THE HISTORY OF THE ABA 60´S   70´S
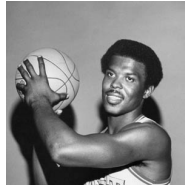
The original **American Basketball Association** (**ABA**) was a major-league professional basketball league founded in 1967. The ABA ceased to exist with the American Basketball Association–National Basketball Association merger in 1976, leading several teams to join the National Basketball Association and the introduction of the 3-point shot in the NBA.The ABA was conceived at a time stretching from 1960 through the mid-1970s when numerous upstart leagues were challenging, with varying degrees of success, the established major professional sports leagues in the United States. Basketball was seen as particularly vulnerable to a challenge; its

major league, the National Basketball Association, was played 21 seasons to that point, and was still fending off than five years since the American Basketball League Indiana Pacers, its goal was to force a merger with the that they could get an ABA team for half of what it cost merger occurred, ABA officials said their investment

the youngest of the Big Four major leagues, having only contemporary challenging leagues (it had been less (ABL) shut down). According to one of the owners of the more established league. Potential investors were told to get an NBA expansion team at the time. When the would more than double.

The ABA distinguished itself from its older counterpart with a more wide-open, flashy style of offensive play, as well as differences in rules—a 30-second shot clock (as opposed to the NBA's 24-second clock, though the ABA did switch to the 24 second shot clock for the 1975–76 season) and use of a three-point field goal arc, pioneered in the earlier ABL. Also, the ABA used a colorful red, white and blue ball, instead of the NBA's traditional orange ball. The ABA also had several "regional" franchises, such as the Virginia Squires and Carolina Cougars, that played "home" games in several cities.

The ABA also went after four of the best referees in the NBA: Earl Strom, John Vanak, Norm Drucker and Joe Gushue, getting them to "jump" leagues by offering them far more in money and benefits. In Earl Storm's memoir *Calling the Shots*, Storm conveys both the heady sense of being courted by a rival league with money to burn—and also the depression that set in the next year when he began refereeing in the ABA, with less prominent players performing in inadequate arenas, in front of very small crowds. Nevertheless, the emergence of the ABA boosted the salaries of referees just as it did the salaries of players.

The freewheeling style of the ABA eventually caught on with fans, but the lack of a national television contract and protracted financial losses would spell doom for the ABA as an independent circuit. In 1976, its last year of existence, the ABA pioneered the now-popular slam dunk contest at its all-star game in Denver.

The league succeeded in forcing a merger with the NBA in the 1976 offseason. Four ABA teams were absorbed into the older league: the New York Nets, Denver Nuggets, Indiana Pacers, and San Antonio Spurs. Two other clubs, the Kentucky Colonels and the Spirits of St. Louis, were disbanded upon the merger, with each   getting a buyout: the Colonels received a one-time

buyout that owner John Y. Brown, Jr. used to purchase negotiated a cut of the other ABA teams' television group of the Spirits over $300M through nearly four In 2014, the NBA and the Spirits ownership agreed to payment of $500M, making the total value for the deal Squires, received nothing, as they had ceased

the NBA's Buffalo Braves, while the Spirits owners revenues in perpetuity. This deal netted the ownership decades due to a large increase in television revenues. phase out future payments in exchange for a one-time over $800M. The seventh remaining team, the Virginia operations shortly before the merger.

One of the more significant long-term contributions of the ABA to professional basketball was to tap into markets in the southeast that had been collegiate basketball hotbeds (including North Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky). The NBA was focused on the urban areas of the Northeast, Midwest and West Coast. At the time, it showed no interest in placing a team south of Washington, D.C.

Commissioners

- **George Mikan** **1967–1969**

- James Carson Gardner 1969 (interim)
- Jack Dolph 1969–1972
- Bob Carlson 1972–1973
- Mike Storen 1973–74
- Tedd Munchak 1974–75
- Dave DeBusschere 1975–76

NBA great George Mikan was the first commissioner of the ABA, where he introduced both the 3-point line and the league's trademark red, white and blue basketball.

Mikan resigned in 1969. Dave DeBusschere, one of the stars of the New York Knicks championship teams, moved from his job as Vice President and GM of the ABA's New York Nets in 1975 to become the last commissioner of the ABA and facilitate the ABA–NBA merger in 1976.

Teams

Of the original 11 teams, only the Kentucky Colonels and Indiana Pacers remained for all nine seasons without relocating, changing team names, or folding. However, the Denver Larks/Rockets/Nuggets, a team that had been assigned to Kansas City, Missouri, moved to Denver without playing a game in Kansas City due to the lack of a suitable arena. In addition to the four surviving ABA teams, seven current NBA markets have ABA heritage: Utah, Dallas, Houston, Miami, New Orleans, Memphis, and Charlotte all had an ABA team before the NBA arrived. The Louisville, Kentucky-Indiana market, former home of the ABA Kentucky Colonels, is considered a top contender for the next NBA expansion or relocation, and in fact the then Vancouver Grizzlies had Louisville as one of its four "finalists" for a new home before choosing Memphis in 2001. The Colonels led the ABA in attendance five of the ABA's nine seasons, with regular sellouts of 16,600+ fans at Louisville's Freedom Hall, since replaced by the 22,000-seat KFC Yum! Center.[6]

List of ABA championships

Main article: [List of ABA champions](#)

Year	Western Division champion	Games	Eastern Division champion	Playoffs MVP
1967–68	New Orleans Buccaneers	3–4	**Pittsburgh Pipers**	Connie Hawkins C, Pittsburgh
1968–69	**Oakland Oaks**	4–1	Indiana Pacers	Warren Jabali G, Oakland
1969–70	Los Angeles Stars	2–4	**Indiana Pacers**	Roger Brown F/G, Indiana
1970–71	**Utah Stars**	4–3	Kentucky Colonels	Zelmo Beaty C, Utah
1971–72	**Indiana Pacers**	4–2	New York Nets	Freddie Lewis G, Indiana
1972–73	**Indiana Pacers**	4–3	Kentucky Colonels	George McGinnis F/C, Indiana
1973–74	Utah Stars	1–4	**New York Nets**	Julius Erving F, New York
1974–75	Indiana Pacers			

Prominent players[edit]

- Marvin Barnes
- Rick Barry
- Zelmo Beaty
- Ron Boone
- John Brisker
- Hubie Brown
- Larry Brown
- Roger Brown
- Don Buse
- Mack Calvin
- Darel Carrier
- Jim Chones
- Billy Cunningham
- Louie Dampier
- Mel Daniels
- Julius "Dr. J" Erving
- Donnie Freeman
- George "Ice Man" Gervin
- Artis Gilmore
- Jerry Harkness
- Connie Hawkins
- Spencer Haywood
- Dan Issel
- Warren Jabali
- Bobby Jones
- Jimmy Jones
- Larry Jones
- Larry Kenon
- Freddie Lewis
- Maurice Lucas
- Moses Malone
- George McGinnis
- Doug Moe
- Bob Netolicky
- Johnny Neumann
- Billy Paultz
- Charlie Scott
- James Silas
- David "Skywalker" Thompson
- George Thompson
- Fly Williams
- Willie Wise

Scoring leaders [edit]

	Season	Player	Team(s)	Games played	Points	PPG	
1st	1967–68	Connie Hawkins*	Pittsburgh Pipers	70	1875	26.8	BEST PPG
2nd	1968–69	Rick Barry*	Oakland Oaks	35	1190	34.0	
3rd	1969–70	Spencer Haywood*	Denver Rockets	84	2519	30.0	
	1970–71	Dan Issel*	Kentucky Colonels	83	2480	29.9	
	1971–72	Charlie Scott	Virginia Squires	73	2524	34.6	BEST POINT
	1972–73	Julius Erving*	Virginia Squires	71	2268	31.9	
	1973–74	Julius Erving* (2)	New York Nets	84	2299	27.4	
	1974–75	George McGinnis*	Indiana Pacers	79	2353	29.8	
	1975–76	Julius Erving* (3)	New York Nets	84	2462	29.3	

Steals leaders [edit]

Season	Player	Team(s)	Games played	Steals	SPG
1973–74	Ted McClain	Denver Rockets	84	250	2.98
1974–75	Brian Taylor	New York Nets	79	221	2.80
1975–76	Don Buse	Indiana Pacers	84	346	4.12

Rebounding leaders [edit]

Season	Player	Team(s)	Game played	Offensive rebounds	Defensive rebounds	Total rebounds	RPG
1967–68	Mel Daniels*	Minnesota Muskies	78	502	711	1213	15.6
1968–69	Mel Daniels* (2)	Indiana Pacers	76	383	873	1256	16.5
1969–70	Spencer Haywood*	Denver Rockets	84	533	1104	1637	19.5
1970–71	Mel Daniels* (3)	Indiana Pacers	82	394	1081	1475	18.0
1971–72	Artis Gilmore*	Kentucky Colonels	84	421	1070	1491	17.8
1972–73	Artis Gilmore* (2)	Kentucky Colonels	84	449	1027	1476	17.6
1973–74	Artis Gilmore* (3)	Kentucky Colonels	84	478	1060	1538	18.3
1974–75	Swen Nater	San Antonio Spurs	78	369	910	1279	16.4
1975–76	Artis Gilmore* (4)	Kentucky Colonels	84	402	901	1303	15.5

Assists leaders [edit]

Season	Player	Team(s)	Games played	Assists	APG
1967–68	Larry Brown*	New Orleans Buccaneers	78	506	6.5
1968–69	Larry Brown* (2)	Oakland Oaks	77	544	7.1
1969–70	Larry Brown* (3)	Washington Caps	82	580	7.1
1970–71	Bill Melchionni	New York Nets	81	672	8.3
1971–72	Bill Melchionni (2)	New York Nets	80	669	8.4
1972–73	Bill Melchionni (3)	New York Nets	61	453	7.4
1973–74	Al Smith	Denver Rockets	76	619	8.1
1974–75	Mack Calvin	Denver Nuggets	74	570	7.7
1975–76	Don Buse	Indiana Pacers	84	689	8.2

Season	Player	Team(s)	Games played	Blocks	BPG
1973–74	Caldwell Jones	San Diego Conquistadors	79	316	4.00
1974–75	Caldwell Jones (2)	San Diego Conquistadors	76	246	3.24
1975–76	Billy Paultz	San Antonio Spurs	83	253	3.05