

It's Been Long Enough

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Introduction

The Basketball Hall of Fame is arguably the “easiest” to be enshrined among the major sports. Compared to the MLB and NFL, everyone who has a chance of making it to the Hall eventually gets in. That includes players with shorter peaks (eg. Tracy McGrady), complementary role players on championship teams (eg. Dick Barnett), and players who were very good, but not among the league’s elite (eg. Bob Dandridge, Walter Davis). This is not to say these players are not deserving; it’s to segue to my next point. On the Basketball Reference website, they have a statistic called *Hall of Fame Probability*. Among players with 400+ career games, the model attempts to calculate how likely a player is to be enshrined using six predictors. Here are the predictors:

- Height in inches
- NBA Titles
- NBA Leadership Points
 - These points are given to players who ranked among the top ten in points, rebounds, assists, steals, or minutes played in any given season.
 - A player receives 10 points for placing first and 1 point for placing tenth.
- Highest Number of Win Shares in a season
- Number of All-Star Selections

The model rewards players for sustained excellence, dominant peaks, winning titles, and...being taller? More on that later. It’s difficult to boil a player’s NBA story and career to a single number. My main critique is that it lacks recognition for other seasonal awards; that leads to the undervaluing of players like Michael Cooper, Bobby Jones, Sidney Moncrief, and Ben Wallace¹. As mentioned in the model’s description, this is an NBA statistic evaluating the Basketball Hall of Fame. International contributors like Dino Radja, Vlade Divac, Toni Kukoc, and Arvydas Sabonis have low HoF probabilities. ABA legends like Charlie Scott, Spencer Haywood, Zelmo Beaty, and Louie Dampier are in the same boat. The statistic tells varying stories about the players that I mentioned at the beginning.

¹Defensive specialists as a whole get underappreciated by statistics.

Player	Prob
Tracy McGrady	95.5%
Dick Barnett	0.7%
Bob Dandridge	16.7%
Walter Davis	30.9%

Table 1: A look at the HOF probability

The statistic will favor McGrady the most due to his peak seasons and accumulation of All-Star honors. Barnett was a very crucial complementary player on the Knicks’ title teams, so the lack of gaudy numbers and All-Star recognition (one-time selection) explain the very low number. Walter Davis was a six-time All-Star elite scorer for more than a decade and a strong peak at the beginning of his career. Dandridge was a two-way four-time All-Star and the third-best player on two title-winning teams; his status is somewhere between Davis and Barnett as a strong scorer and a championship contributor.

The statistic is not perfect; it’s designed more for evaluating players who were stars or are on the edge of enshrinement, what the NBA community calls the “Hall of Very Good.” Examples include Joe Johnson, Shawn Marion, and Amar’e Stoudemire. Those players were stars and some of the better players in the league for many years; they made several All-Star teams, they had incredible peaks, but they weren’t quite at the top. Among retired players, those three names comprise three of the top nine players in Hall of Fame probability who have not been inducted yet.

Player	Prob
<i>Larry Foust</i>	<i>94.2%</i>
Shawn Marion	75.6%
Amar’e Stoudemire	72.9%
Rajon Rondo	60.6%
Blake Griffin	54.8%
LaMarcus Aldridge	50.9%
Joe Johnson	50.6%
Shawn Kemp	38.5%
John Wall	32.4%

Table 2: The nine retired, uninducted players with the highest HOF prob.

Does that read 94%? Larry Foust has probability of 94.2% and is not an enshrined member? With a probability that high, Foust is in incredibly elite company. 79 players have a probability of 94% or above; Larry Foust is the only one who is not a Hall-of-Famer or an active player; those twelve active players are all locks or near-locks for the Hall² Returning to the leaderboard, among retired players, Foust’s 94.2% probability unaccompanied by enshrinement is an outrageous outlier. The border for outlier status is 32.1%, so the previous table consists of the nine players whose probabilities are extreme enough. Foust’s distance from the pack is still staggering; he’s more than four standard deviations removed from the mean. He’s almost an entire standard deviation

²The 12 active players: LeBron, KD, CP3, Curry, Harden, Westbrook, AD, Giannis, Jokic, Lillard, PG-13, and Kyrie. All of these players are first ballot; Paul George’s recent seasons are hurting his PR, but his résumé is incredible.

removed from the next closest player (Shawn Marion, 75.6%). His lack of enshrinement is puzzling, and my goal is to make sense of his lack of inclusion.

Do They Even Read my Résumé?

Let's unpack the career rap sheet behind that 94.2% figure. Larry Foust was a big man whose career spanned twelve seasons (1950-62). He was an eight-time All-Star selection and a two-time All-NBA selection (including First Team honors in 1955). Foust's best years were spent with the Pistons, formerly located in Fort Wayne, where he made the All-Star team in each of his first six seasons. He was a double-double machine in his prime; he averaged a double-double in the 1950s decade and narrowly missed the mark of averaging a double-double for his career.

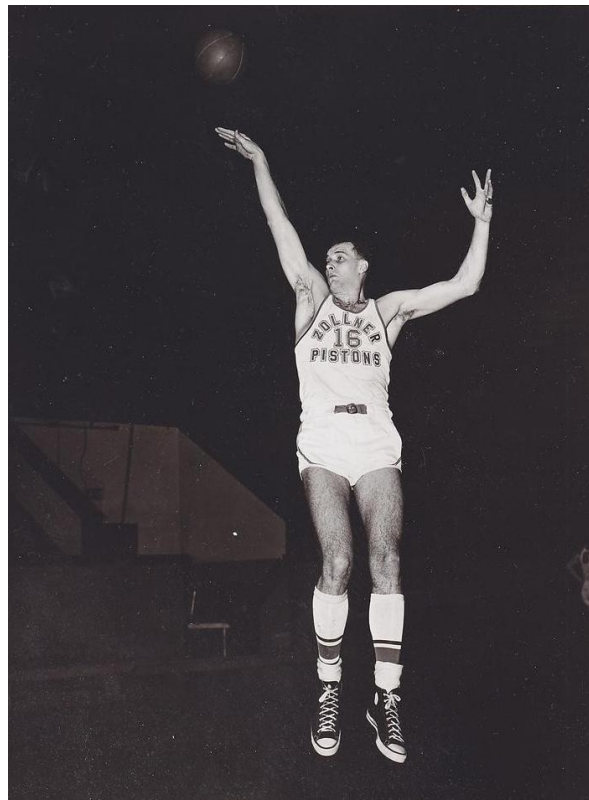


Figure 1: Larry Foust

Let's talk about the '50s. Foust's career averages of 13.7 points and 9.8 rebounds might appear pedestrian by today's standards. Those marks are in line with 2025 Jarrett Allen (13.5 pts and 9.7 reb). His work needs to be assessed in the context of the era in which he was active. In 2025, the average NBA pace (possessions per 48 minutes) was 98.8 compared to 97.4 in 1951. The average true shooting percentage in 2025 was 57.6% compared to 42.8% in 1951. So 1951 (Foust's rookie season), was a period when the game was slower and far more inefficient. Before judging Foust's work against all NBA Hall-of-Famers, he should be compared to his direct contemporaries.

Among NBA players in the 1950s (1950-59), here are Foust's ranks in a few areas:

Stat	Rank
8 All-Star Nods	3rd
9,216 Points	8th
6,703 Rebounds	2nd
3,008 Free Throws	6th
6 Seasons Averaging 10+ pts & 10+ reb	3rd

Table 3: A “Long” Reign

Foust’s eight All-Star selections are particularly notable in his Hall of Fame case. His Wikipedia page, which has the undertones of a “Get Foust in the Hall” campaign, notes that he is the only (retired) NBA player with that many All-Star nods to not be inducted. There are 56 such players; Foust is the only one left out.

“The Big One” was a dominant presence in the 1950s, constantly ranking among the top 20 in categories related to points, rebounds, shooting, win shares, PER, etc. Foust’s finest season was his 1955 campaign. He averaged 17 points and 10 rebounds on elite efficiency; he led the league in field goal percentage and true shooting percentage. He also led the association in win shares per 48 minutes, while ranking third in PER.

The stats were far from empty; Foust’s Pistons had a fantastic season as well. Alongside Foust, the Pistons were anchored by Hall-of-Famers Andy Phillip and the “Yardbird,” George Yardley. They also acquired the services of NBA pioneer Max Zaslofsky, a microwave who could get hot at any moment. Sadly, their season ended in heart-breaking fashion. After advancing past the Lakers, who had been a thorn in the side of the Pistons for years, Fort Wayne fell one game short of a ring. One point short, actually; they lost Game 7 to the Nationals 92 to 91. Foust went to war with fellow big man Dolph Schayes, one of the best to ever play Naismith’s game. He had a dominant 24-point showing in Game 7, but poor shooting nights from both Yardley and starter Mel Hutchins left the Pistons hanging (they shot a combined 9-31). Even Schayes had a rough game (4-18 FG), but seven Nationals scored in double figures, including 15 points each from two unlikely sources: Billy Kenville and George King. The Nationals dominated both the glass (53 to 42) and the free throw margin (49 to 34) to overcome a poor shooting day.

The 1956 Pistons made the Finals and lost to the Warriors in a gentleman’s sweep. Foust averaged a double-double and Yardley played like a man possessed, but the Pistons didn’t have enough horses. The Warriors were led by the lethal Paul Arizin and had six (!) players average double figure scoring for the series.

Foust, now a Minneapolis Laker, made it to the Finals again in 1959. Despite having Rookie of the Year Elgin Baylor, who was already one of the top players in the NBA, the Lakers were quickly grounded in a sweep at the hands of a scary Celtics team. Foust left everything on the court. He racked up 26 points and 22 rebounds in a Game 3 loss, where Bob Cousy had 23 points and 19 dimes and Bill Russell had 30 rebounds.

Those were Foust’s most prominent playoff runs³. He wasn’t able to collect a ring primarily because he ran into better teams, but he certainly gave it his all.

³He was on the Hawks in 1961, but played sparingly in the Finals due to his age

Conclusion

To recap, he spent the 1950s racking up double-doubles and earning All-Star nods. He was a mainstay among the league leaders in several categories and wasn't prone to shrinking in the postseason. Yet, in an era where seemingly everyone notable was inducted, Foust remains unenshrined. Was there something heinous off the court? Nothing. Foust took a job in marketing after retiring, and that's the extent of his "Personal Life" section on Wikipedia. Some members of the 1955 Pistons were alleged to have thrown Game 7, but Foust was not named among those accused.

Larry Foust has all the elements of a Hall-of-Famer. He was dominant in his era, he was among the best players in the NBA, he earned many accolades, he was consistent, and his peak was not short by any means. His Hall of Fame probability and All-Star selections show that Foust is an outlier. He should be a member and it's confounding why he's been left out. He had longer peaks than Hall-of-Famers like Jim Pollard and Arnie Risen and higher peaks than Harry Gallatin, for example. This is not to diminish those players; it's to say that Foust is on their level. Larry actually has a higher Hall of Fame probability than all three of them.

There is still a chance Foust could be inducted. Carl Braun, a guard who played in the 1950s, was inducted in 2020; his statistical exploits and accolades look modest in comparison to Foust's. However, it shows that the NBA will induct players long after they were active.

Foust played in the same era as many all-time great frontcourt players: George Mikan, Bob Pettit, Dolph Schayes, Ed Macauley, a young Bill Russell, Clyde Lovellette, Harry Gallatin, Vern Mikkelsen, Neil Johnston, etc. This positional log jam contributed to Foust only earning All-NBA honors twice, but Foust still has the fourth-most All-Star appearances among that group. He was never overshadowed; he still made his name.

References

- [1] “Hall of Fame Probability,” *Basketball-Reference*, [URL](#).
- [2] Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, “Larry Foust,” *Wikipedia*, 29 July 2025, [URL](#).
- [3] Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, “1955 NBA Finals,” *Wikipedia*, 21 June 2025, [URL](#).