The 2016 NBA Finals are upon us. LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers have already secured their place in the championship bout. Tonight the 73-9 Golden State Warriors face off against the Oklahoma City Thunder. It should be a game for the ages. Curry vs. Westbrook. Kevin vs. Klay with a K. Andrew Bogut vs. Steven Adam's moustache. I can't wait. I'm rooting for the Thunder because I want to see Kevin hoist that Larry O'Brien trophy, but I can't say I'd be too upset if the Warriors win. They're so much fun to watch and Steph Curry is just spectacular with the ball in his hands. Whoever is there, this year's Finals should be a memorable one.

What better day than today, Memorial Day, to recall the greatest shots, plays, games, moves and moments in NBA Finals history. From Ginobili's emphatic dunk on Chris Bosh to 36-year old Bill Russell leading the greatest Finals upset over the seemingly invincible Chamberlain-led Lakers, the NBA Finals has provided some of the greatest moments, not just in basketball history, but in sports history.

Today, I commemorate almost 70-years of NBA championship basketball by counting down the 30 greatest moments in Finals history.

### ****30. Frazier Strips Mr. Clutch - 1970****

In the legendary seventh game of the 1970 NBA Finals Walt Frazier played one of the greatest games in NBA Playoffs history. Willis Reed may have made the headlines, but Frazier carried the Knicks to the Promised Land.

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### ****29. Kerr's Shot & Pippen’s Steal - 1997****

Scottie Pippen might be the best perimeter defender in NBA history. And this steal and save is exhibit A. The Jazz had one more opportunity to tie or win game 6 and force a game 7. But Pippen knocked away the inbound pass, and in one diving motion, saved the ball from going out of bounds and knocked it to Toni Kukoc for the series-clinching dunk.

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### ****28. Ginobili Destroys Chris Bosh - 2014****

The San Antonio Spurs got their revenge and then some in the 2014 Finals. In five decisive games the Spurs cremated the Miami Heat and sent LeBron running scared back to Cleveland—en route to their fifth championship. No moment from the series better sums up the Spurs dominance than Ginobili's poster dunk on Chris Bosh.

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### ****27. Jerry West’s Half-Court Heave - 1970****

Here's the scenario: Series is tied 1-1. The game is tied with less than ten seconds on the clock. Knicks forward, Dave DeBusschere launches a shot with a man his face. Money. The Lakers are now down 2 with three seconds left. Your move, Mr. Clutch.

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### ****26. Dr. J Rocks the Rim…Twice - 1977****

The Doctor performed his high-flying operations all over the Portland defense during the '77 Finals. Even the great Bill Walton found himself on a Dr. J poster. Though the Sixers would lose the series, Julius Erving had put the NBA on notice in his first NBA Finals appearance.

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### ****25. Celtics Stun the Staples Center - 2008****

Kobe and his Lakers looked to even the series with a game 4 victory at home. With about five minutes to go in the first half L.A. seemed well on their way to a much-needed win. But Boston chipped away at the lead for the next two quarters and stole the game from the Lakers to take a 3-1 series lead.

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### ****24. [Gerald]**** "Henderson Steals the Ball!" ****- 1984****

The Boston Celtics, down two with eighteen seconds left, faced the prospect of losing the first two games of the '84 Finals on their home court. The Lakers had possession and just needed inbound the ball and get it into the front-court. But James Worthy made a foolish cross-court pass that was intercepted by Gerald Henderson. Henderson scored and the Celtics would go on to win in overtime.

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### ****23. Air Jordan Switches Hands - 1991****

Michael Jordan's first appearance on this list is MJ's iconic shot from the 1991 Finals. Many skeptics believed the Lakers would triumph in the Finals because of their experience. The skeptics were seemingly validated after a game 1 Bulls loss in Chicago. The rest of the series was a wash however. The Bulls cruised to their first title in 5 games. Jordan rubbed salt in the wound with his "Ohh what a spectacular move!!" shot in which he switched hands in mid-air before laying the ball gently off the glass.

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### ****22. Iverson Crosses Up Tyronn Lue - 2001****

The 2001 Lakers had not lost a playoff game coming into the Finals. Their opponent, the Allen-Iverson-led Sixers, stood no chance at dethroning the champs. But that didn't mean they couldn't steal a game and end L.A.'s hopes of an undefeated postseason. Which is exactly what Iverson did in game 1, as he dropped 48 points including a sensational jumper in front of the Lakers bench.

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### ****21. Miami "Won't End Their Season Like This" - 2006****

The Dallas Mavericks took the first two games of the series and looked to be well on their way to an insurmountable 3-0 series advantage in game 3. Down 13 with under seven minutes left to play Pat Riley implored his Heat players, "do you really want to go out like this?" Apparently Dwyane Wade did not. He sparked the comeback and rejuvenated his team. The Heat would win the next three games and capture their first title.

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### ****20. Here Comes Willis - 1970****

This one gets my vote for most overrated moment in Finals history. Don't get me wrong, what Willis did was remarkable. He was the undisputed leader of the Knicks; someone whose presence was immeasurable. But he only scored four points in the famous game seven, yet somehow overshadowed Walt Frazier's brilliant performance—the true determining factor in that game. Regardless, Willis willed himself through a serious injury. He inspired his teammates as well as the Garden crowd, and helped bring a championship to New York.

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### ****19. Jordan Goes for 55 - 1993****

[Charles Barkley believed that God wanted the Phoenix Suns to win the NBA championship](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJ_jc1oiSjM) in 1993. After the series he amended his proclamation to say that he just didn't realize God was wearing #23 for the Bulls.Jordan laid waste to the Suns defense on his way to 55 points and 3-1 series lead.

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### ****18. Jordan Buries Utah - 1997****

Karl Malone won the 1997 NBA MVP award because the people wanted to give the award to someone other than Jordan. Which was stupid. And everyone secretly knew it. But the voters never planned on MJ making them look like idiots in vindicating fashion. With the game tied Karl Malone stepped to the line with the chance to go ahead in the final seconds. Clank. Clank. Jordan's turn. Guess how that went.

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### ****17. Lakers 4th Quarter Scramble - 2009****

The 2009 Los Angeles Lakers found themselves in a hole late in game 4. The underrated Magic were less than a minute from evening the series. But Kobe and Derek Fischer had no desire to let the Magic back into the series. Kobe started the frantic comeback with a dazzling spin move in transition and a dump-off for a trailing Pau Gasol. Down 3, Fischer buried a deep three-pointer over Jameer Nelson. The Lakers prevailed in the overtime session.

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### ****16. The Shrug - 1992****

When Challenging Michael Jordan Goes Wrong, example 3,942:

The Portland TrailBlazers made the unforgivable mistake of telling the media their defensive strategy for the Bulls going into the Finals. Not a good idea in general; a terrible idea when the other team has Michael Jordan. The Blazers challenged the Bulls to beat them with threes. So MJ did. Maybe shut up, Rick Adelman?

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### ****15. Tony Parker Beats the Shot Clock…Barely - 2013****

Game 1 of the greatest Finals series of my lifetime ended in dramatic fashion. Up 2 with under ten seconds remaining, The Spurs got the ball into the hands of Tony Parker. Parker loses his footing and has to pivot quickly in order to get around LeBron. He releases a shot the beats the shot clock by milliseconds. The ball ricochets off the backboard and bounces on the front of the rim (for suspense) briefly before dropping through the net.

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### ****14. Dr. J Defies Physics - 1980****

The 1980 Finals was a clash of titans featuring Dr. J, League MVP Kareem-Abdul-Jabbar and rookie Magic Johnson. The Lakers may have won the series but the highlight of the series goes to the Doctor with this sleek baseline move. Erving floats in the air so long, he appears to not be bound by the laws of physics.

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### ****13. Kareem’s Skyhook - 1974****

The most iconic move in NBA history was also a clutch one. After the NCAA banned dunking because of Kareem (Lew Alcindor at the time), Jabbar developed the shot we now know famously as, "The Skyhook." During game 6 of the 1974 Finals Kareem found his Bucks trailing by one in the waning seconds. He caught the inbound pass and made his move. Everyone knew what he wanted to do, but it didn't matter. The shot was unstoppable. Swish. Get ready for game 7.

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### ****12. The Triple-Overtime - 1976****

The Phoenix Suns had little reason the think they could win in Boston Garden. But after winning games 3 and 4 it didn't seem impossible. The Celtics jumped out to a big lead early, but the scrappy Suns rallied and forced overtime. In the second OT John Havlicek banked in a leaner to give Boston a 1-point lead with a second remaining. The Suns Paul Westphal had the brilliant idea to call a timeout—they didn't have any. The Suns were assessed a technical foul and the Celtics were awarded one free-throw, which Jo Jo White made. But now Phoenix could advance the ball to half-court. They inbounded the ball to Garfield Heard who turned and threw up a prayer that obviously went in. It was just that kind of night. Boston walked off victorious that night, but both teams will go down in history for being part of one of the greatest games ever played.

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### ****11. The Flu Game - 1997****

There are actually a few theories about what the real cause of Jordan's ailment before and during game 5 of the 1997 NBA Finals. [Jalen Rose thinks His Airness was actually hungover](http://bleacherreport.com/articles/1516339-jalen-rose-claims-that-michael-jordans-flu-game-was-actually-a-hangover-game). And Jordan's trainer, Tim Grover, thinks MJ was poisoned. It doesn't matter though. Whatever it was, it wasn't going to stop the GOAT from getting his fifth ring.

Have you ever had the flu? It sucks. We often forget what being sick is really like. People even hope for sick-days because they're easy to romanticize as a day off. Then you get sick and remember how terrible being sick actually is. How the hell did Jordan score 38 points in that condition? I can't even make myself breakfast when I have the flu.

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### ****10. The Robert Horry Show - 2005****

Robert Horry earned the moniker "Big Shot Rob" long before the 2005 Finals. Horry always looked like the most relaxed dude on the court—to the point that sometimes it seemed like he didn't care. That couldn't be farther from the truth though. If you could look into Horry's eyes in 2005 you would've seen the eye of the tiger biding his team, waiting to strike. In the 4th quarter of game 5 of the Finals Big Shot Rob struck. He scored all 21 of his points in the last eighteen minutes of play, including the game-winning three-pointer.

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### ****9. Mavericks Comeback - 2011****

The Dallas Mavericks lost game 1 of the 2011 Finals and game 2 appeared to be a repeat with about seven minutes left in regulation. Wade hit a corner three to put the Heat up by 15. The Mavericks didn't appreciate LeBron and D-Wade bragging in front of Dallas' bench. Nor did they want to find themselves in 2-0 hole. Motivated inside and out, the Mavs crept back into the game. In the game's final moments Dirk Nowitzki knocked down a clutch left-handed layup to secure victory.

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### ****8. Magic Johnson’s Junior Skyhook - 1987****

You would think somebody would try to emulate Kareem's elegant Skyhook. It was virtually un-blockable and deadly accurate. Jabbar's teammate, Magic Johnson, adopted his own version of the hook-shot in order to punish smaller point guards in the post. It worked pretty well for him too. Ask the Celtics frontline.

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### ****7. Paxson’s Three - 1993****

You're surprised to see this ranked so high aren't you? I know historically Paxson's game-winner isn't as fondly remembered as some of the previously mentioned Finals moments. But this one is more important. The Bulls had a 3-1 lead going into game 5 in Chicago. They lost the game and the chance to finish the series in Chicago. Instead, they went back to Phoenix for game 6 and if necessary, game 7. If the Bulls lost game 6 they would have played game 7 in Phoenix. The Suns would have home-court advantage, the momentum, and the Bulls would be feeling the pressure of blowing a 3-1 series lead in the Finals. So yeah, this was a pretty big shot.

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### ****6. Game 4 of The 1984 Finals - 1984****

The greatest game from the greatest Finals series in NBA history. Game 3 saw the Lakers run the Celtics right off the court en route to a 33-point massacre. What looked like the beginning of a series to be dominated by L.A. was actually the spark that ignited the Celtics. Boston came into game 4 on the road seeing red. The game would teeter on the brink of breaking out into an all-out brawl all night. Both teams dealt heavy blows, but it was Mr. Larry Bird who would put the dagger in the Lakers heart. The series was never the same after game 4.

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### ****5. Isiah Thomas Has Heart, And Then Some - 1988****

Holding a 3-2 series lead, the Detroit Pistons hoped to finish off the Lakers in game 6. Then tragedy struck. Franchise point guard Isiah Thomas sprained his ankle badly. He came out of the game, but only for a minute. He re-entered the game and scored an NBA-record 25 points in the third quarter. And he was clearly hobbling the whole time. Possibly the gutsiest performance in Finals history. Too bad they didn't win the game (because of an EGREGIOUS foul call).

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### ****4. Magic Johnson Starts at Center - 1980****

Kareem went down in game 5 of the Finals against the Sixers with a sprained ankle. Though he would return to help lead the Lakers to victory and a 3-2 series, he wasn't capable of playing game 6, and probably game 7 as well. Going back to Philadelphia, the Sixers looked suited to take the series with Jabbar sidelined. But Magic Johnson ambushed them. He started at center, played forward and guard, and posted a transcendent 42 points, 15 rebounds and 7 assists. The Lakers won the series and Magic was named Finals MVP. Oh and he was 20.

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### ****3. The Greatest Finals Upset - 1969****

In his final season Bill Russell played for, and coached, the Celtics to their 11th NBA Championship. It would be his 12th Finals appearance in his 13-year career. Unlike their other championship seasons, the Celtics were underdogs in ’69. The Lakers were heavily favored in the Finals. They added Wilt Chamberlain to their roster the previous summer. L.A. now boasted a starting lineup that included three hall-of-famers: Jerry West, Elgin Baylor and Wilt Chamberlain. Russell was 36 and the only player remaining from the Celtics first championship squad. No one even expected Boston to reach the Finals that year. But they defied all odds and forced a game 7 in Los Angeles. The Lakers organization posted flyers in the arena that virtually guaranteed a Lakers victory. Someone showed this to Bill Russell…and the rest is history.

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### ****2.****  ****Ray Allen Saves Miami's Season****

It looked too good to be true. And it was. San Antonio held a 10-point lead entering the fourth quarter of game 6 in Miami. Are the Spurs really about to steal this series? IN MIAMI?! These old guys are about to beat the Heat's Big Three?Then it all came crumbling down. LeBron lost his headband, and with it, any fear he had. The Heat stormed back into the game. Still, the Spurs had their chances down the stretch to close the game out. And LeBron almost blew it, too. In the last minute, down 2, James turned the ball over twice, and bricked a couple of threes. He did knock down one huge three-pointer, but missed the potential game-tying shot. However, Bosh corralled the rebound and passed to Ray Allen who was drifting backwards into the corner. He caught the ball and elevated, somehow keeping his momentum from forcing him to fade away from the hoop. Perfect swish. The game went into OT. Miami won. Spurs fans cried. I cried. And the Heat repeated as champions.

All the Spurs had to do was get one rebound! Or make one more free throw! AAAAAHHHHH!!!!

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### ****1. The Great Jordan Sequence - 1998****

The single most incredible sequence of events I’ve witnessed in sports. Michael Jordan, at age 34, was still the League’s Most Valuable Player and leading scorer. But the Chicago Bulls looked mortal for the first time since Jordan’s return to basketball. They managed to weasel their way to the Finals for the third straight year, and with a late surge of energy, grabbed a commanding 3-1 lead in the series. But similar to the ’93 Finals, the Bulls lost game 5 at home and now faced the possibility of two more games on the road. Pippen threw his back out early in game 6 and Michael had to carry the load. He scored 45 points on the night.

With the game winding down, and the score tied, Stockton hit a three with 41 seconds left. After a Chicago timeout, the ball is inbounded to Michael Jordan. And then it began. No other Bull would touch the ball again.

There you have it. The 30 greatest, most memorable moments in NBA Finals history. I'm sure plenty of you will disagree with the order. But that's not what's important. What matters is that you remember these moments. Even if you weren't alive to see them.

For those of you thinking I left out any moments, here are my honorable mentions.

### ****Honorable Mentions:****

[Jordan and-one on Greg Ostertag](https://giphy.com/gifs/M8AZSW07bSiYg)

[LeBron Denies Tiago Splitter](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI8-PbK1wmY)

[Jordan Dunks on Sam Perkins](https://giphy.com/gifs/KU2Hi6nEiRvX2)

[Kobe Serves Up a Facial On Todd MacCulloch](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_p2OEMyZ1E)

[Paul Pierce 4-Point Play](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELQJBLK475U)

[Drexler Slams on Cartwright](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKtdn0lmzr0)

[Olajuwon Blocks Starks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3-64I6zp7k)