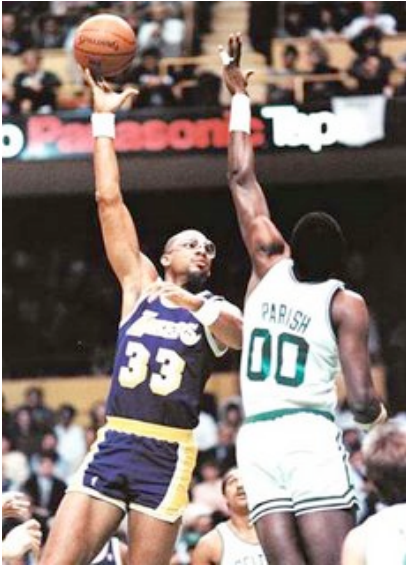


VALENTINE'S VIEWS ON SPORTS

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ESPN is right -- Abdul-Jabbar is best center ever



In honor of Shaquille O'Neal's 35th birthday, ESPN has posted its ranking of the [10 best centers in NBA history](#).

No, Shaq is not No. 1 on the list -- nor do I believe he deserves to be. Shaq is fourth on the list, following Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell.

I believe ESPN got this right. I'm not quite old enough to have seen Chamberlain and Russell, but I saw plenty of Abdul-Jabbar.

I know how brutally powerful Shaq is, and I know earlier in his career he moved exceptionally well for a man who weighs 330 pounds or more. But Abdul-Jabbar, the leading all-time scorer in NBA history with 38,387 points, had more weapons.

Abdul-Jabbar was utterly unstoppable on offense. His amazing sky hook was unblockable, he could shoot with either hand and could make that sky hook from 15-17 feet out. He also had a smooth turnaround jump shot, and possessed the grace and athleticism of men a foot shorter.

Not old enough to have seen Abdul-Jabbar? Or maybe you just don't remember how great he was? Here is [some video](#) to show you.

Abdul-Jabbar was also a more complete player than O'Neal. Eleven times he was named to the all-NBA Defensive Team. Shaq has blocked more than 3 shots per game twice in his career. Abdul-Jabbar did it six times, and the stat did not even exist the first four years of his career.

As a passer, Abdul-Jabbar was also superior. Shaq is considered by some the best passing center in the modern game, but his career best for a season is 3.8 assists per game. Abdul-Jabbar averaged 3.6 assists per game in his career, and topped 4 per game nine times.

The rest of the list, in order, includes Hakeem Olajuwon, Moses Malone, Bill Walton, David Robinson, George Mikan and Patrick Ewing. I can't really argue with any of those selections.

Your thoughts?