

MARCH 2008 "COLLECTING WITH JEFF" JEFF FIGLER

QUESTION: #1 I have the very first issue of the Sporting News from the 1880's. How much is it worth? Gus V., St. Louis, Mo.

ANSWER: Dear Gus,

If you have an original Sporting News it is worth several thousand dollars. However, several years ago there was a reprint done, so you may very well have a reprint instead of the original.

QUESTION: #2 I have a signed University of Tennessee College football helmet with all the signatures except for Peyton Manning. How much is it worth and how can I get his signature? Melissa G., Chicago, Il.

ANSWER: Dear Melissa,

Without the Manning signature the helmet is worth no more that \$100. I would suggest that you try to get Manning's signature by sending the helmet, insured, to the Indianapolis Colts, and you might get lucky. Do not expect it to be returned for 4 or 5 months, and you might send either enough postage or your Fed Ex or UPS number.

TRIVIA ANSWERS FOR FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER:

1. Reggie Jackson for New York, Oakland and California.
2. Alex Rodriguez for New York, Texas and Seattle.

TRIVIA:

1. Who was the youngest major league baseball player in history?
How old was he?
2. Who was the first black NBA player?
Who was the first black NHL player?

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Which basketball player popularized the "dunk" shot?

Basketball has surely become a game for the tall man. Sure, once in a while, there will be a

player under 6 feet two inches tall who plays professional basketball, but it is unusual. Of course, with tall players being the norm, the highest percentage shot is the dunk shot. Reaching above the ten foot rim to put the ball in the basket is an easy way to score two points, if you can do it. And definitely, players such as Michael Jordan, Vince Carter, Dominique Wilkins, and Julius Erving have been the most spectacular dunkers. Erving was the first to introduce the dunk, jumping off the foul line to a wide audience when he did so in the 1976 ABA All-Star Dunking Contest.

Julius Erving was born in 1950 in Roosevelt, New York. While at Roosevelt High School, he earned the name "Doctor J" because of his precise way of playing basketball. He went to the University of Massachusetts, and in two varsity years, averaged over 26 points and 20 rebounds per game, one of only five players in NCAA Men's basketball history to average more than 20 points and 20 rebounds per game.

Erving then joined the ABA in 1971 with the Virginia Squires, where he gained his reputation for dunking. He became eligible for the NBA draft in 1972 and was picked by the Milwaukee Bucks. However, he signed a contract with the NBA Atlanta Hawks before the 1972 season, but because of a legal injunction, had to return to the ABA Virginia Squires.

The Squires had financial problems, like most of the ABA teams, and were forced to trade Erving to the New York Mets in 1973, and Erving soon established himself as the ABA's most important player. Fans flocked to see his electrifying play and spectacular dunks.

Along with the San Antonio Spurs, Indiana Pacers, and Denver Nuggets, the New York Nets joined the NBA for the 1976 season. The New York Knicks demanded that the Nets pay them money for "invading" their territory. Coupled with the fact that Erving's salary demands were not met, he refused to play. Julius Erving was then traded to the Philadelphia 76ers.

Erving was a star in the NBA as well, as he was in the ABA. After Philadelphia acquired Moses Malone for the 1982 season, they dominated. He retired in 1987, and is one of the few basketball players to have his jersey retired by two franchises. The New Jersey Nets (New York Nets) retired his number 32 jersey, and the Philadelphia 76ers retired his number 6 jersey. He was elected to the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1993.

One of the greatest dunks of all time was Erving's "Rock the Cradle" dunk, in a 1983 regular season game against Los Angeles. He stole the ball, came down the court on a fast break and, swinging the ball back and forth before taking off on a Rock the Cradle dunk, slung the ball around behind his head and dunked over the Lakers' Michael Cooper.

Erving saw his role as a spokesman for the NBA and played that role to perfection. He made his mark on the league as it had never been done before.



THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Who is considered to be the best player to come out of the 1984 draft?

The 1984 NBA draft was loaded with future stars. Akeem Olajuwon (University of Houston), John Stockton (Gonzaga), Karl Malone (Louisiana Tech), and Charles Barkley (Auburn), were all in the 1984 draft, and all will be in the Basketball Hall of Fame. However, there was a shooting guard from the University of North Carolina, who was also drafted in that same draft. In fact, he was drafted third by the Chicago Bulls, after the Houston Rockets selected Olajuwon and the Portland Trail Blazers selected Sam Bowie of Kentucky. Neither Houston nor Portland needed a guard, and Houston did not want to pass on a local star, Olajuwon, as they had done the year before when they had passed on another University of Houston Cougar star, Clyde Drexler. Michael Jordan was the best player selected in the 1984 NBA draft, and arguably, the best player ever selected.

Michael Jordan was born on February 17, 1963 in Brooklyn, New York. When he was young, his family moved to Wilmington, North Carolina. He finally made the varsity high school team as a junior, and was a McDonald's All-American as a senior. He earned a basketball scholarship to the University of North Carolina, and played under legendary coach Dean Smith. As a sophomore in the 1982 NCAA championship game against the Patrick Ewing-led Georgetown Hoyas, Jordan made the game-winning jump shot, the shot that Jordan would later say was the major turning point in his basketball career. Jordan did turn professional after his junior year, but did return to the University of North Carolina to complete his degree in 1986.

Michael Jordan played in the NBA with the Chicago Bulls from 1984-1993, and again from 1995-1998, and with the Washington Wizards from 2001-2003. The 1995-1996 Bulls team won an NBA-record 72 regular season games.

In his distinguished NBA career, Jordan won five Most Valuable Player awards, was selected ten times to All-NBA First Team, and won ten scoring titles (seven in a row).

Jordan holds the NBA record for the highest career regular season scoring average, as well as the highest scoring average in the playoffs.

In 1999, Michael Jordan was named the greatest North American athlete of the twentieth century by ESPN, and was second to Babe Ruth by the Associated Press on its list of athletes of the century.

