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A new ball game: history of labor relations in the National Basketball Association (1964-1976)



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Abstract

Professional basketball players in the National Basketball Association (NBA) founded the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) in 1954. The first collective act of professional basketball players under the NBPA was a threat to strike just before the 1964 NBA All-Star Game. Eventually, they had achieved to get the pension plan that they hoped for many years. Larry Fleisher, the general counsel of the NBPA, and Oscar Robertson, the president of the NBPA, were determined to abolish the reserve clause in basketball. The reserve clause restrained the free movement of professional athletes for many years, and NBA players were the ones who established staunch struggle against it, in various ways, including litigation. The NBPA filed a class-action lawsuit, also known as the Oscar Robertson lawsuit, against the merger between two basketball leagues, the NBA, and the ABA (American Basketball Association) in April 1970. Thus, professional basketball players were able to prevent the merger. After five years, Judge Robert L. Carter ruled that the reserve clause was illegal. Eventually, the NBA and the NBPA reached a settlement and removed the reserve clause from their collective bargaining agreement. This thesis argues that the NBA players gained the right of free agency through strong leadership and collective bargaining despite proven customer discrimination. The NBPA's actions demonstrate that it is possible to gain rights without a strike.

Keywords

[Collective bargaining agreement](#)

[Free agency](#)

[NBA](#)

[Oscar Robertson](#)

[The reserve clause](#)

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The American National Basketball Association (NBA), established in 1946, grew to a multibillion-dollar enterprise by the end of the century, and basketball became an integral part of American culture. Contents. 1 Early history. An illustration of a basketball game that accompanied Naismith's article from The Triangle in 1892 listing his 13 rules. There were only thirteen rules of "basket ball" Six teams took part in the National Basketball League, and the first champions were the Trenton Nationals, followed by the New York Wanderers, the Bristol Pile Drivers and the Camden Electrics. The league was abandoned in 1904.[14] Then, many small championships were organized, but most of them were not as important as some teams who played for money against challengers. Professional basketball players in the National Basketball Association (NBA) founded the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) in 1954. The first collective act of professional basketball players under the NBPA was a threat to strike just before the 1964 NBA All-Star Game. Eventually, they had achieved to get the pension plan that they hoped for many years. Larry Fleisher, the general counsel of the NBPA, and Oscar Robertson, the president of the NBPA, were determined to abolish the reserve clause in basketball. The reserve clause restrained the free movement of professional athletes