

**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

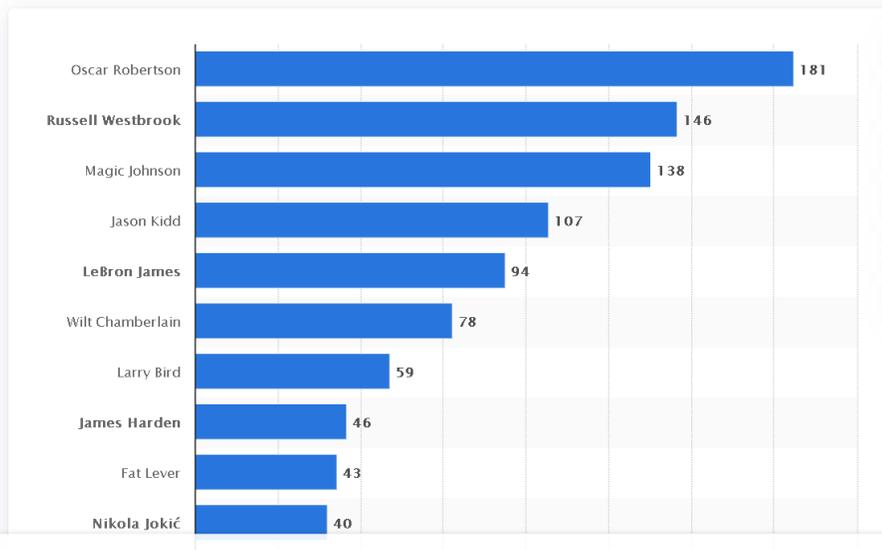
World's Best Basketball Player

The World's Best Basketball Player¹

I cannot leave a subject that I brought up sparingly during my report about Bobby Morrow. I mentioned the greatest basketball player of all-time was Oscar Robertson, if for no other reason than the statistics cited below. For the uninformed basketball person, a triple double is scoring in the double figures in three of the following categories: scoring ten points or more, rebounding in the double figures, stealing the ball ten or more times, making ten or more assists, or executing ten or more blocked shots.

Look at these stats!

Players with the most triple doubles in the NBA all-time



Oscar Robertson is still in the top ten in NBA history for assists, as shown here:

Assists Leaders		
RK	PLAYER	AST
1	John Stockton	15,806
2	Jason Kidd	12,091
3	Steve Nash	10,335
4	Mark Jackson	10,334
5	Magic Johnson	10,141
6	Oscar Robertson	9,887
7	CHRIS PAUL	9,607
8	LeBRON JAMES	9,298
9	Isiah Thomas	9,061
10	Gary Payton	8,966

The trend of modern times is to consider Michael Jordan as the all-time best. Granted, Jordan was a great player, but not even close to the best. The reason? See a later section in this article about dribbling the ball and palming (carrying).

¹ Thanks to Google for all photos and statistics, unless otherwise noted.

My hat is also off to Russell Westbrook, who made NBA history in 2016-17 and 2017-18 with two successive seasons averaging a triple double. However, for 55 seasons, Oscar Robertson stood alone as the only player to average a triple double for each season. Westbrook also tied Wilt Chamberlain's run of nine triple-doubles in a row, set in 1968, against the Houston Rockets.



According to Google, during Robertson's triple double season, he averaged 30.8 points, 12.5 rebounds and 11.4 assists per game for the Cincinnati Royals. Westbrook finished 2016-17 averaging 31.6 points, 10.7 rebounds and 10.4 assists.

The photo on the left shows Robertson when he played pro ball for the Milwaukee Bucks. Part of his professional career was also with the Cincinnati Royals. He played pro ball from 1960-1974.

As an interesting side bar, Oscar never dunked a basketball during a game. Not once. He could have as he had a prodigious leap and was 6-5 in height. In those more modest days, dunking was rare. Today, people watch television programs devoted to players contesting one another for the most impressive (read: aggressive) slam dunk. ...Not a "dunk," but a "slam

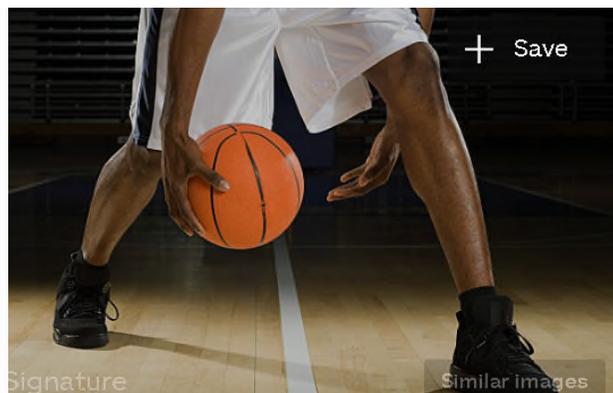
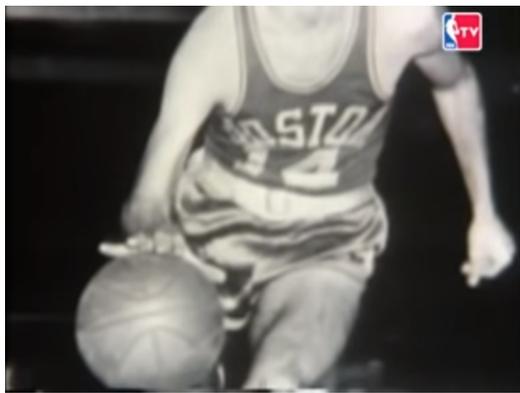
dunk!"

Palming (Carrying) the ball

While I continue to claim Oscar Robinson was the best basketball player ever, it should be remembered that during his heyday and up until the late 1980s (or there-about; no one agrees on the precise date), A player could not palm (carry the ball) while dribbling.

Palming is holding the ball briefly just before the hand bounces it onto the floor. The only way this move can be executed is for the player to (briefly) hold close to the underside of the ball with his palm and fingers, especially if the player has a large hand.

This hand position allows the player to make a sudden move much more quickly than if his hand was on the top and side of the ball. Essentially, the player is carrying the ball along with him in the direction of his thrust.



The photo on the top left above shows the great Bob Cousy (highlighted in the next section) executing a non-palming dribble. The photo on the top right shows the player palming the ball, with his fingers partially on the underside of the ball. I think even a person who does not play basketball can understand the player who is palming the ball has much more control and can shift positions faster and easier than the player pictured on the left.

It's no understatement to say that the allowance of palming altered the game of basketball. For a while, it was restricted to the NBA, then drifted down to the college level, and is now used by kids the same time they are learning to dribble.

I recall Jerry West was called for this infraction during his career, somewhere in 1972 or 1973. So, palming must have still been illegal in those days. But now it has gone to the extreme. Watching a modern basketball game bears witness to a player almost spooning the ball, turning it over as if flipping it to its other side.

Take the word of any basketball player. The fantastic moves we see today of a player suddenly changing directions could not be done unless the player was also palming the ball. And along with palming, comes the ability to score more easily.

Don't Forget Bob Cousy



Googling the Internet, I found this information about a player whom I believe was the best ball handler ever: Bob Cousy. Before the 1956–57 NBA season, coach Red Auerbach drafted two future Hall-of-Famers: forward Tom Heinsohn and defensive center Bill Russell. Powered by these new players, the Celtics went 44–28 in the regular season.

As the play-making point guard, Bob Cousy averaged 20.6 points, 4.8 rebounds, and a league-leading 7.5 assists, earning his first NBA Most Valuable Player Award. He also won his second NBA All-Star Game MVP award.

The Celtics reached the 1957 NBA Finals, and powered by Cousy on offense and rugged center Russell on defense, they beat the Hawks 4–3, who were noted for future Hall-of-Fame power forward Bob Pettit and former teammates Macauley and Hagan. Cousy finally won his first title. And Bob did not palm the ball.

In the 1957–58 NBA season, Cousy had great year, with his 20.0 points, 5.5 rebounds and 8.6 assists per game leading to nominations into the All-NBA First Team and the All-Star team. He again led the NBA in assists. The Celtics reached the 1958 NBA Finals against the Hawks, but when Russell succumbed to a foot injury in Game 3, the Celtics faded and bowed out four games to two. This was the last losing NBA playoff series in which Cousy would play.

To witness this man's ball handling and passing magic, google "Bob Cousy and his ball handling."