

# Best in the business: michael jordan vs. lebron james

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Michael Jordan once said, " Some people wish it would happen, some people want it to happen, some people make it happen." LeBron James and Michael Jordan lived their life according to this quote whether it was on or off the court. These incredible athletes are two of the most prominent men to ever play in the NBA. Many people argue daily who is the best between the two but face the challenge that they did not play at the same time period. LeBron James is often considered one of the greatest basketball players of all time, but Michael Jordan impacted the basketball world more than any player ever will by his perseverance and will to win. Michael Jordan's coach, Phil Jackson, once said, " He (Michael Jordan) will go down in history as one of the greatest champions of all time." Jordan's career exemplified his passion for the game that will never be forgotten.

Michael Jordan was born 17 February 1963 in Wilmington, North Carolina. Jordan was a competitor from the moment he started playing sports. His father, James Jordan, remarked, " What he does have is a competition problem. He was born with that ... the person he tries to outdo the most of the time is himself." Michael's father was a minor league baseball player and encouraged Michael to follow in his footsteps but Jordan's passion was on the basketball court. In 1981, Jordan enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as the basketball star. His sophomore year at UNC, the Tarheels won the NCAA Division I championship behind Jordan's final basket to defeat Georgetown University. The next two years, Jordan was honored as the NCAA College Player of the Year.

After Jordan's junior year, he decided to join the NBA and was drafted by the Chicago Bulls who would not regret their decision. Michael led the Bulls to

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the playoffs his first season while averaging 28.2 points per game and received the NBA Rookie of the Year Award. During Jordan's second season, he was plagued with many injuries but returned in the 1986-1987 season to be the only player besides Wilt Chamberlin to score more than 3,000 points in a single season. Michael led the Bulls to the Eastern Conference Finals in 1990 but did not win their first NBA championship until the following year by defeating the Los Angeles Lakers. Jordan's name was becoming well known for his agility and power on the court while his leadership abilities impacted the Bulls off the court.

In 1992, the Bulls defeated the Portland Trail Blazers to win their second NBA title and won their third championship the next year. After the 1992-1993 season, Jordan's father, James, was brutally murdered in Wilmington, North Carolina. Jordan shocked the world and decided to retire from the game of basketball to pursue baseball just like his father wanted him to. He would only play one year for a minor league team, the Birmingham Barons as an outfielder. In March of 1995, Jordan would return to basketball and play for the Chicago Bulls who would win three more championships in a row. Jordan became an icon in the basketball world: starring in the movie Space Jam, landing endorsement deals with Nike, and would eventually create his own brand, Air Jordan.

He retired again after the 1997-1998 season but would return to play for the Washington Wizards. In 2001, Michael finally called it quits and retired for the final time. As of now, Jordan is the owner of the Charlotte Bobcats and in 2009 was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. Despite Jordan's rocky road during his professional career, one thing he will

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be remembered by was his passion for the game. Some say he is the greatest champion of all time because of his clutch performances on the biggest stage, but many say he won all of his titles because of his team. Jordan performed on the basketball court like no one had seen before and shocked the NBA with his winning ability. One of Jordan's many inspirational quotes that he lived by was, " You have to expect things of yourself before you can do them."

Unlike Michael Jordan, LeBron James grew up with a single parent who was struggling to provide for the two of them. He was born on 30 December 1984 in Akron, Ohio. His mother was 16 when LeBron was born and his father, Anthony McClelland, was an ex-con who did not want to be a parent. For most of LeBron's childhood, he and his mother bounced from apartment to apartment while she looked for steady work. LeBron was bullied in elementary school because of his home life but he soon found a way to cope with his emotions and intelligence in sports. Ironically, James' hero growing up was Michael Jordan and he tried to be like him in every aspect of the game. LeBron's football coach, Frankie Walker, had an enormous impact on LeBron and Gloria's life. As James became more of a star in sports, he had basically dropped out of school because of his home situation. Mr. Walker saw the potential LeBron had and decided it was best for him to move into the Walker family. LeBron and four other boys he became close too were becoming known around Akron.

These five boys created their own AAU team, with the help of the parents, and went on to win a national championship. LeBron was becoming very popular in the state of Ohio after winning four state championships and a

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national championship his senior year. James would be one of the few players who would be drafted into the NBA without going to college. He was selected first overall to the Cleveland Cavaliers who relied on LeBron to be their savior. Even though LeBron faced a rough childhood, he would no longer have any worries about money. In fact, his estimated endorsement deals from Nike, Coca-Cola, and Upper Deck were over one hundred million dollars. LeBron was nothing less of what everyone expected and he finished his first NBA season as the NBA Rookie of the Year. James became the youngest player in NBA history to record 50 points in a single game and notch a triple-double. After LeBron's first three seasons, he finally reached the playoffs where he would average 35.7 points per game in the first round where they would beat the Washington Wizards.

LeBron would fail to reach the finals that year losing to the Detroit Pistons in the next round. Along with all the noise LeBron was making, he became the youngest player to reach 10,000 points for his career but was still missing one thing; a ring. LeBron only reached the finals once with the Cavs only to be swept by the Spurs. His future in Cleveland was coming to an end when he entered free agency in 2010. The summer of 2010, LeBron made one of the biggest moves of his career signing with the Miami Heat. They would end up losing in the championship game his first year but would come back to win his first NBA Championship. LeBron has been one of the most scrutinized players to ever play in the NBA because of his amazing talent but unable to win the big game. He is often compared to Michael Jordan or Kobe Bryant based off skill but does not have near as many rings as them. As of now, LeBron is on pace to win his second title and the only person that can stop

him is himself. LeBron was placed on a pedestal before he even entered the NBA and once he did not meet the media's expectations, they criticize him for all his flaws. He is by far the greatest basketball player on the planet in the present, but there is one man he will never surpass: Michael Jordan.

Michael Jordan and LeBron James are very hard to argue because no one knows LeBron's legacy yet. Jordan set the standard extremely high but people do not look at little things like the pace James is on. He has already broke many records in his early 20's that Jordan did not set until the later part of his career. A question many people interested in this argument should look at the question, "What will we think of LeBron in ten years?" Phil Jackson was asked his opinion about LeBron and where he is at in his career, which he simply replied, "He is a player that can play four positions. Except for perhaps the center spot, which he hasn't given a shot at yet, he can play those other four positions quite well. This is unique; Michael could play three and was very good at all three of those, but as a power player that LeBron can become, I think he has an opportunity to explore and advance some of the status that he has already gained." Anytime these two athletes are compared, people always talk about how LeBron will never win as many championships as Michael, but even some other NBA never won a single title but still hold many records. One thing LeBron has drastically changed since he entered the NBA is his mental game. Entering the NBA at age 18 and being the cover of Sports Illustrated at 15 can easily manipulate a teenage mind. Last year when LeBron won his first ring, many critics changed their opinion because of how mature and focused he was on and off the court. His first couple seasons with the Cavaliers, James was not focused on winning

but making a name for himself. LeBron is now 27 years old and is on the right track to be the greatest NBA player of all time. When Jordan was 27 he only had one All-Star MVP, one MVP award, and no NBA rings. LeBron has already won three MVP honors, two All-Star MVP's, and one NBA championship ring. These two NBA stars will be remembered forever but who will come out on top. This topic has been argued about since LeBron entered the NBA and will continue until another phenomenal player comes along to be argued about.

The most difficult area in this argument is no one ever saw them play one-on-one or against each other. Michael's success is why he is considered the greatest but LeBron's overall play has exceeded most expectations. Everyone says championships define a legacy but LeBron has created a legacy that is beyond what any other player has ever done yet he is still scrutinized for only having one ring. " Michael Jordan was asked about LeBron and he replied that he would take Kobe Bryant, who has five rings, over LeBron because five beats one every time. LeBron was asked to comment on Michael's interview which he basically answered rings do not always define a player's career, if that was the case, LeBron said he would pick Robert Horry, a seven-time champion, over Jordan. Then he would comment, " I wouldn't do that." (Ginsburg) NBA championships add a lot to a player's legacy, but his individual talent and team leadership is what truly defines a player's career. Michael's legacy is remembered as the greatest " champion" of all time, not the greatest " player" of all time. LeBron has shown the world how incredible he can be and if he plays to his full potential

for the remainder of his career, there will be no question that he is the greatest player of all time.

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