

The Top 12 Fictional Basketball Players Of All Time

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Normally, NBA training camps would be two weeks away from opening. As it stands, the lockout will prevent you from enjoying the work of the greatest basketball players in the world. What options do you have? How about enjoying the greatest fictional basketball players in the world (or in the library, or in your DVD player?) The Top 12 Fictional Basketball Players of All-Time:

1: Chip Hilton (character in 24 books, 1948 to 1965) Authored by Basketball Hall of Famer Clair Bee, the Chip Hilton series put our hero in position to succeed in football, baseball, basketball and life. Don't know Chip? Ask your Grandpa. Chip is the boy your Grandpa wishes your dad was.

2: Todd Anderson (“The Cookout,’’ film) Todd Anderson sucks and so does this movie created by Queen Latifah. But it features Mavs owner Mark Cuban making all sorts of ridiculous front-office moves to acquire Anderson. So in the sense that it’s a film version of Nellie scribbling trade ideas on a bar napkin and Cuban filling his order, it’s got a ring of truth.

3: Teen Wolf (“Teen Wolf,’’ film) The athletic ability demonstrated in his other 1985 hit, “Back To The Future,’’ was all about skateboarding. The diminutive Fox takes it to another level with two-handed dunks from the free-throw line, hook shots from half-court and apparel deals – all while he’s in high school. Probably the beginning of the whole “Twilight’’ and “True Blood’’ phenomenon. Or not.

4: Neon Budreau (“Blue Chips,’’ film) Shaq plays Shaquille O’Neal, recruited from a Louisiana swamp to play under Nick Nolte at Pacific University. The movie shows the sleazy underbelly of college recruiting and at the same time features cameos from Bobby Knight, Rick Pitino, Dick Vitale and Jerry Tarkanian. Did they not read the script closely enough to know that their real-life personas are the bad guys?

5: Air Bud (“Air Bud,’’ film) He’s like Teen Wolf, except he lacks the requisite opposable thumbs. But heck, if Erick Dampier can do without ‘em, why can’t a golden retriever?

6: Saleh (“The Air Up There,’’ film) Saleh must win a game in order to save his tribe’s land. His best teammate is NBA scout Kevin Bacon, who is putting it all on the line because he apparently cannot tell the difference between what he thinks Saleh is (the next Dikembe Mutombo) and what Saleh really is (the next Moussa Seck).

7: Jimmy Chitwood (“Hoosiers,’’ film) Indiana is another planet. Basketball rims are nailed to barns. Players’ shorts are short. Alcoholics are redeemable through basketball. Barbara Hershey can’t get a date. And a white country boy can single-handedly take down the big, bad inner-city teams thanks to his team’s semi-rhythmic locker-room clapping.

8: Will Smith, (“Fresh Prince of Bel Air,’’ TV) The Fresh Prince Highlight Reel includes Will jumping center to begin a game and instead of tipping the ball, he grabs it in mid-air and makes a half-court jumper. Now, the court appears to be about 40 feet long. And the baskets Will dunks on appear to be nine-feet high. And he was on NBC, never ESPN. But still …

9: Billy Hoyle (“White Men Can't Jump,’’ film) Woody Harrelson is good enough to hustle Marques Johnson on the court and his girlfriend Rosie Perez is good enough to win on “Jeopardy.’’ From online bingo sites to sports to brain games, what can they not do? The result of their procreation could rule the planet!

10: Calvin Cambridge (“Like Mike,’’ film) A little kid gets electrocuted by Michael Jordan's shoes and becomes an NBA star capable of out-BBIQ’ing Jason Kidd The only way to stop him? I say either a) enforce the NBA’s age limit rules or b) call Child Protective Services.

11: Jesus Shuttlesworth (“He Got Game,’’ film) Ray Allen can act a little. Playing his dad, Denzel Washington can ball a little. A Spike Lee joint.

12: Lola Bunny (film, “Space Jam’’) Everyone in this movie was fictional, including Michael Jordan himself. (He portrayed himself, for one thing, as a loyal and loving husband.) There is a Mavs-related thread that moves through the cast. You know about Shawn Bradley (and how his “talent’’ was stolen. Ahem.) But how about the movie also featuring Del Harris, Ced Ceballos, Paul Westphal, A.C. Green, Derek Harper, Mav-for-a-day Muggsy Bogues and Dallas native Larry Johnson? And the one girl who can play alongside them all … Lola Bunny. If you look at this movie just right, this is basically “The Nancy Lieberman Story’’ … with fluffier ears.