

Six Points That Changed History

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The story of how the Boston Celtics acquired the rights to Bill Russell is a familiar tale, but the Minneapolis Lakers' pursuit of the future Hall of Famer is less well-known. The Lakers were rebuffed in their first attempt to land the University of San Francisco (USF) star center, but might have had him fall into their laps if not for the outcome of a few late season games, concluding with a contest against the St. Louis Hawks on March 16, 1956.

Red Auerbach first learned about Russell's outstanding talents as a defender and rebounder from Bill Reinhart, who had coached Auerbach as a college player at George Washington University. But the Celtics, despite their inability to win a championship, were a perennial playoff team, and Russell was unlikely to last until their draft choice (#7) in the first round of the 1956 draft. After learning that the Rochester Royals, who had earned the top pick, planned to pass on him, Auerbach worked out a trade with the St. Louis Hawks for the second choice.

Both clubs had plausible reasons for letting Russell slip through their fingers. Royals owner Les Harrison had witnessed one of Russell's less impressive games,¹ and his strategy of sending Dolly King (the first African-American to play for the Royals) to meet with Russell backfired, as Russell reacted coolly to what he perceived as an attempt to influence him using a member of his own race. Harrison also believed that the Harlem Globetrotters, who were still the primary destination for African-American basketball players at the time,² would offer Russell a far more lucrative salary than Harrison could afford to pay, especially when the Royals already had an elite scorer and rebounder in Rookie of the Year Maurice Stokes. However, Harrison was unaware that Russell had been even more offended by the 'Trotters Abe Saperstein's condescending attitude towards him (ignoring him during their meeting to talk mostly with USF's head coach Phil Woolpert) while Russell's internal pride made him ill-suited for the team's clowning ways.³

Meanwhile, Ben Kerner, owner of the Hawks, had just moved the team from Milwaukee to St. Louis for the 1955-56 season, and was desperate to build a winner around reigning NBA Rookie of the Year Bob Pettit in order to grow his fan base as quickly as possible. The Hawks did not want to wait for Russell to finish playing at the Summer Olympics in Melbourne, Australia in mid-December, and shared the Royals' mistaken belief that Russell would prefer to sign with the Globetrotters. When Auerbach offered St. Louis-native Ed Macauley and former University of Kentucky star Cliff Hagan for the second pick, Kerner jumped at the chance. The fact that Russell was black was also reportedly a factor given the racial climate in St. Louis at the time, despite the protestations of team officials, both then and now. Years later, Hawks General Manager Marty Blake defended the trade on basketball talent grounds: "Don't kid yourself, the Celts weren't crazy about giving up Hagan, too, and they weren't positive Russell was their next superstar."⁴ Eleven championships later, everyone in the NBA would be convinced of Russell's worth.

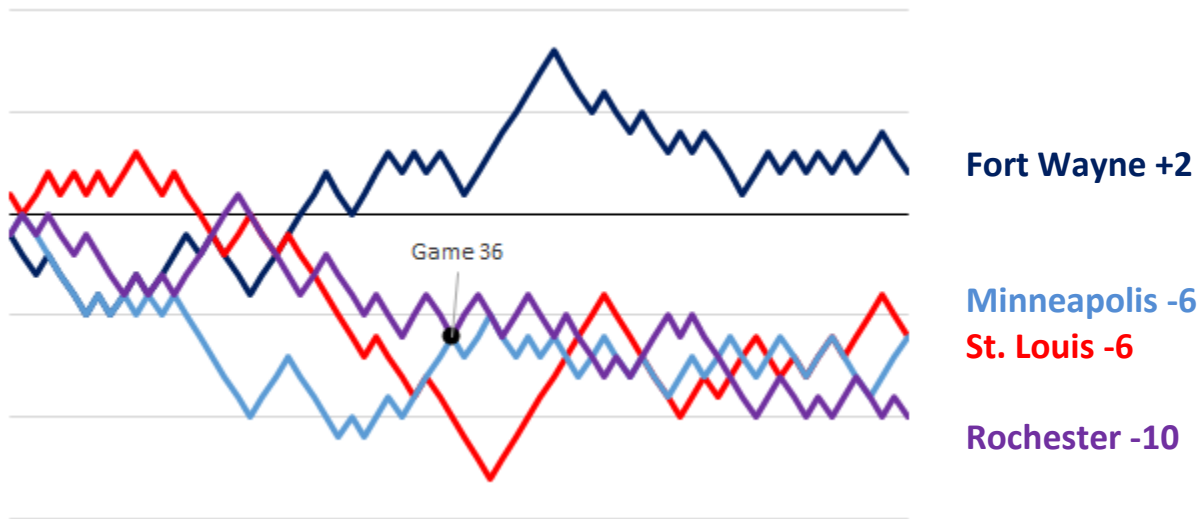
But the Hawks had not earned the second pick in the draft through conventional means. A look at the 1955-56 regular season standings shows the Hawks *tied* for the second-worst record in the league with the Minneapolis Lakers. The Hawks posted a 7-5 record against the Lakers during the regular season; under today's NBA rules, the Hawks would have earned the third pick in the draft, and the Lakers would have been slotted second. And more importantly, the Lakers would have been less likely to trade away Russell's rights.

The histories of the Lakers and Hawks could not have been more different heading into the fall of 1955. Both franchises had originally been founded in 1946 as part of the National Basketball League (NBL), and both soon moved to new cities and adopted new nicknames, but their fortunes quickly diverged after that. The Lakers were born as the Detroit Gems, owned by a jewelry merchant named Maury Winston who sold the team to a group of investors from Minneapolis after a 4-40 inaugural season. The fortunes of the franchise turned around when the rival Professional Basketball League of America (PBLA) collapsed just weeks into their season, taking the Chicago American Gears franchise down along with it. The Gears had won the 1946 NBL title before jumping to the PBLA, and their roster was stocked with prime talent, including center George Mikan, the best professional player in the country. A dispersal draft was held by the NBL to distribute the former Gears and other PBLA players worthy of NBL roster spots, and the Lakers held the first choice due to their pitiful finish in the 1946-47 campaign. Minneapolis selected Mikan, then won six championships over the next seven seasons, as they moved from the NBL (1948), to the Basketball Association of America (BAA, 1949), and then into the consolidated NBA (1950, 1952-1954).⁵ Mikan's subsequent retirement, and the adoption of the 24-second clock for the 1954-55 season, caused the Lakers to slip to a still respectable 40-32 record, but that mark represented their worst finish since moving to Minneapolis. Forward Jim Pollard then retired as well, further depleting the Lakers' roster.

Ben Kerner had established his Buffalo Bisons franchise in the fall of 1946 but quickly relocated the team to Moline, Illinois two days after Christmas.⁶ The rechristened Tri-Cities Blackhawks (named for the Tri-Cities area of Moline and Rock Island, Illinois and nearby Davenport, Iowa) finished 19-25 that season, then improved to 30-30 in 1947-48, losing to Mikan and the Lakers in two straight games in the playoffs by a combined margin of 181-138. After posting their first winning season the following year, the Hawks moved into the new NBA and proceeded to sink to the bottom of the standings. From 1951 through 1955 the Hawks—who moved again, this time to Milwaukee in the fall of 1951 while dropping the “Black” from their name—finished in last place every year while posting an overall record of 116-233 (for comparison, the Lakers won 218 games during the same span). With attendance dropping, Kerner moved the franchise once more, to St. Louis, despite the failure of the city's previous NBA entry, the Bombers, in 1950.

The Lakers and Hawks opened the 1955-56 season against each other with a game in St. Louis. With Bob Pettit and Frank Selvy scoring 21 points apiece to offset 27 by Clyde Lovellette, St. Louis won 101-89. Lovellette, a former All-American who had won an Olympic gold medal and an AAU championship with

the Phillips 66ers, posted solid statistics as Mikan’s replacement in the middle but became better known for his colorful off-court personality and rough style of play that led Tom Meschery to describe him as “the single dirtiest player in NBA history.”⁷ The Hawks spent the first month of the season in first place while the Lakers and the rest of the Western Division were below the .500 mark. Minneapolis lost five in a row in November, six straight in December, and nearly closed out the calendar year 1955 with another five game skid if not for a 74-71 win against the Hawks in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It was the Lakers second victory over the Hawks in six attempts up to that point in the season.



Games above .500 during 1955-56 Season (Game by Game)⁸

Although the Lakers’ play improved in January, George Mikan had seen enough, and decided to leave his front office job and come out of retirement to try to spark the team. “If I can just help to win a few games,” Mikan wrote in a prepared statement, “I will be contributing something toward winning back the support the team has had in the past.”⁹ On January 14, he scored 11 points in 12 minutes in his debut against the first-place Fort Wayne Pistons in a 117-94 victory.¹⁰ Minneapolis was 14-21 prior to Mikan’s return, tied in the loss column with the Royals and Hawks for second place behind the 18-15 Pistons. A month later, as the trading deadline approached, the standings were virtually unchanged: the Pistons led the 25-32 Royals by five-and-a-half games, while the Lakers and Hawks were close behind, tied in the loss column with 23-31 and 22-31 records.¹¹ At that point, the Royals, Lakers, and Hawks were battling not only for the final two playoff spots in the West, but also for the top pick in next year’s college draft since the East was a stronger division. But Sid Hartman, a member of the Lakers front office staff (and a local newspaper reporter) was working on a deal that he hoped would secure the top overall choice for the Lakers.

NBA Standings
End of play on February 14, 1956

Eastern Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia Warriors	35	19	.648	-
Boston Celtics	31	24	.564	4.5
New York Knicks	28	27	.509	7.5
Syracuse Nationals	25	29	.463	10

Western Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Fort Wayne Pistons	28	24	.538	-
Rochester Royals	25	32	.439	5.5
Minneapolis Lakers	23	31	.426	6
St. Louis Hawks	22	31	.415	6.5

Vern Mikkelsen was a 6'7" forward from Fresno, California who graduated from Askov High School in Askov, Minnesota and then attended Hamline University in St. Paul. The Lakers made frequent use of their territorial draft rights to select local talent (exchanging their first round pick to take a local college star, as the NBA rules permitted back then¹²) and their 1955-56 squad had a distinct Midwestern flavor. In addition to Mikkelsen and four graduates from the University of Minnesota, the Lakers roster featured seven other players who attended college in Illinois, Kansas, or Ohio. Slater Martin (U. of Texas at Austin) and Florida-native Bob Williams, the first African-American player in Lakers history, were the exceptions. Mikkelsen was chosen for his fifth All-Star Game in 1956, but Sid Hartman believed that he was more valuable as trade bait. He proposed sending Mikkelsen to the Celtics for Cliff Hagan, Frank Ramsey, and Lou Tsioropoulos (who were all in the military at the time and not able to play) at the trading deadline. To use the modern term, the goal of the trade was to "tank" the rest of the season to earn the top pick to select Russell. "I had Pete Newell, who I had become good friends with through my friendship with Bob Knight, who was a California coach at the time, talk to Russell," Hartman said later, "and see if he would consider playing with the Lakers if we were fortunate in drafting him."¹³ The combination of the defensive-minded Russell and the offensive-minded Lovellette could have given the Lakers a potent front-court duo for years. George Mikan appears to have agreed; while Russell was in high school, he had met Mikan, and it was widely reported in the spring of 1956 that Mikan wrote to Russell, asking him to consider playing professionally with the Lakers.¹⁴ "The Lakers are interested in your services," Mikan wrote. "If we can arrange it through the draft, we would be able to give you a deal that will set you up for a long, long time."¹⁵

Hartman contended that Russell was amenable to the prospect, but what happened next is now difficult to determine for sure, as sixty years have passed. Hartman later claimed that Red Auerbach agreed to the deal—and even signed paperwork to make the transaction official—before the trade fell through. Mikkelsen was not thrilled with the prospect of leaving Minneapolis and Hartman would blame him, along with Celtics owner Walter Brown and Lakers owner Ben Berger, for killing the deal.¹⁶

However, Auerbach later denied he would have made the trade, an assertion that, even in hindsight, makes some sense given his affection for Russell's skills.

Instead, Mikkelsen remained in Minneapolis and had a respectable season, though his scoring average continued to tail off, partly as a result of Mikan's return.¹⁷ Just as the deal collapsed, the Lakers played the second-place Royals three times in six days, and won all three, including two lopsided 110-79 and 119-99 affairs. The Royals lost five in a row overall, and fell into last place in the tightly contested Western Division. For the rest of the season, the Royals played .500 ball with remarkable precision (winning two games, then losing two, or winning one and losing one) while the Lakers and Hawks jockeyed for position ahead of them. The Pistons, who had moved into first place for good the week after Christmas, clinched the division title with a 100-82 victory over the Lakers on March 8. St. Louis also lost that night, and the Hawks and Lakers both dropped to 30-37. But the Hawks then defeated the Lakers twice on back-to-back nights to move two games ahead with just three games remaining, and Royals upset the resting Warriors to move percentage points ahead of the Lakers in third place. Had the Lakers lost their remaining three games, they would have claimed the number one pick in the draft in spite of the failed Mikkelsen deal. But Minneapolis won them all, beginning with a 126-98 victory over the Royals on March 11 in which eight Lakers scored in double figures. Combined with the Hawks 127-121 win over the Celtics, St. Louis had clinched a playoff spot. Rochester had concluded their regular season schedule with a 31-41 record, while the Lakers and Hawks still had two games remaining.

NBA Standings

End of play on March 11, 1956

Eastern Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia Warriors - Y	44	26	.629	-
Boston Celtics - X	38	33	.535	6.5
Syracuse Nationals	34	36	.486	10
New York Knicks	34	36	.486	10

Western Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Fort Wayne Pistons - Y	37	34	.521	-
St. Louis Hawks - X	33	37	.471	3.5
Minneapolis Lakers	31	39	.443	5.5
Rochester Royals	31	41	.431	6.5

X - Clinched Playoffs; Y - Clinched Division

The next night, St. Louis lost to Syracuse 92-88, keeping the door open for Minneapolis to catch them for second place. Both teams were in action on March 13. Lovellette scored 19 to lead the Lakers past the Knicks 102-89, while the Hawks nearly rallied from a 13-point fourth quarter deficit before falling to the Warriors 116-113. The Lakers had clinched a playoff spot with their victory, and went into their final game of the regular season needing a win over Fort Wayne to force a tie for second place. The Pistons had nothing to play for and fell behind by 12 points in the second half. Their late rally fell short, and the Lakers won 100-96.

NBA Standings

End of regular season on March 14, 1956

Eastern Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia Warriors - Y	45	27	.625	-
Boston Celtics - X	39	33	.542	6
Syracuse Nationals	35	37	.486	10
New York Knicks	35	37	.486	10

Western Division

Team	W	L	Pct	GB
Fort Wayne Pistons - Y	37	35	.514	-
St. Louis Hawks - X	33	39	.458	4
Minneapolis Lakers - X	33	39	.458	4
Rochester Royals	31	41	.431	6

X - Clinched Playoffs; Y - Clinched Division

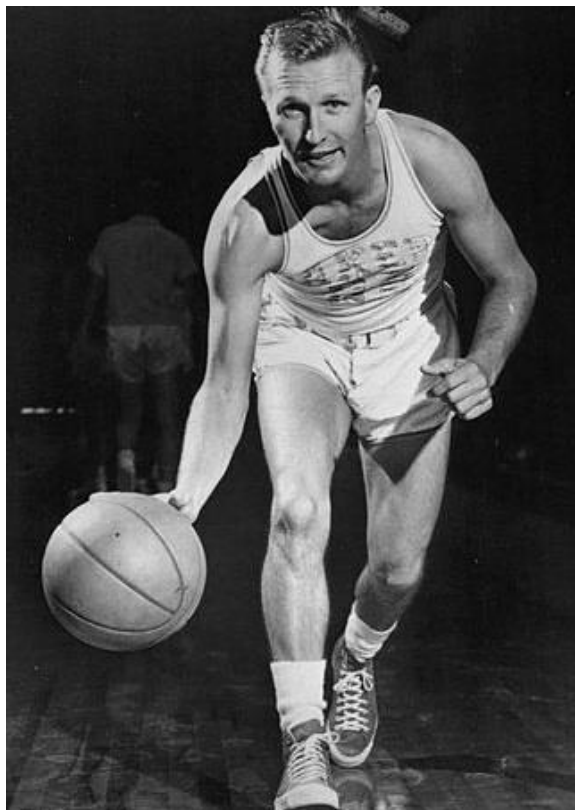
(Note: the Nationals would defeat the Knicks in a playoff on March 15 to clinch the final playoff spot)

After 72 games, the Lakers and Hawks were tied at 33-39. Both teams had qualified for the playoffs, and a best-of-three playoff series would begin in St. Louis on March 17. But first, a one-game playoff would be played the night before to decide who would earn second-place honors. The winner would receive home-court advantage in the subsequent series by earning the right to host Game 3; the series opener would be held in St. Louis due to a scheduling conflict in Minneapolis,¹⁸ and the Lakers would host the second game. The loser would finish third and obtain the second overall pick in the upcoming college draft behind Rochester. The position of the draft choice was of little consequence to the players, who had another powerful incentive to finish second—money. The NBA awarded \$5,000 bonuses (to be split among the players) to each first-place team, \$2,500 for coming in second, but nothing for third. At the time, the average player salary for an entire season was about \$6,000.¹⁹ Teams also earned extra money for each series victory in the playoffs, so capturing home-court advantage would also improve their chances of earning an additional \$2,000 of bonus money—or more.²⁰

The one-game playoff was held the Kiel Auditorium in St. Louis as a result of the Hawks 7-5 edge in the regular season series. Bob Pettit scored 13 points in the first quarter while the Hawks held the Lakers without a field goal for the first four minutes of the game. St. Louis led 27-17 late in the first quarter, but missed 15 of their 19 shots from the floor in the second; Minneapolis went on a 16-8 run to tie the game at the half. Then, with Bob Kalafat suddenly shutting down Pettit, who made just two field goals after the opening stanza en route to a subpar 7 for 23 shooting night, the Lakers broke the game open in the third, leading by as many as 17 points (at 79-62). St. Louis then rallied, cheered on by the 3,595 fans in attendance, to close to within 90-83 with 6:13 remaining in the game. Bob Pettit led the Hawks with 22 points but this was a far cry from his back-to-back 44- and 34-point performances against the Lakers less than a week earlier in a pair of Hawks victories. For Minneapolis, point guard Slater Martin rose to the challenge, scoring a season-high 28 points on 9 for 15 shooting and added 9 assists; Clyde Lovellette scored 17 points in just 18 minutes of action, and George Mikan added 13 points and 17 rebounds.²¹



Bob Pettit²²



Slater Martin²³

Another key factor in the game was the Hawks poor free throw shooting. Prior to the game, Lakers coach John Kundla told referees Mendy Rudolph and Arnie Heft that the Hawks, especially Bob Pettit, were taking far longer than the required 10 seconds to shoot free throws. As a result, the Hawks shot their free throws faster than usual, and made just 31 of 58²⁴ of their attempts during the game, far below their regular season .703 shooting percentage.

The six point margin of victory earned the Lakers their second-place bonus money, but the home-court advantage they secured failed to be decisive. The Hawks took Game 1 at home 116-115, despite falling behind by 19 points early in the third quarter.²⁵ In the second game, the Lakers administered a blistering 133-75 beating back home in Minneapolis. All ten of their players scored in double figures, as the Lakers scored twice as many field goals (44) as they allowed (22) and out-rebounded the Hawks 71-44.²⁶ However, Bob Pettit exploded for 41 points in Game 3, including 13 points in the third quarter, and the Hawks led 114-112 in the closing minutes. Clyde Lovellette made a three-point play to put the Lakers back in front, but then Al Ferrari of the Hawks converted two free throws to give St. Louis a 116-115 lead. After Ed Kalafat missed two free throws in the final minute, the Hawks held on and earned a trip to the Western Division Finals.²⁷

While the Lakers players had no way of knowing that their tie-breaker victory would be for naught, the fallout from that victory had ripple effects for years to come. The loss gave the Hawks the second choice

in the 1956 draft. With Bill Russell off the board when it was time to make their selection, the Lakers took guard Jim Paxson of Dayton with their first-round pick. After a mediocre rookie season, Paxson was traded to the relocated Cincinnati Royals along with Lovellette (whose off-court antics had reportedly turned off the Lakers²⁸) for five players who made a minimal impact; Paxson would play just one year for the Royals and then washed out of the NBA entirely. Meanwhile, Slater Martin held out at the start of the 1956-57 season, and the Lakers traded him to the Knicks in a five-player deal that brought second-year center Walter Dukes to Minneapolis. Dukes also lasted just a year with the Lakers before being flipped to the Pistons for Larry Foust. Neither proved to be a superstar center, though Foust did make the All-Star Team as a reserve in 1958 and 1959 after six previous selections as a Piston.

Minneapolis collapsed to a 19-53 record in 1957-58. This time they got the number one pick and used it wisely, selecting future Hall of Famer Elgin Baylor.²⁹ The Lakers lost to Russell and the Celtics in the 1959 Finals, then, after moving to Los Angeles, added Jerry West and became a perennial contender again. However, the Lakers would lose to Russell and the Celtics in the NBA Finals seven times from 1959 through 1969, failing to win even after acquiring Wilt Chamberlain in 1968. Lakers fans were left to wonder what would have happened if they had drafted Russell in 1956 instead of the Celtics, and had built a team around him instead of Baylor and West.

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Sources

¹ Taylor, John. *The Rivalry: Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, and the Golden Age of Basketball*. New York: Ballantine, 2006, p67-68.

² The 8 NBA teams combined to employ just 12 black players during the 1955-56 season.

³ Russell, Bill as told to William McSweeney. *Go Up For Glory*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1966, p52.

⁴ Marecek, Greg. *Full Court: The Untold Stories of the St. Louis Hawks*. St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2006, p34-35. Blake dismissed the notion that Russell's race was factor, saying "that's a lot of baloney. We already had a black player, Chuck Cooper..." and it is true that the Hawks had selected a pair of African-Americans, Dick Ricketts of Duquesne in the first round in 1955 and Willie Naulls of UCLA in the second round in 1956. But Ricketts had been traded to Rochester in early January 1956 as part of a deal to acquire Jack Coleman and Jack McMahon, who were both white. Cooper was released a week later, and the Hawks would trade Naulls in December 1956 to acquire another white star, Slater Martin, from the Knicks. In 1958, the Hawks became the last all-white team to win the NBA championship.

⁵ Much of this section is drawn from Lazenby, Roland. *The Lakers: A Basketball Journey*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

⁶ Neft, David and Richard Cohen. *The Sports Encyclopedia: Pro Basketball*. New York: St. Martin's, 1990, p60.

⁷ Pluto, Terry. *Tall Tales: The Glory Years of the NBA, in the Words of the Men who Played, Coached, and Built Pro Basketball*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992, p57.

⁸ Chart drawn by the author, based on game results taken from <http://www.basketball-reference.com>

⁹ Wire story, "Mikan to Rejoin Lakers Saturday," *Winona Daily News*, January 13, 1956.

¹⁰ "Mikan, Returning to Game, Tabs 11 Points in Victory," *The Sporting News*, January 25, 1956.

¹¹ The Hawks posted a 9-11 record from mid-January through February 19 in an unusual fashion: they lost five in a row, rebounded to win nine straight, and then lost six in a row.

¹² The Celtics most famously exercised their territorial rights in the 1956 draft to take Tom Heinsohn from Holy Cross. It is unlikely that Heinsohn would have still been available if the Celtics had been forced to wait until the seventh pick in the first round.

¹³ "Sid Hartman and the Minneapolis Lakers," interview posted at:
<http://www.nba.com/lakers/news/110228sidhartman.html>

¹⁴ (UP) Wire story, carried by several newspapers, "'Cager Of The Year?' Why, Russell, Naturally!" Sandusky (Ohio) Register, March 16, 1956.

¹⁵ UP Wire story, "Lakers Want Don's Russell," *Lead (South Dakota) Daily Call*, February 27, 1956 states that Russell released the contents of the letter that Mikan wrote to him.

¹⁶ Lazenby, *The Lakers*, p97. Hartman, Sid. "Ex-Lakers star Mikkelsen passes away at 85," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, November 22, 2013, posted at: <http://www.startribune.com/sports/twins/blogs/233087071.html>

¹⁷ See Mikkelsen's 1955-56 game log at:

<http://stats.nba.com/playerGameLogs.html?PlayerID=77593&pageNo=1&rowsPerPage=100&Season=1955-56&sortField=PTS&sortOrder=DES>

¹⁸ "Hawks' Playoff to Open Here Saturday, but Will They Be Second or Third?" *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 13, 1956. Series "will begin Saturday night at St. Louis' Kiel Auditorium. Holzman was told by Ben Kerner, Hawks' owner, that Minneapolis officials said their floor would not be available that night."

¹⁹ <http://www.apbr.org/apbr-faq.html> cites \$6,000 as the average for the 1956-57 season; no figure is given for 1955-56. \$2,500 in 1956 = \$21,887.13 in 2016 dollars (as of April); US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator: http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

²⁰ The NBA awarded \$5,000 to each division champion and \$2,500 to the runner-up. Then in the playoffs, the quarterfinal losers got \$2,500 while the winners earned \$2,000 and the ability to earn more money in subsequent rounds. (\$7,500 for winning the championship, \$5,000 for losing in the finals, \$3,500 for winning the semifinals, and \$2,500 for losing the semifinals.) See Wire story, "Elimination Survivors Take On Division Champs," *The Lewiston (Maine) Daily Sun*, March 17, 1956, and Wire story, "Playoff Pot in NBA Totals \$44,500," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 17 1956.. Note that the game stories for the Lakers-Hawks playoff in the *Minneapolis Tribune* and *Minneapolis Star*, and stories in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* leading up to the game, confirm that the second-place teams received \$2,500, as does an AP story, "Lakers Tie Hawks; Play Here Tomorrow, Saturday," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 15, 1956. Some other AP stories state the division winner would get \$4,000 and second-place would earn \$1,500, but I have chosen to rely on the stories from the St. Louis and Minneapolis newspapers.

²¹ "Haste Makes Waste; Lakers Win," *Minneapolis Star*, March 17, 1956; Augie Karcher, "Lakers Beat Hawks 103-97," *Minneapolis Tribune*, March 17, 1956. Both stories prominently mention the bonus money that the Lakers earned for their second-place finish and do not mention the draft pick side of the equation.

²² Pettit photo - *The Sporting News Archives*: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bob_Pettit_1961.jpeg

²³ Martin photo - *The Sporting News Archives*: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Slater_Martin_\(1\).jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Slater_Martin_(1).jpeg)

²⁴ The 58 FTA figure is based on reports in the *Minneapolis Tribune* and the *Minneapolis Star* which state that the Hawks missed 27 free throws. The box score in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*) states that the Hawks made 31 of 61 free throws; the box score for this game on NBA.com and Basketball-Reference.com shows the Hawks shooting 31 for 55 from the free throw line. Since 58 is exactly in the middle, I have chosen to use that figure.

²⁵ Marecek, *Full Court*, p21.

²⁶ Marecek, *Full Court*, p22.

²⁷ Marecek, *Full Court*, p23.

²⁸ Lazenby, *The Lakers*. On p118 Lazenby mentions a rumor that Lovellette was "accused of exposing himself to a woman at a popular St. Paul nightclub."

²⁹ The Lakers had also selected Elgin Baylor with a late round selection in 1956, based on Baylor's performances with the Seattle-based Westside Ford AAU team. But Baylor, who was playing AAU ball while sitting out a year after transferring from the University of Idaho to Seattle University, had only played one season of college basketball and was not eligible for the draft. (Westford Ford was owned by Ralph Malone, a major booster of

Seattle University basketball.) Dan Raley, "Baylor, Seattle U scoring machine, was toast of town in 1950's," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, February 12, 2008: <http://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Baylor-Seattle-U-scoring-machine-was-toast-of-1264314.php>