



## **INDUCTEE BIOGRAPHY: DR. SHAQUILLE O'NEAL**

*Superman Hall of Heroes inductee Shaquille O'Neal has had many successes throughout his life. From a championship basketball career, to numerous charitable efforts, to fulfilling a promise to his mother that he would get a college degree, O'Neal has been both a hands-on leader in his community and a true role model.*

Shaquille Rashaun O'Neal (born March 6, 1972), nicknamed "Shaq", retired from American professional basketball, and is now a rapper, actor, businessman, reserve police officer, doctorate recipient and TNT NBA Analyst. He is widely perceived as one of the most dominant players in the history of the NBA. Standing 7'1", he is one of the largest players to ever play in the NBA. Throughout his 19 year career, O'Neal has used his size, strength and skill to overpower opponents.

Following a standout career at Louisiana State University, O'Neal was drafted by the Orlando Magic with the first overall pick in the 1992 NBA Draft. He quickly became one of the top centers in the league, winning Rookie of the year in 1992-93 and later leading his team to the 1995 NBA Finals. After four years with the Magic, O'Neal signed as a free agent with the Los Angeles Lakers. He won three consecutive championships, playing alongside Kobe Bryant, in 2000, 2001 and 2002. In 2004, Shaq was traded to the Miami Heat. He won his fourth NBA championship in 2006, but was traded midway through the season just a year later to the Phoenix Suns. After a season-and-a-half with the Suns, O'Neal was traded to the Cleveland Cavaliers, where he played alongside LeBron James in the 2009–10 season. After one year with the Cavaliers, the Celtics signed O'Neal and he played his final season alongside Paul Pierce and Kevin Garnett in Boston.

O'Neal's individual accolades include the 1999-00 Most Valuable Player (MVP) award, the 1992–93 NBA Rookie of the Year award, 15 All-Star game selections, three All-Star Game MVPs, three Finals MVPs, two scoring titles, 14 All-NBA team selections and three NBA All-Defensive Team selections. He currently ranks fifth all-time in points scored, sixth in field goals, 15<sup>th</sup> in rebounds and seventh in blocks.

In addition to his basketball career, O'Neal has released four rap albums, with his first, *Shaq Diesel*, going platinum. He has also appeared in numerous films and has starred in his own reality shows, "Shaq's Big Challenge" and "Shaq Vs."

O'Neal first gained national attention as a star at Linton Middle School. He led his Robert G. Cole High School team, San Antonio, Texas, to a 68–1 record during his two years there and helped the team win the state title his senior year.

After graduating from high school, O'Neal attended Louisiana State University, where he studied business. He had first met Dale Brown, LSU's men's basketball coach at that time, years before in Europe. With O'Neal's stepfather stationed on a U.S. Army base at Wildflecken, West Germany, and his

godfather a First Sergeant at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, O'Neal attended Fulda American High School, a DODDS school. While playing for Brown at LSU, O'Neal was a two-time All-American, two-time SEC player of the year, and received the Adolph Rupp Trophy as NCAA men's basketball player of the year in 1991. He also holds the NCAA record for blocked shots in a game with 17 blocks against Mississippi State on December 3, 1990. O'Neal left LSU early to pursue his NBA career, but returned to school in 2000 and received a Bachelor of Arts in General Studies. He was later inducted into the LSU Hall of Fame.

Throughout his career, O'Neal established himself as a formidable low post presence, putting up career averages of 25.2 points on .581 field goal accuracy, 11.5 rebounds and 2.4 blocks per game (as of May 2008).

At 7'1" and a size 23 shoe, he is famous for his physical stature. His physical frame gives him a power advantage over most opponents, and for a man of that size, he is quick and explosive.

O'Neal's "drop step", (called the "Black Tornado" by O'Neal) in which he posts up a defender, turns around and, using his elbows for leverage, powers past him for a very high-percentage slam dunk, has proven an extremely effective offensive weapon, though it has been limited in recent years. In addition, O'Neal frequently uses a right-handed jump hook shot to score near the basket. The ability to dunk frequently contributes to his career field goal accuracy of .582; he is the second most accurate shooter of all time.

Opposing teams often use up many fouls on O'Neal, limiting the playing time of their own big men. O'Neal's physical presence inside the paint has caused dramatic changes in many teams' offensive and defensive strategies that can be seen over the course of his career.

O'Neal has been able to step up his performance in big games, having been voted three-times NBA Finals Most Valuable Player.

## **OFF COURT**

O'Neal left LSU for the NBA after three years. However, he promised his mother he would eventually return to his studies and complete his bachelor's degree. He fulfilled that promise in 2000, earning his Bachelor of Arts in general studies. Coach Phil Jackson let O'Neal miss a home game so he could attend graduation. At the ceremony, he told the crowd "now I can go and get a real job." Subsequently, O'Neal earned an MBA from the University of Phoenix in 2005 and his doctoral degree in Organization Learning and Leadership from Barry University in May of 2012.

After his retirement, O'Neal was hired by Turner to serve as an NBA analyst on their five-time Emmy-winning show, "Inside the NBA." Since O'Neal joined the cast of Ernie Johnson, Charles Barkley and

Kenny Smith on the show, ratings have been up 30 percent. O'Neal also has a development deal with Turner to star or executive produce various shows across their family of networks. He just wrapped up filming the second season of the show "Upload with Shaquille O'Neal," which airs on TruTv, and also served as the two-time 2012 and 2013 host of the Hall of Game Awards, airing on Cartoon Network.

O'Neal teamed up with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America when he was drafted in 1992. His relationship with the group dates back to his youth in Newark. He has put on several long-standing events in conjunction with Boys & Girls Clubs including Shaq-A-Claus, Shaqs-giving and Toys for Tots.

O'Neal was born in Newark, New Jersey and has six children (Taahirah, Myles, Shareef, Amirah, Shaqir, and Me'arah). The family currently maintains a residence in Windermere, Fla., a northwest Orlando suburb.