

# NBA celebrities

**An American cultural phenomenon** > The National Basketball Association has been a significant part of American culture since it started. Its fan base has grown over the years, with increased global interest, and modern technology allows fans to watch games at home, making players well-known.

**Origins** > The National Basketball Association, commonly known as the NBA, is a top-tier professional basketball league. It started out as the Basketball Association of America (BAA) back in 1946 and officially became the NBA in 1949. Over the years, the league has seen some incredible players, thrilling championship games, and plenty of memorable moments.

**Inside the NBA** > It is divided into two Conferences (i.e. championships) based on geography: the Eastern Conference includes 15 teams from the eastern United States, whereas the Western Conference consists of 15 teams from the western United States. Both conferences are further organised into three divisions of five teams each.

**Major NBA teams** > Well-known teams of the Eastern Conference are Boston Celtics, Chicago Bulls, Cleveland Cavaliers, and Miami Heat. Big names of the Western Conference, instead, are LA Lakers, Golden State Warriors, Phoenix Suns, and Dallas Mavericks.



**Long-lasting rivalry** > The rivalry between Los Angeles Lakers and Boston Celtics is a milestone in NBA history: the two teams have won the highest number of championships in NBA (35 out of 78) facing off in 12 finals. Boston currently leads with 18 titles. Iconic players have shaped this rivalry across generations. Today, the Lakers are led by James LeBron and Anthony Davis, while the Celtics rely on Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown.

**A cultural clash** > The rivalry between these two iconic teams goes beyond the basketball court: they reflect the different identities of Los Angeles and Boston. On one hand, the glamorous and captivating lifestyle of the Western Coast; on the other hand, the deep-rooted traditions of the East Coast.

## 1 READING WRITING Correct these false statements.

- 1 The NBA has seen a decline in its global fan base over the years.
- 2 The National Basketball Association consists of fifteen teams.
- 3 The NBA was originally known as the American Basketball Association.
- 4 Boston Celtics and Los Angeles Lakers have never met in the finals.
- 5 Iconic players like James LeBron and Jayson Tatum currently play for the same team.
- 6 The Lakers and the Celtics rivalry represents the cultural identities of Los Angeles and Miami.

**glossary**.....  
**deep-rooted:** *ben radicato*  
**top-tier:** *di alto livello*  
 .....

- 2 READING PAIR WORK** Read this information about some of the most well-known NBA players of all time. Match each of them to the names given below. There are two names you do not need to use. Then go online and check if your guess was correct.

Shaquille O'Neal • James LeBron • Stephen Curry • Kobe Bryant • Michael Jordan • Magic Johnson



- 1 ..... Born in New York in 1963, he is considered one of the best basketball players ever. He played in the Chicago Bulls and earned the NBA's Most Valuable Player (MVP) award five times. He signed a contract with Nike to design Air Jordan line, basketball shoes and sports apparel with the colours of Chicago Bulls.
- 2 ..... Born in 1978 in Philadelphia, he spent his entire career with LA Lakers, winning five championships. Despite his incredible talent, he only won one MVP award in 2008. Tragically, he passed away in a helicopter crash in 2020.
- 3 ..... Born in 1972 in New Jersey, he is often ranked as the third-best basketball player in history. He played for teams like LA Lakers and Boston Celtics, winning the MVP award in 2000.

Besides basketball, he has pursued acting, rapping, and even launched his own clothing line.

- 4 ..... He was born in 1988 in Ohio and he is captain of Golden State Warriors. He is regarded as the G.O.A.T. (Greatest of All Times) of the current generation of basketballers, ahead of players like James LeBron and Kevin Durant. He has won the MVP award twice, making history in 2016 and 2017.

- 3 READING** Choose the best option to complete the text.

#### Charitable NBA celebrities

NBA celebrities are not only renowned for being rich and famous but also for their 1. *philanthropic / patriotic / promotional* efforts. Most of them, in fact, help the global community 2. *for / by / with* allocating a portion of their earnings to assist those in need. The NBA has a charitable organisation dedicated to supporting Black communities within the United States. 3. *Some / All / Each* NBA team contributes \$1 million to this initiative which has a lot of 4. *defenders / opponents / supporters*. Among the most charitable players in the league is Al Horford, a Dominican athlete currently with Boston Celtics. Originally from San Felipe de Puerto Plata, a notably 5. *wealthy / impoverished / enriched* area in the Dominican Republic, Horford has financially supported the construction of basketball courts in his hometown and has organised youth basketball teams across the island. Horford is also a member of Basketball Without Borders, a non-profit organisation which focuses 6. *on / over / about* youth engagement in developing countries, particularly in Africa.

Adapted from: <https://cares.nba.com/>

- 4 READING WRITING SPEAKING** Go online and search for information about the NBA All Star Game. Prepare a short presentation for the class.