, he even grew 5 inches over that summer. Come his Junior season, Jordan hit the ground running. He'd averaged more points than anyone else on the team and had also been selected to play in the 1981 McDonald's All-American game where he scored 30 points. Jordan had become an overnight sensation, garnering attention from colleges all over the country. Though his dream had always been to play basketball for UCLA, he settled on The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (where he majored in cultural geography).