

= Bob Cousy =

Robert Joseph " Bob " Cousy ( born August 9 , 1928 ) is an American retired professional basketball player . Cousy played point guard with the Boston Celtics from 1950 to 1963 and briefly with the Cincinnati Royals in the 1969 ? 70 season . Cousy first demonstrated his basketball abilities while playing for his high school varsity team in his junior year . He obtained a scholarship to the College of the Holy Cross , where he led the Crusaders to berths in the 1948 NCAA Tournament and 1950 NCAA Tournament and was named an NCAA All @-@ American for 3 seasons . Cousy was initially drafted as the third overall pick in the first round of the 1950 NBA draft by the Tri @-@ Cities Blackhawks , but after he refused to report , he was picked up by Boston . Cousy had a very successful career with the Celtics , playing on six championship teams , being voted into 13 NBA All @-@ Star Games and 12 All @-@ NBA First and Second Teams and winning the NBA Most Valuable Player Award in 1957 .

In his first 11 seasons in the NBA , Cousy led the league in assists eight straight times and introduced a new blend of ball @-@ handling and passing skills that earned him the nicknames " Cooz , " " The Houdini of the Hardwood , " and ? as he was regularly introduced at Boston Garden ? " Mr. Basketball . " After his playing career , he coached the Royals for several years , and even made a short comeback for them at age 41 . He then became a broadcaster for Celtics games . He was elected into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1971 , and in his honor , the Celtics retired his # 14 jersey and hung it in the rafters of Boston Garden . Cousy was named to the NBA 25th Anniversary Team in 1971 , the NBA 35th Anniversary Team in 1981 , and the NBA 's 50th Anniversary All @-@ Time Team in 1996 , making him one of only four players that were selected to each of those teams . He was also the first president of National Basketball Players Association .

= = Early years = =

Cousy was the only son of poor French immigrants living in New York City . He grew up in the Yorkville neighborhood of Manhattan 's East Side , in the midst of the Great Depression . His father Joseph was a cab driver , who earned extra income by moonlighting . The elder Cousy had served in the German Army during World War I. Shortly after the war , his first wife died of pneumonia , leaving behind a young daughter . He married Julie Corlet , a secretary and French teacher from Dijon . At the time of the 1930 census , the family was renting an apartment in Astoria , Queens , for \$ 50 per month . The younger Cousy spoke French for the first 5 years of his life , and started to speak English only after entering primary school . He spent his early days playing stickball in a multicultural environment , regularly playing with African Americans , Jews and other ethnic minority children . These experiences ingrained him with a strong anti @-@ racist sentiment , an attitude he prominently promoted during his professional career . When he was 12 , his family moved to a rented house in St. Albans , Queens . That summer , the elder Cousy put a \$ 500 down payment for a \$ 4 @, @ 500 house four blocks away . He rented out the bottom two floors of the three @-@ story building to tenants to help make his mortgage payments on time .

= = = High school = = =

Cousy took up basketball at the age of 13 , as a student at St. Pascal 's elementary school , and was " immediately hooked " . The following year , he entered Andrew Jackson High School in St Albans . His basketball success was not immediate , and in fact he was cut from the school team in his first year . Later that year , he joined the St. Albans Lindens of the Press League , a basketball league sponsored by the Long Island Press , where he developed his basketball skills and gained much @-@ needed experience . The next year , however , he was again cut during the tryouts for the school basketball team .

That same year , he fell out of a tree and broke his right hand . The injury forced him to play left @-@ handed until his hand healed , making him effectively ambidextrous . In retrospect , he

described this accident as " a fortunate event " and cited it as a factor in making him more versatile on the court . During a Press League game , the high school basketball coach saw him play . He was impressed by the budding star 's ability to play with both hands , and invited Cousy to come to practice the following day to try out for the junior varsity team . He did well enough to become a permanent member of the JV squad . He continued to practice day and night , and by his junior year was sure he was going to be promoted to the varsity ; but failing his citizenship course made him ineligible for the first semester . He joined the varsity squad midway through the season , however , scoring 28 points in his first game . He had no intention of attending college , but after he started to make a name for himself on the basketball court he started to focus on improving in both academics and basketball skills to make it easier for him to get into college .

He again excelled in basketball his senior year , leading his team to the Queens divisional championship and amassing more points than any other New York City high school basketball player . He was even named captain of the Journal @-@ American All @-@ Scholastic team . He then began to plan for college . His family had wanted him to attend a Catholic school , and he wanted to go somewhere outside New York City . Boston College recruited him , and he considered accepting the BC offer , but it had no dormitories , and he was not interested in being a commuter student . Soon afterward , he received an offer from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester , Massachusetts about forty miles ( 64 kilometers ) west of Boston . He was impressed by the school , and accepted the basketball scholarship it offered him . He spent the summer before matriculating working at Tamarack Lodge in the Catskill Mountains and playing in a local basketball league along with a number of established college players .

= = = College basketball career = = =

He was one of six freshmen on the Holy Cross Crusaders ' varsity basketball team in 1946 ? 47 . From the start of the season , coach Doggie Julian chose to play the six freshmen off the bench in a two @-@ team system , so that each player would get some time on the court . As members of the " second team " , they would come off the bench nine and a half minutes into the game , where they would relieve the " first team " starters . They would sometimes get to play as much as a third or even half of the game , but even so Cousy was so disappointed with the lack of playing time that he went to the campus chapel after practice to pray that Julian would give him more of a chance to show off his basketball talents on the court . Early in the season , however , he got into trouble with Julian , who accused him of being a showboater on court . Even as late as that 1946 ? 47 season basketball was a static game , depending on slow , deliberate player movement and flat @-@ footed shots . Far different was Cousy 's up @-@ tempo , streetball @-@ like game , marked by ambidextrous finesse play and notable for behind @-@ the @-@ back dribbling and no @-@ look , behind @-@ the @-@ back and half @-@ court passing . Even so , he had enough playing time in games to score 227 points for the season , finishing with the third @-@ highest total on the team . The team , with stars George Kaftan and Joe Mullaney , finished the 1946 ? 47 basketball season 24 ? 3 .

On the basis of that record , the Crusaders got into the 1947 NCAA Tournament as the last seed in the then only eight @-@ team tournament . In the first game , Holy Cross defeated Navy 55 @-@ 47 in front of a sell @-@ out crowd at Madison Square Garden . Mullaney led the team in scoring with 18 points , due mostly in part to Navy coach Ben Carnevale 's decision to have his players back off from Mullaney , who was reputed as being more of a playmaker than a shooter . In the semifinal game , the Crusaders faced CCNY , coached by Nat Holman , one of the game 's earliest innovators . The Crusaders , led by Kaftan 's thirty points , easily defeated the Beavers 60 ? 45 . In the championship game , Holy Cross faced Oklahoma , coached by Bruce Drake , in another sold @-@ out game at Madison Square Garden . Kaftan followed up his 30 @-@ point semifinal heroics with a mere 18 points in the title game , which was far more than enough for the Crusaders to defeat the Sooners 58 ? 47 . Cousy played poorly , however , scoring only four points on 2 @-@ for @-@ 13 shots . Holy Cross became the first New England college to win the NCAA tournament . On their arrival back in Worcester , the team was given a hero 's welcome by about ten thousand cheering

fans who met their train at Union Station .

The following season Julian limited Cousy 's playing time , to the point that the frustrated sophomore contemplated transferring out of Holy Cross . Cousy wrote a letter to coach Joe Lapchick of St. John 's University in New York , informing him that he was considering a transfer there . Lapchick wrote back to Cousy that he considered Julian " one of the finest basketball coaches in America " and that he believed Julian had no bad intentions in restricting his playing time . He told Cousy that Julian would use him more often during his later years with the team . Lapchick alerted Cousy that transferring was a very risky move : according to NCAA rules , the player would be required to sit out a year before becoming eligible to play for the school to which he transferred .

During Cousy 's senior year of 1949 @-@ 1950 , his fate changed in a match against Loyola of Chicago at Boston Garden . With 5 minutes left and Holy Cross trailing , the crowd started to chant " We want Cousy ! " until coach Julian relented . In these few minutes , Cousy scored 11 points and hit a game @-@ winning buzzer @-@ beater coming off a behind @-@ the @-@ back dribble . The performance established him as a team leader , and he then led Holy Cross to 26 straight wins and a Number 4 national ranking , going on to become a three @-@ time All @-@ American . Bob Cousy ended his college career in the 1950 NCAA Tournament , when Holy Cross fell to North Carolina State in an opening round game at Madison Square Garden . CCNY would go on to win the tournament . Cousy ended his college basketball career just in the nick of time . The following year , college basketball would be rocked by the biggest point @-@ shaving scandal in the history of the sport .

= = Boston Celtics = =

= = = The first years ( 1950 ? 56 ) = = =

Cousy turned pro and made himself available for the 1950 NBA draft when the Boston Celtics had just concluded the 1949 ? 50 NBA season with a poor 22 ? 46 win @-@ loss record and had the first draft pick . It was strongly anticipated that they would draft the highly coveted local favorite Cousy . However , coach Red Auerbach snubbed him for center Charlie Share , saying : " Am I supposed to win , or please the local yokels ? " The local press strongly criticized Auerbach , but other scouts were also skeptical about Cousy , viewing him as flamboyant but ineffective . One scout wrote in his report : " The first time he tries that fancy Dan stuff in this league , they 'll cram the ball down his throat . "

As a result , the Tri @-@ Cities Blackhawks drafted Cousy , but the point guard was unenthusiastic about his new employer . Cousy was trying to establish a driving school in Worcester , Massachusetts and did not want to move into a left field consisting of three small towns of Moline , Rock Island and Davenport . As compensation for having to give up his driving school , Cousy demanded a salary of \$ 10 @,@ 000 from Blackhawks owner Ben Kerner . When Kerner only offered him \$ 6 @,@ 000 , Cousy refused to report . The latter was then picked up by the Chicago Stags , but when they folded , league Commissioner Maurice Podoloff declared three Stags available for a dispersal draft : Stags scoring champion Max Zaslofsky , Andy Phillip and Cousy . Walter A. Brown , owner of the Boston Celtics , was one of the three club bosses invited . He later made it clear that he was hoping for Zaslofsky , would have tolerated Phillip , and did not want Cousy . When the Celtics drew Cousy , Brown confessed : " I could have fallen to the floor . " Hence , Cousy became a Celtic , with Brown reluctantly giving him a \$ 9 @,@ 000 salary .

It was not long before both Auerbach and Brown changed their minds . With an average of 15 @.@ 6 points , 6 @.@ 9 rebounds and 4 @.@ 9 assists a game , Cousy received the first of his 13 consecutive All @-@ NBA Team call @-@ ups , and led a Celtics team with future Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Famer Ed Macauley and Bones McKinney to a 39 ? 30 record in the 1950 ? 51 NBA season . However , in the 1951 NBA Playoffs , the Celtics were beaten by the New York Knicks . The next year , the Celtics added future Hall @-@ of @-@ Fame guard Bill Sharman , and by averaging 21 @.@ 7 points , 6 @.@ 4 rebounds and 6 @.@ 7 assists per game , Cousy

earned his first All @-@ NBA First Team nomination . Nonetheless , the Celtics lost to the Knicks in the 1952 NBA Playoffs .

In the following season , Cousy made further progress . Averaging 7 @.@ 7 assists per game , he won the first of his eight consecutive assists titles . These numbers were made despite the fact that the NBA had not yet introduced the shot clock , making the game static and putting prolific assist givers at a disadvantage . Powered by Auerbach 's quick fastbreak @-@ dominated tactics , the Celtics won 46 games and beat the Syracuse Nationals 2 ? 0 in the 1953 NBA Playoffs . Game 2 ended 111 ? 105 in a 4 @-@ overtime thriller , in which Cousy had a much @-@ lauded game . Despite having an injured leg , he scored 25 points after four quarters , scored 6 of his team 's 9 points in the first overtime , hit a clutch free throw in the last seconds , and scored all 4 of Boston 's points in the second overtime . He scored 8 more points in the third overtime , among them a 25 @-@ ft. buzzer beater . In the fourth overtime , he scored 9 of Boston 's 12 points . Cousy played 66 minutes , and scored 50 points after making a still @-@ standing record of 30 free throws in 32 attempts . This game is regarded by the NBA as one of the finest scoring feats ever , in line with Wilt Chamberlain 's 100 @-@ point game . However , for the third time in a row , the Knicks beat Boston in the next round .

In the next three years , Cousy firmly established himself as one of the league 's best point guards . Leading the league in assists all 3 seasons , and averaging 20 points and 7 rebounds , the versatile Cousy earned himself three more All @-@ NBA First Team and All @-@ Star honors , and was also Most Valuable Player of the 1954 NBA All @-@ Star Game . In terms of playing style , Cousy introduced an array of visually attractive street basketball moves , described by the NBA as a mix of ambidextrous , behind @-@ the @-@ back dribbling and " no @-@ look passes , behind @-@ the @-@ back feeds or half @-@ court fastbreak launches " . Cousy 's modus operandi contrasted with the rest of the NBA , which was dominated by muscular low post scorers and deliberate set shooters . Soon , he was called " Houdini of the Hardwood " after the magician Harry Houdini . Cousy 's crowd @-@ pleasing and effective play drew the crowd into the Boston Garden and also won over coach Auerbach , who no longer saw him as a liability , but as an essential building block for the future .

The Celtics eventually added two talented forwards , future Hall @-@ of @-@ Famer Frank Ramsey and defensive specialist Jim Loscutoff . Along with Celtics colleague Bob Brannum , Loscutoff also became Cousy 's unofficial bodyguard , retaliating against opposing players who would try to hurt him . The Celtics were unable to make their mark in the 1954 NBA Playoffs , 1955 NBA Playoffs , and 1956 NBA Playoffs , where they lost three times in a row against the Nationals . Cousy attributed the shortcomings to fatigue , stating : " We would get tired in the end and could not get the ball " . As a result , Auerbach sought a defensive center who could get easy rebounds , initiate fast breaks and close out games .

= = = Dynasty years ( 1957 ? 63 ) = = =

Before the 1956 ? 57 NBA season , Auerbach acquired two future Hall @-@ of @-@ Famers : forward Tom Heinsohn , and defensive center Bill Russell . Powered by these new recruits , the Celtics went 44 ? 28 in the regular season , and Cousy averaged 20 @.@ 6 points , 4 @.@ 8 rebounds and a league @-@ leading 7 @.@ 5 assists , earning his first NBA Most Valuable Player Award ; he also won his second NBA All @-@ Star Game MVP award . The Celtics reached the 1957 NBA Finals , and powered by Cousy on offense and rugged center Russell on defense , they beat the Hawks 4 ? 3 , who were noted for future Hall @-@ of @-@ Fame power forward Bob Pettit and former teammates Macauley and Hagan . Cousy finally won his first title .

In the 1957 ? 58 NBA season , Cousy had yet another highly productive year , with his 20 @.@ 0 points , 5 @.@ 5 rebounds and 8 @.@ 6 assists per game leading to nominations into the All @-@ NBA First Team and the All @-@ Star team . He again led the NBA in assists . The Celtics reached the 1958 NBA Finals against the Hawks , but when Russell succumbed to a foot injury in Game 3 , the Celtics faded and bowed out four games to two . This was the last losing NBA playoff series in which Cousy would play .

In the following 1958 ? 59 NBA season , the Celtics got revenge on their opposition , powered by an inspired Cousy , who averaged 20 @.@ 0 points , 5 @.@ 5 rebounds and a league @.@ high 8 @.@ 6 assists a game , won another assists title and another pair of All @.@ NBA First Team and All @.@ Star team nominations . Late in the season , Cousy reasserted his playmaking dominance by setting an NBA record with 28 assists in a game against the Minneapolis Lakers . While that record was broken 19 years later , Cousy also set a record for 19 assists in a half which has never been broken . The Celtics stormed through the playoffs and , behind Cousy 's 51 total assists ( still a record for a four @.@ game NBA Finals series ) , defeated the Minneapolis Lakers in the first 4 ? 0 sweep ever in the 1959 NBA Finals .

In the 1959 ? 60 NBA season , Cousy was again productive , his 19 @.@ 4 points , 4 @.@ 7 rebounds and 9 @.@ 5 assists per game earning him his eighth consecutive assists title and another joint All @.@ NBA First Team and All @.@ Star team nomination . Again , the Celtics defeated all opposition and won the 1960 NBA Finals 4 ? 3 against the Hawks . A year later , the 32 @.@ year @.@ old Cousy scored 18 @.@ 1 points , 4 @.@ 4 rebounds and 7 @.@ 7 assists per game , winning another pair of All @.@ NBA First Team and All @.@ Star nominations , but failing to win the assists crown after eight consecutive seasons . However , the Celtics won the 1961 NBA Finals after convincingly beating the Hawks 4 ? 1 .

In the 1961 ? 62 NBA season , the aging Cousy slowly began to fade statistically , averaging 15 @.@ 7 points , 3 @.@ 5 rebounds and 7 @.@ 8 assists , and was voted into the All @.@ NBA Second Team after ten consecutive First Team nominations . Still , he enjoyed a satisfying postseason , winning the 1962 NBA Finals after 4 ? 3 battles against two upcoming teams , the Philadelphia Warriors and Los Angeles Lakers . The Finals series against the Lakers was especially dramatic , because Lakers guard Frank Selvy failed to make a last @.@ second buzzer beater in Game 7 which would have won the title . Finally , in the 1962 ? 63 NBA season , the last of his career , Cousy averaged 13 @.@ 2 points , 2 @.@ 5 rebounds and 6 @.@ 8 assists , and collected one last All @.@ Star and All @.@ NBA Second Team nomination . In the 1963 NBA Finals , the Celtics again won 4 ? 2 against the Lakers , and Cousy finished his career on a high note : in the fourth quarter of Game 6 , Cousy sprained an ankle and had to be helped to the bench . He went back in with Boston up 1 . Although he did not score again , his was credited with providing an emotional lift that carried the Celtics to victory , 112 ? 109 . The game ended with Cousy throwing the ball into the rafters .

At age 35 , Cousy held his retirement ceremony on March 17 , 1963 in a packed Boston Garden . The event became known as the Boston Tear Party , when the crowd 's response overwhelmed Cousy , left him speechless , and caused his planned 7 @.@ minute farewell to go on for 20 . Joe Dillon , a water worker from South Boston , Massachusetts , and a devoted Celtics fan , screamed " We love ya , Cooz , " breaking the tension and the crowd went into cheers . As a testament to Cousy 's legacy , President John F. Kennedy wired to Cousy : " The game bears an indelible stamp of your rare skills and competitive daring . "

= = Post @.@ player career = =

After retiring as a player , Cousy published his autobiography Basketball Is My Life in 1963 , and in the same year became coach at Boston College . In the 1965 ECAC Holiday Basketball Festival at Madison Square Garden , Providence defeated Boston College 91 @.@ 86 in the title game , when the Friars were led by Tourney MVP and All @.@ American Jimmy Walker . Providence was coached by Joe Mullaney , who was Cousy 's teammate at Holy Cross when the two men were players there in 1947 . In his six seasons there , he had a record of 117 wins and 38 losses and was named New England Coach of the Year for 1968 and 1969 . Cousy led the Eagles to three NIT appearances , including a berth in the 1969 NIT Championship and two National Collegiate Athletic Association tournaments , including the 1967 Eastern Regional Finals .

Cousy grew bored with college basketball and returned to the NBA as coach of the Cincinnati Royals , team of fellow Hall @.@ of @.@ Fame point guard Oscar Robertson . He later said about this engagement , " I did it for the money . I was made an offer I couldn 't refuse . " In 1970 , the 41

@-@ year @-@ old Cousy even made a late @-@ season comeback as a player to boost ticket sales . Despite his meager output of 5 points in 34 minutes of playing time in seven games , ticket sales jumped by 77 percent . He continued as coach of the team after it moved from Cincinnati to Kansas City / Omaha , but stepped down as the Kings ' coach early in the 1973 ? 74 NBA season with a 141 ? 209 record .

In later life , Cousy was Commissioner of the American Soccer League from 1974 to 1979 . He has been a color analyst on Celtics telecasts since the 1980s . " In addition , Cousy had a role in the basketball film Blue Chips in 1993 , in which he played a college athletic director . Today he is a marketing consultant for the Celtics , and occasionally makes broadcast appearances with Mike Gorman and ex @-@ Celtic teammate Tom Heinsohn .

= = = Coaching record = = =

= = = = College coaching record = = = =

= = = = NBA coaching record = = = =

= = Legacy = =

In 1954 , the NBA had no health benefits , pension plan , minimum salary , and the average player 's salary was \$ 8 @, @ 000 a season . To combat this , Cousy organized the National Basketball Players Association , the first trade union among those in the four major North American professional sports leagues . Cousy served as its first president until 1958 .

In his 13 @-@ year , 924 @-@ game NBA playing career , Cousy finished with 16 @, @ 960 points , 4 @, @ 786 rebounds and 6 @, @ 955 assists , translating to averages of 18 @. @ 4 points , 5 @. @ 2 rebounds and 7 @. @ 5 assists per game . He was regarded as the first great point guard of the NBA , winning eight of the first 11 assist titles in the league , all of them en bloc , and had a highly successful career , winning six NBA titles , one MVP award , 13 All @-@ Star and 12 All @-@ NBA First and Second Team call @-@ ups and two All @-@ Star MVP awards . With his eye @-@ catching dribbling and unorthodox passing , Cousy popularized modern guard play and raised the profile of the Boston Celtics and the entire NBA . His fast @-@ paced playing style was later emulated by the likes of Pete Maravich and Magic Johnson .

In recognition of his feats , Cousy was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1971 and honored by the Celtics , which retired his # 14 jersey . Celtics owner Walter Brown said : " The Celtics wouldn 't be here without him [ Cousy ] . He made basketball in this town . If he had played in New York he would have been the biggest thing since [ New York Yankees baseball legend ] Babe Ruth . I think he is anyway . " In addition , on May 11 , 2006 , ESPN.com rated Cousy as the fifth greatest point guard of all time , lauding him as " ahead of his time with his ballhandling and passing skills " and pointing out he is one of only five point guards ever to win a NBA Most Valuable Player award .

On November 16 , 2008 Cousy 's college # 17 was hoisted to the Hart Center rafters . During halftime of a game between the Holy Cross Crusaders and St. Joseph 's Hawks , Cousy , George Kaftan , Togo Palazzi , and Tommy Heinsohn 's numbers became the first to hang from the gymnasium 's ceiling .

= = Personal life = =

Cousy married his college sweetheart , Missie Ritterbusch , in December 1950 , six months after he graduated from Holy Cross . They lived in Worcester , Massachusetts , and had two daughters , Missie died on September 20 , 2013 , after suffering from dementia for several years .

Cousy was well @-@ known , both on and off the court , for his public stance against racism , a result of his upbringing in a multicultural environment . In 1950 , the Celtics played a game in the then @-@ segregated city of Charlotte , North Carolina , and teammate Chuck Cooper ? the first African @-@ American in NBA history to be drafted ? would have been denied a hotel room . Instead of taking the hotel room , Cousy insisted on travelling with Cooper on an uncomfortable overnight train . He described their visit to a segregated men 's toilet ? Cooper was prohibited from using the clean " for whites " bathroom and had to use the shabby " for colored " facility ? as one of the most shameful experiences of his life . He also sympathized with the plight of black Celtics star Bill Russell , who was frequently a victim of racism .

Cousy was close to his Celtics mentor , head coach Red Auerbach , and was one of the few permitted to call him " Arnold " , his given name , instead of his nickname " Red " .