

= Red Auerbach =

Arnold Jacob " Red " Auerbach (September 20 , 1917 ? October 28 , 2006) was an American basketball coach of the Washington Capitols , the Tri @-@ Cities Blackhawks and the Boston Celtics . After he retired from coaching , he served as president and front office executive of the Celtics until his death . As a coach , he won 938 games (a record at his retirement) and nine National Basketball Association (NBA) championships in ten years (a number surpassed only by Phil Jackson , who won 11 in twenty years) . As general manager and team president of the Celtics , he won an additional seven NBA titles , for a grand total of 16 in a span of 29 years , making him one of the most successful team officials in the history of North American professional sports .

Auerbach is remembered as a pioneer of modern basketball , redefining basketball as a game dominated by team play and defense and for introducing the fast break as a potent offensive weapon . He groomed many players who went on to be inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame . Additionally , Auerbach was vital in breaking down color barriers in the NBA . He made history by drafting the first African @-@ American NBA player , Chuck Cooper in 1950 , introduced the first African @-@ American starting five in 1964 , and hired the first African @-@ American head coach in North American sports (Bill Russell in 1966) . Famous for his polarizing nature , he was well known for smoking a cigar when he thought a victory was assured , a habit that became , for many , " the ultimate symbol of victory " during his Boston tenure .

In 1967 , the NBA Coach of the Year award , which he had won in 1965 , was named the " Red Auerbach Trophy , " and Auerbach was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1969 . In 1980 , he was named the greatest coach in the history of the NBA by the Professional Basketball Writers Association of America , and was NBA Executive of the Year in 1980 . In addition , Auerbach was voted one of the NBA 10 Greatest Coaches in history , was inducted into the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame , and is honored with a retired number 2 jersey in the TD Garden , the home of the Boston Celtics .

= = Early life = =

Arnold Jacob Auerbach was one of the four children of Marie and Hyman Auerbach . Hyman was a Russian Jewish immigrant from Minsk , Russia , and Marie Auerbach , née Thompson , was American @-@ born . Auerbach Sr. had left Russia when he was 13 , and the couple owned a delicatessen store and later went into the dry @-@ cleaning business . Little Arnold spent his whole childhood in Williamsburg , Brooklyn , playing basketball . With his flaming red hair and fiery temper , Auerbach was soon nicknamed " Red . "

Amid the Great Depression , Red played basketball at PS 122 and in the Eastern District High School , where he was named " Second Team All @-@ Brooklyn " by the World @-@ Telegram in his senior year . Auerbach received an athletic scholarship to the basketball program of Bill Reinhart at George Washington University in Washington , D.C .. Auerbach was a standout basketball player and graduated with a M.A. in 1941 . In those years , Auerbach began to understand the importance of the fast break , appreciating how potent three charging attackers against two back @-@ pedalling defenders could be .

= = First coaching years (1941 ? 1950) = =

In 1941 , Auerbach began coaching basketball at the St. Albans School and Roosevelt High School in Washington , D.C. Two years later , he joined the US Navy for three years , coaching the Navy basketball team in Norfolk . There , he caught the eye of Washington millionaire Mike Uline , who hired him to coach the Washington Capitols in the newly founded Basketball Association of America (BAA) , a predecessor of the NBA .

In the 1946 @-@ 47 BAA season , Auerbach led a fast break @-@ oriented team built around early BAA star Bones McKinney and various ex @-@ Navy players to a 49 ? 11 win ? loss record , including a standard @-@ setting 17 @-@ game winning streak that stood as the single @-@

season league record until 1969 . In the playoffs , however , they were defeated by the Chicago Stags in six games .

The next year the Capitols went 28 ? 20 but were eliminated from the playoffs in a one @-@ game Western Division tie @-@ breaker . In the 1948 @-@ 49 BAA season , the Caps won their first 15 games and finished the season at 38 ? 22 . The team reached the BAA Finals , but were beaten by the Minneapolis Lakers , who were led by Hall @-@ of @-@ Fame center George Mikan . In the next season , the BAA and the rival league National Basketball League merged to become the NBA , and Auerbach felt he had to rebuild his squad . However , owner Uline declined his proposals , and Auerbach resigned .

Auerbach was then approached by Ben Kerner , owner of the Tri @-@ Cities Blackhawks . After getting a green light to rebuild the team from scratch , Auerbach traded more than two dozen players in just six weeks , and the revamped Blackhawks improved , but ended the 1949 ? 50 NBA season with a losing record of 28 ? 29 . When Kerner traded Auerbach 's favorite player John Mahnken , an angry Auerbach resigned again .

= = Boston Celtics (1950 ? 2006) = =

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

Prior to the 1950 ? 51 NBA season , Walter Brown , owner of the Boston Celtics , was desperate to turn around his struggling and financially strapped franchise , which was reeling from a 22 ? 46 record . Brown , in characteristic candor , said to a gathering of local Boston sportswriters , " Boys , I don 't know anything about basketball . Who would you recommend I hire as coach ? " The group vociferously answered that he get the recently available Auerbach , and Brown complied . In the 1950 NBA Draft , Auerbach made some notable moves . First , he famously snubbed Hall @-@ of @-@ Fame New England point guard Bob Cousy in the 1950 NBA Draft , infuriating the Boston crowd . He argued that the flashy Cousy lacked the poise necessary to make his team , taunting him as a " local yokel " . Second , he drafted African @-@ American Chuck Cooper , the first black player to be drafted by an NBA club . With that , Auerbach effectively broke down the color barrier in professional basketball .

In that year , the core of the Celtics consisted of Hall @-@ of @-@ Fame center Ed Macauley , Auerbach 's old favorite McKinney , and an unlikely addition , Cousy . Cousy had refused to report to the club that had drafted him (ironically , the Blackhawks , Auerbach 's old club) , and because his next team (the Chicago Stags) folded , he ended up with the Celtics . With Auerbach 's fast @-@ break tactics , the Celtics achieved a 39 ? 30 record but lost in the 1951 NBA Playoffs to the New York Knicks . However , the relationship between Auerbach and Cousy improved when the coach saw that the " Houdini of the Hardwood " ? as the spectacular dribbler and flashy passer Cousy was lovingly called ? became the first great playmaker of the fledgling NBA .

In the following 1951 ? 52 NBA season , Auerbach made a remarkable draft pick of future Hall @-@ of @-@ Fame guard Bill Sharman . With the high @-@ scoring Macauley , elite passer Cousy , and new prodigy Sharman , Auerbach had a core that provided high @-@ octane fast @-@ break basketball . Other notable players who joined the Celtics were forwards Frank Ramsey and Jim Loscutoff . In the next years until 1956 , the Celtics would make the playoffs every year , but never won the title . In fact , the Celtics often choked in the playoffs , going a mere 10 ? 17 in the postseason from 1951 through 1956 . As Cousy put it : " We would get tired in the end and could not get the ball . " As a result , Auerbach sought a defensive big man who could both get easy rebounds , initiate fast breaks , and close out games .

= = = The dynasty (1956 ? 66) = = =

Before the 1956 NBA Draft , Auerbach had already set his sights on defensive rebounding center Bill Russell . Via a draft @-@ day trade that sent Macauley and rookie Cliff Hagan to the rival St.

Louis Hawks , he acquired a center in Russell , who would go on to become one of the greatest basketball players of all time . In the same draft , Auerbach picked up forward Tom Heinsohn and guard K.C. Jones , also two future Hall @-@ of @-@ Famers . Emphasizing team play rather than individual performances , and stressing that defense was more important than offense , Auerbach drilled his players to play tough defense and force opposing turnovers for easy fast @-@ break points . Forward Tom Sanders recalled that the teams were also regularly among the best @-@ conditioned and toughest squads .

Anchored by defensive stalwart Russell , the tough Celtics forced their opponents to take low @-@ percentage shots from farther distances (there was no three @-@ point arc at the time) ; misses were then often grabbed by perennial rebounding champion Russell , who then either passed it on to elite fast @-@ break distributor Cousy or made the outlet pass himself , providing their sprinting colleagues opportunities for an easy slam dunk or layup . Auerbach also emphasized the need for role players like Frank Ramsey and John Havlicek , who became two of the first legitimate sixth men in NBA history , a role later succeeded in by Don Nelson . Auerbach 's recipe proved devastating to the opposition . From 1957 to 1966 , the Celtics won nine of ten NBA championships . This included eight consecutive championships ? which is the longest championship streak in North American sports ? and six victories over the Los Angeles Lakers of Hall @-@ of @-@ Famers Elgin Baylor and Jerry West in the NBA Finals . The streak also denied perennial scoring and rebounding champion Wilt Chamberlain a title during Auerbach 's coaching reign .

Flowing from Auerbach 's emphasis on teamwork , what was also striking about his teams was that they never seemed to have a dominant scorer : in the 1960 ? 61 NBA season , for instance , the Celtics had six players who scored between 15 and 21 points per game , but none made the Top 10 scoring list . In 1964 , he sent out the first @-@ ever NBA starting five consisting of an African @-@ American quintet , namely Russell , Willie Naulls , Tom Sanders , Sam Jones , and K. C. Jones . Auerbach would go a step further in the 1966 ? 67 NBA season , when he stepped down after winning nine titles in 11 years , and made Bill Russell player @-@ coach . Auerbach also popularized smoking a victory cigar whenever he thought a game was already decided , a habit that became cult @-@ like in popularity in the Boston area . Furthermore , having acquired a reputation as a fierce competitor , he often got into verbal altercations with officials , receiving more fines and getting ejected more often than any other coach in NBA history .

All in all , Auerbach coached nine championship teams directly and mentored 4 players ? Russell , Sharman , Heinsohn and K.C. Jones ? who would go on to win an additional 7 NBA championships as coaches (two each for Russell , Heinsohn and Jones , all with the Celtics , and one for Sharman with the Lakers) . Ten players who played for Auerbach have been inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame ? Macauley , Ramsey , Cousy , Sharman , Heinsohn , Russell , K. C. Jones , Havlicek , Sam Jones and Bailey Howell . Although Don Nelson played for Auerbach only during his last year as coach , his influence was profound : Nelson would later join Auerbach as one of the 10 Greatest Coaches in NBA history . Sharman and Heinsohn would become two of only four people to be inducted into the Hall of Fame as both a player and a coach . Few , if any , coaches can match Auerbach 's record of wins and successful mentorship of his players .

= = = General manager (1966 ? 84) = = =

Prior to the 1965 @-@ 66 NBA season , Auerbach announced the coming year would be his last as coach , stating to the rest of the league , " This is your chance to take your last shot at me . " After losing game 1 of the 1966 finals to the Lakers , he publicly named his successor , center Bill Russell . The Celtics won the series in seven games , sending Auerbach out on top . Russell then took over as a player @-@ coach , and so became the first African @-@ American head coach ever in the four major North American professional team sports . While his pupil led the Celtics to two further titles in 1968 and 1969 , Auerbach rebuilt the aging Celtics with shrewd draft picks , among them Jo Jo White and future Hall @-@ of @-@ Famers Dave Cowens , Paul Westphal , and Don Chaney . With his ex @-@ player Tom Heinsohn coaching the Celtics and led by former sixth man John Havlicek , Auerbach 's new recruits won the Atlantic Division every year from 1972 to 1976 , winning

the NBA title in 1974 and 1976 . Auerbach also signed veteran forward / center Paul Silas and ex @-@ ABA star Charlie Scott .

However , Auerbach could not prevent the Celtics from going into a slump at the end of the 1970s . He traded away both Silas and Westphal because they wanted salary increases that would have made them higher earners than the best player on the Celtics (Cowens) , which was not acceptable to Auerbach . While the Westphal trade to the Phoenix Suns in exchange for Charlie Scott was considered a success due to the Celtics ' 13th title in 1976 , Auerbach later admitted he erred in letting Silas go , even after Cowens personally begged him to give Silas a new deal . When scoring champion Havlicek retired in 1978 , the Celtics went 61 ? 103 in two seasons . In the summer of 1978 , after the worst in a string of contentious clashes with several different owners after Walter Brown 's passing in 1964 , Auerbach hopped into a taxi to take him to Logan Airport , where he was to board a flight to New York to consider a lucrative contract offer from Knicks owner Sonny Werblin . However , the cab driver pleaded with him to stay , emphasizing how much Bostonians loved him and considered him family . Soon after , heading a team press conference , and with his typical bravado , Auerbach puffed on his trademark cigar and stated simply , " I 'm not going anywhere . We 're going to sign Larry Bird , and we 're going to be on top again . " Despite knowing that Bird , a talented young player from unheralded Indiana State , had a year of college eligibility remaining , he had drafted Bird as a junior eligible in the 1978 NBA Draft and waited for a year until the future Hall @-@ of @-@ Fame forward Bird arrived , finally setting aside his team salary rules when it became clear that his choices were paying Bird a record @-@ setting rookie salary or watch him simply re @-@ enter the 1979 draft . Bird then became the highest @-@ paid Celtic as a rookie , with a \$ 650 @,@ 000 @-@ per year deal . Auerbach knew that the brilliant , hardworking Bird would be the cornerstone of a new Celtics generation .

In 1980 , Auerbach achieved another great coup , which was dubbed " The Steal of The Century " . He convinced the Golden State Warriors to trade him a # 3 overall pick and future Hall @-@ of @-@ Fame center Robert Parish in exchange for two picks in the 1980 NBA Draft : # 1 overall Joe Barry Carroll , who went on to have an unremarkable career , and the # 13 pick Rickey Brown . With the # 3 pick , Auerbach selected the player he most wanted in the draft , Kevin McHale , who would also be inducted into the Hall of Fame . The frontcourt of Parish @-@ McHale @-@ Bird became one of the greatest front lines in NBA history . Auerbach hired head coach Bill Fitch who led the revamped Celtics to the 1981 title .

In 1983 , Auerbach named former Celtics player K.C. Jones coach of the Celtics . Starting in 1984 , Jones coached the Celtics to four straight appearances in the NBA Finals , winning championships in 1984 and 1986 .

= = = President and vice chairman (1984 ? 2006) = = =

In 1984 , Auerbach relinquished his general managing duties and became president and later vice @-@ chairman of the Boston Celtics . In a surprising move after winning their 15th title , he traded popular guard Gerald Henderson , the game 2 hero in the finals against the Lakers , for Seattle 's first round draft pick in 1986 . Two years later , after the Celtics defeated Houston in the finals for their 16th championship , he used the second overall pick in the 1986 draft , the pick acquired from Seattle , to take college prodigy Len Bias from Maryland , arguably the most brilliant coup in Auerbach 's stellar career . With the team 's star players still in their prime , the defending champions appeared set to compete at the top for years . However , tragedy struck just two days later , when Bias died of a cocaine overdose . Several years later , Celtics star player Reggie Lewis died suddenly in 1993 , and without any league compensation for either loss , the team fell into decline , not seeing another Finals in Auerbach 's lifetime .

In an interview , Auerbach confessed that he lost interest in big @-@ time managing in the early 1990s , preferring to stay in the background and concentrating on his pastimes , racquetball and his beloved cigar @-@ smoking . He would , however , stay on with the Celtics as president until 1997 , as vice chairman until 2001 , and then became president again , a position he held until his death , although in his final years , he was weakened by heart problems and often used a wheelchair .

= = Personal life = =

Auerbach was one of four children of American @-@ born Marie Auerbach and Russian Jewish immigrant Hyman Auerbach in Brooklyn . His brother Zang Auerbach , four years his junior , was a respected cartoonist and portraitist at the Washington Star . He married Dorothy Lewis in the spring of 1941 . The couple had two daughters , Nancy and Randy .

Auerbach was known for his love for cigar smoking . Because Red made his victory cigars a cult in the 1960s , Boston restaurants would often say " no cigar or pipe smoking , except for Red Auerbach " . In addition , Auerbach was well known for his love of Chinese food . In an interview shortly before his death , he explained that since the 1950s , Chinese takeout was the most convenient nutrition : back then , NBA teams travelled on regular flights and had a tight time schedule , so filling up the stomach with heavier non @-@ Chinese food meant wasting time and risking travel @-@ sickness . Over the years , Auerbach became so fond of this food that he even became a part @-@ owner of a Chinese restaurant in Boston . Despite a heart operation , he remained active in his 80s , playing racquetball and making frequent public appearances .

Despite his fierce nature , Auerbach was popular among his players . He recalled that on his 75th birthday party , 45 of his former players showed up ; and when he turned 80 , his perennial 1960s victim Wilt Chamberlain showed up , a gesture which Auerbach dearly appreciated .

In an interview with ESPN , Auerbach stated that his all @-@ star fantasy team would consist of Bill Russell ? who in the former 's opinion was the ultimate player to start a franchise with ? as well as Bob Pettit , Elgin Baylor , Oscar Robertson and Jerry West , with John Havlicek as the sixth man . Regarding greatest basketballers of all time , Auerbach 's candidates were Russell , Larry Bird , Magic Johnson , Kareem Abdul @-@ Jabbar , Michael Jordan , and Robertson . "

= = = Death = = =

Auerbach died of a heart attack on October 28 , 2006 at the age of 89 . NBA commissioner David Stern said , " the void caused by his death will never be filled " and players Bill Russell , K.C. Jones , John Havlicek and Larry Bird , as well as contemporaries like Jerry West , Pat Riley , and Wayne Embry universally hailed Auerbach as one of the greatest personalities in NBA history . Bird stated " Red shared our passion for the game , our commitment to excellence , and our desire to do whatever it takes to win . " Auerbach was survived by his two daughters , Nancy and Randy . Auerbach was interred in Falls Church , Virginia at King David Memorial Gardens within National Memorial Park on October 31 , 2006 . Attendees included basketball dignitaries Bill Russell , Kevin McHale , Danny Ainge , and David Stern .

During the 2006 ? 07 NBA season , NBA TV and NBA.com aired reruns of Auerbach 's four @-@ minute instructional videos known as " Red on Roundball " previously aired during NBA on CBS halftime shows in the 1970s and 1980s , and as a testament to his importance in the Boston sports world , the Boston Red Sox honored Auerbach at their April 20 , 2007 game against the New York Yankees by wearing green uniforms and by hanging replicated Celtics championship banners on the " Green Monster " at Fenway Park . Boston won 7 ? 6 .

Prior to Boston 's season opener against the Wizards , his signature was officially placed on the parquet floor near center court , thereby naming the court as " Red Auerbach Parquet Floor . " The ceremony was attended by his daughter Randy and some of the Celtics legends . The signature replaced the Red Auerbach memorial logo used during the 2007 season .

= = Writing = =

Auerbach was the author of seven books . His first , Basketball for the Player , the Fan and Coach , has been translated into seven languages and is the best @-@ selling basketball book in print . His second book , co @-@ authored with Paul Sann , was Winning the Hard Way . He also wrote a pair of books with Joe Fitzgerald : Red Auerbach : An Autobiography and Red Auerbach On and Off the

Court . In October 1991 M.B.A. : Management by Auerbach was co @-@ authored with Ken Dooley . In 1994 , Seeing Red was written with Dan Shaughnessy . In October 2004 , his last book , Let Me Tell You A Story , was co @-@ authored with sports journalist John Feinstein .

= = Legacy = =

Among Auerbach 's accomplishments during his 20 @-@ year professional coaching career were eleven Eastern Division titles (including nine in a row from 1957 ? 65) , 11 appearances in the finals (including ten in a row from 1957 ? 66) , and nine NBA championships . With a total of 16 NBA championship rings in a span of 29 years (1957 ? 86) as the Celtics coach , general manager , and team president , Auerbach is the most successful team official in NBA history . He is credited with creating several generations of championship Boston Celtics teams , including the first Celtics dynasty with Bill Russell , which won an NBA record eight titles in a row (1959 ? 66) . As Celtics general manager , he created championship @-@ winning teams around Hall @-@ of @-@ Famers Dave Cowens in the 1970s and Larry Bird in the 1980s .

In addition to coaching , Auerbach was a highly effective mentor ; several players coached by Auerbach would become successful coaches themselves . Bill Russell won two titles as Auerbach 's successor , Tom Heinsohn won a pair of championships as a Celtics coach in the 1970s , K.C. Jones led the Celtics to two further titles in the 1980s , and Bill Sharman coached the Los Angeles Lakers to their first title in 1972 . In addition , prototypical sixth man Don Nelson had a highly successful coaching career and joined his mentor Auerbach as one of 10 Greatest Coaches in NBA history .

Throughout his coaching tenure in Boston , Auerbach served several other roles including , but not limited to , general manager , head of scouting , personnel director and travel agent . [< articles.latimes.com / 2006 / oct / 29 / local / me @-@ auerbach29 >] In the early offseasons , he would take the Celtics on barnstorming tours around New England , promoting the still fledgling NBA . At the end of every season , regardless of their on @-@ court success , he would approach owner Brown and ask , " Walter , are our last paychecks going to clear ? " to which Brown would always positively respond , and they would . Despite Brown 's own close association with the NHL 's Boston Bruins , whose owners also possessed the Boston Garden , the Celtics were fleeced on concessions and profits as tenants . During this era , when most team owners not only thought of , but also treated their players as cattle and / or slaves , athletes from all the four major professional sports leagues were fighting for their rights and economic fairness . As Auerbach represented management of the Celtics , team members frustrated with their salaries had only him to complain to , or about , in their role in the formation of the players ' union . These interpersonal dynamics are construed as follows by journalist David Halberstam :

The hard core of the union came from the Celtics . That was not surprising ; Red Auerbach went after the players of the highest intelligence and character , and then of course paid them horribly . That made the Celtics a mass of contradictions . They had great coherence as a team , great personal loyalty to each other , great respect and love for Auerbach , who had created this unique institution and honored each of them by making him a part of it , and then of course great anger at him for paying them so little .

Pertaining to the above , it should be noted that Walter Brown was not rich ; also that as Auerbach was as tough at the negotiating table as he was on the practice court and in the locker room , it was always for the purpose of getting the most out of his players . In the summer of 1984 , with much trepidation , Auerbach reluctantly signed former finals MVP Cedric Maxwell to a lucrative guaranteed contract to stay with the Celtics . Then , Auerbach 's worst fears came true when Maxwell arrived that fall out of shape , and , suffering from various injuries , provided little contribution as the team lost a playoff for the first time ever to the Lakers in the 1985 Finals . Two subsequent facts are perhaps most relevant in evaluating Auerbach 's legacy : First , he was able to trade Maxwell to San Diego in exchange for former MVP Bill Walton , who was a major contributor to the team winning its 16th title in 1986 , the last of Auerbach 's career . Second , Maxwell continues to be embraced as a beloved member of the Celtics family , including having his number retired alongside the team 's

legendary greats .

In Auerbach 's honor , the Celtics have retired a number @-@ 2 jersey with the name " AUERBACH , " memorializing his role as the second most important Celtic ever , behind founder Walter Brown , in whose honor the number @-@ 1 " BROWN " jersey is retired .

His story is documented in The First Basket , the first and most comprehensive documentary on the history of Jews and Basketball . He is also featured as an interviews subject for the film .

= = = Coaching pioneer = = =

From his early days , Auerbach was convinced that the fast break , where a team used a quick outlet pass to fast guards who run downcourt and score before the opponent had re @-@ established position , was a potent tactical weapon . This new strategy proved lethal for the opposition . Further , Auerbach moved emphasis away from individual accolades and instilled the teamwork element into his players . He also invented the concept of the role player and of the sixth man , stating : " Individual honors are nice , but no Celtic has ever gone out of his way to achieve them . We have never had the league 's top scorer . In fact , we won seven league championships without placing even one among the league 's top 10 scorers . Our pride was never rooted in statistics . "

While Auerbach was not known for his tactical bandwidth , famously restricting his teams to just seven plays , he was well known for his psychological warfare , often provoking opposing players and officials with unabashed trash talk . For his fiery temper , he was ejected more often and received more fines than any other coach in NBA history . Age did nothing to diminish his fire ; in 1983 , after star Larry Bird was ejected from a preseason game against Philadelphia at the Garden along with the Sixers ' role player Marc Iavaroni , Auerbach stormed onto the court and after taking the officials to task , screamed nose @-@ to @-@ nose with the 6 ' 10 " 260 @-@ pound Moses Malone . Concerning his own team , Auerbach was softer . Earl Lloyd , the first black player to play in the NBA , said : " Red Auerbach convinced his players that he loved them [...] so all they wanted to do was please him . "

= = = No color barrier = = =

Auerbach was known for choosing players for talent and motivation , with disregard for skin color or ethnicity . In 1950 , he made NBA history by drafting the league 's first African @-@ American player , Chuck Cooper . He constantly added new black players to his squad , including Bill Russell , Tom Sanders , Sam Jones , K.C. Jones , and Willie Naulls . In 1964 , these five players became the first African @-@ American starting five in the NBA . When Auerbach gave up coaching to become the Celtics general manager in 1966 , he appointed Bill Russell as his successor . Russell became the first black NBA coach , and was the first black coach of a professional sports organization since Fritz Pollard in 1925 . Similarly , in the 1980s , as the Celtics GM , Auerbach fielded an earnest , hardworking team that was derided as being " too white . " While the 1980s Celts were , in actuality , neither predominantly white nor black , the NBA at the time was predominately black . White players like Larry Bird , Kevin McHale , Danny Ainge , and Bill Walton played alongside Tiny Archibald , Dennis Johnson , Robert Parish , and Cedric Maxwell to bring three more championships in the ' 80s under coaches Bill Fitch (white) and K.C. Jones (black) .

Auerbach is prominently featured in the documentary film , " The First Basket " about Jewish basketball history .

= = = Arnold " Red " Auerbach Award = = =

To honor Auerbach , the Celtics created the Arnold " Red " Auerbach award in 2006 . It is an award given annually to the current Celtic player or coach who " best exemplifies the spirit and meaning of what it is to be a Celtic . This award is named in honor of the legendary Coach , General Manager and President of the organization , Arnold ' Red ' Auerbach . "

Winners :

== NBA Coach of the Year Award ==

The NBA gives out an annual coach of the year award to honor the league 's best coach as voted by a panel of sportswriters . The trophy is named the ' Red Auerbach trophy ' and has a figure of Auerbach sitting on a bench .

== NBA ==