

Philly Jocks

The Best Philadelphia Pro Athletes of Our Time

Dave Brown

Foreword by Jody McDonald

1. Wilt Chamberlain

The numbers were mind-boggling—100 points in a game, 55 rebounds in a game, 50.4 points per game in a season; the accomplishments were astounding—seven NBA scoring titles, 11 rebounding titles, four MVPs; and the accolades which Wilt “the Big Dipper” Chamberlain received from the voters were of the highest order. “He totally dominated the sport. He is the greatest NBA player ever (Oscar Robertson is the second best)” (Andy Musser). “He was a larger than life figure...Shaq [Shaquille O’Neal] is not even close to Wilt” (Steve Bucci). “He was a player of incredible historical significance. He is a transcendent player who changed his sport. He was bigger than the sport” (Ray Didinger). “He is the best Philadelphia athlete by far; he revolutionized the game of basketball” (Jody McDonald). “Nobody will touch the records that he set” (Adam Kimelman). “He was the single most dominant player in the history of the NBA—more dominant than Michael Jordan” (Merrill Reese). “He had strength, finesse, endurance, and power—he was devastating” (Michael Barkann).

A few of the voters pointed out that Wilt was so dominant that the NBA enacted several rule changes, including the widening of the lane and the three-second clock, to control his dominance.

Nobody disputed Wilt’s greatness, but some voters, including Dave Beck and Paul Lalley, moved “the Stilt” down a few notches because he spent a fair amount of his professional career outside of Philadelphia. “When I envision Wilt,” said Dave Beck, “I see him in a Lakers uniform, not a Philly uniform.” Wilt’s 1972 world champion Lakers are remembered for their NBA record, 33-game winning streak. Ken Miller felt that Wilt didn’t win the big game enough and that his arch-rival for the Celtics, Bill Russell, seemed to be one up on him most of the time. Wilt squared off against Russell’s Celtics six times in the playoffs while he was in Philadelphia—three times with the Warriors, and three with the Sixers. Wilt’s team came out on the short end of the stick every time except 1967 when the Sixers beat the Celtics in the Eastern Conference Finals en route to the world championship.

Dave Myers thought that Wilt’s 100-point game, although very impressive, generated more hoopla than it deserved. “Too much weight was given to that game. It’s just one game, not a compilation of his entire career.”

