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Characteristics of Players in the 2005-2006 U.S. National Basketball Association (NBA)\(^i\)

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The 2010-2011 United States National Basketball Association (NBA) season is now over, with the Dallas Mavericks winning the championship. In 2006, I conducted an in-depth study of the NBA, by compiling and computing data of the players presented on the NBA website, including the names of the players, height, weight, date of birth, high school, college or university attended and position played on the court. Because the NBA does not provide the salary figures of the players on its website, I compiled and computed those figures from the website of *USA Today* newspaper. This study, however, did not focus on the performance of the players on the basketball court, such as points scored, rebounds, assists or blocked shots. Instead, it focuses on the demographics of the league and annual salaries. I will present a summary of the salaries of the players for the 2005-2006 season. It is useful to first present a summary of my findings of the demographics of the NBA for the 2005-2006 season.

**Racial Breakdown and International Players**

As of the early afternoon of March 6, 2006, there were 430 players in the NBA. Of that total, 327 (76%) were Black and 103 (24%) were non-Black. Of the 103 non-Black players, 101 (23.5%) were White and 2 players were North East Asians (from
China and South Korea). Of the 101 White players, International players accounted for 53.5% (54 players). Of the 327 Black players, 26 (8%) were International players. Out of the total 430 players, almost 1 out of every 5 (19.1%) were International players.

International players in the NBA come from 38 nations and territories scattered across the world. As of March 6, 2006, posted on the NBA’s website was a publication of the names, country or geographic entity from which they come, and teams those international players played for. The publication is entitled: “NBA Players from Around the World: 2005-2006 Season.” This publication noted that as of February 28, 2006, there were 82 international players in the NBA from 38 nations and territories, who were either active or inactive at that time. This author grouped these 82 international players based on countries and geographic regions of the world where they come from. Of the 82 players, 44 players (54%) were from 15 nations in Europe (including Russia): Serbia and Montenegro (8 players); Lithuania (6 players); Russia (5 players); Slovenia (5 players); Croatia (4 players); France (4 players); the Netherlands (2 players); Spain (2 players); Ukraine (2 players); Czech Republic (1 player); Germany (1 player); Greece (1 player); Ireland (1 player); and Latvia (1 player).

The region classified as Latin America (the geographic area from Mexico all the way down south to Argentina) had 11 players (13.4%) from 5 nations. The nations are: Argentina (4 players); Brazil (4 players); Belize (1 player); Mexico (1 player); and Uruguay (1 player). The nation of Georgia, in Southwest Asia, had 2 players (2.4%).

The Caribbean region had 8 players (9.6%) from 6 nations and territories. The nations and territories are: Puerto Rico (2 players); U.S. Virgin Islands (2 players);
Dominican Republic (1 player); Haiti (1 player); Martinique (1 player); and Saint Vincent and Grenadines (1 player).

Sub-Saharan Africa had 7 players (8.5%) from 4 nations. The nations are: Senegal (3 players); Congo, Democratic Republic of (2 players); Nigeria (1 player); and Sudan (1 player).

The Middle East had 3 players (3.7%), all from Turkey. Oceania had two nations, with two players (2.4%). The nations are Australia (1 player) and New Zealand (1 player). Northeast Asia had 2 players (2.4%) from two nations. The nations are: China (1 player) and South Korea (1 player). Finally, there are 2 players (2.4%) from one nation in North America (Canada).

**U.S. Geographic Regions of Sending Institutions**

There were 375 players representing high schools, colleges or universities from 40 states in the U.S. plus Washington, D.C. Geographically, of those 375 players, 157 (41.9%) were from high schools, colleges and universities located in the South; 91 (24.3%) were from the Midwest; 73 (19.5%) were from the West; and 54 (14.4%) were from the Northeast.

**Players Directly from U.S. High Schools**

A total of 35 players (8.1% of all 430 players) entered the NBA directly from high school. Of those 35 players, 34 (7.9% of all 430 total players, but 10.4% of all Black players) are Black, and the remaining 1 player is White.

**Players from College Basketball Conferences**

As of April 2, 2006, there were 32 NCAA Division I basketball conferences in the United States. Of those 32 conferences, 27 (84.4%) had at least 1 player in the NBA in
the 2005-2006 season. In addition, 6 other national college athletic organizations or associations also had at least 1 player each in the NBA in the 2005-2006 season. All of these conferences combined had a total of 340 players in the NBA in the 2005-2006 season (As of March 6, 2006).

Of the 38 combined conferences that had at least 1 player in the NBA in the 2005-2006 season, 9 (27.3%) had double figure numbers of players: Big East Conference, 50 players (14.7% of the 340 players); Atlantic Coast Conference, 47 players (13.8% of the 340 players); Southeastern Conference, 39 players (11.5% of the 340 players); Pacific-10 Conference, 39 players (11.5% of the 340 players); Big 12 Conference, 34 players (10% of the 340 players); Big 10 Conference, 33 players (9.7% of the 340 players); Atlantic 10 Conference, 19 players (5.6% of the 340 players); Mountain West Conference, 13 players (3.8% of the 340 players); and Conference USA, 12 players (3.5% of the 340 players).

**2006 U.S. News & World Report Rankings of Sending Colleges and Universities**

There were 166 institutions in the U.S. with players in the 2005-2006 NBA season (as of March 6, 2006), with the academic rankings of those institutions ranked in the 2006 U.S. News & World Report academic rankings of colleges and universities in the United States. The 2006 U.S. News & World Report college rankings were divided into three sections or categories: (1) National Universities, which ranks the top 120 institutions according to academic strength (Tier I and Tier II combined). This particular ranking had 124 institutions because some institutions are tied for certain positions. For example, Princeton University and Harvard University were tied for the top spot; (2) Tier 3 institutions, which were a group of 64 colleges and universities listed alphabetically;
and (3) Tier 4 institutions, which are a group of 60 institutions listed alphabetically. The combined total number of all institutions in the three groups is 248. Let us now examine which of the 166 U.S. academic institutions with players in the 2005-2006 NBA season were ranked in the 2006 *U.S. News & World Report* college rankings.

Two institutions (Duke University and Stanford University) were ranked in the Top 10, with both of them tied at number 5. A total of 8 institutions were ranked in the Top 25. They are: Duke University; Stanford University; Rice University (#17); University of Notre Dame (#18); University of California, Berkeley (#20); Georgetown University (#23); University of California, Los Angeles (#25); and the University of Michigan (#25). A total of 20 institutions were ranked in the Top 50. A total of 30 institutions were ranked in the Top 60. Fifty two institutions were ranked in the Top 100, and 62 institutions were ranked in the Top 120.

For institutions ranked in Tier 3, a total of 27 of them with players in the NBA were ranked in that group. For Tier 4 institutions, a total of 10 institutions with players in the NBA were ranked in that category. For 67 institutions with players in the NBA, no data showed that they were ranked in any of those three separate 2006 *U.S. News and World Report* college rankings.

The 62 institutions ranked in the Top 120 comprised 50% of the 124 institutions in that category. The 27 institutions ranked in the Tier 3 group comprised 42.2% of the total of 64 institutions listed. The 10 institutions ranked in Tier 4 accounted for 16.7% of the total 60 institutions on the list. Finally, combined 99 institutions with players in the NBA were ranked in any one of the three different 2006 *U.S. News & World Report*
college rankings, accounting for 39.9% of the total 248 institutions. Let us briefly examine the salary figures.

**Salaries of NBA Players, 2005-2006 Season**

Players in the NBA are among the highest paid professionals in the United States. I compiled and computed salary figures from *USA Today* for 423 (98.4%) of the total 430 players. Of the 423 players, their total salary for the 2005-2006 season was $1.651 billion. Of the $1.651 billion, $1.301 billion (78.8%) was earned by 322 Black players and $350.15 million (21.2%) was earned by 101 non-Black players. For 99 White players, their total earnings was $344 million (20.8%), and the two North East Asian players earned a combined $6.233 million.

The average salary of all of the 423 players was $3,903,616. For 322 Black players it was $4,040,633 and $3,466,792 for the 101 non-Black players.

Of the 423 players, 123 (29.1%) earned $5 million or more. There were 101 Black players (23.9% of 423 players, but 31.4% of 322 Black players) who earned $5 million or more. There were 22 non-Black players (5.2% of 423 players, but 21.8% of 101 non-Black players) who earned $5 million or more. There were 21 White players (5% of 423 players, but 21.2% of 99 White players) who earned $5 million or more.

There were 40 players (9.5% of all 423 players) who earned $10 million or more. There were 35 Black players (8.3% of 423 players, but 10.9% of 322 Black players) who earned $10 million or more. There were 5 non-Black players (1.2% of 423 players, but 5% of all non-Black players) who earned $10 million or more. There were 4 White
players (0.0094% of 423 players, but 4% of 99 White players) who earned $10 million or more.

Almost 3 out of every 4 players earned $1 million or more. Of the 423 players, 315 (74.5%) earned $1 million or more. A total of 236 Black players (55.8% of 423 players, but 73.3% of 322 Black players) earned $1 million or more. A total of 79 non-Black players (18.7% of 423 players, but 78.2% of 101 non-Black players) earned $1 million or more.

Finally, it is useful to note that NBA players are important tax payers. For example, I utilized Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax information in 2006 to determine the tax bracket for NBA players. All of the NBA players were in the 35% federal tax bracket. This means that for the $1.651 billion, their total federal tax could have been $577 million. For the $1.301 billion earned by the 322 Black players, they could have paid $455 million in federal taxes. For the $350.15 million earned by the 101 non-Black players, they could have paid $122.5 million in taxes.

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