



**SPORT**  
**SPORT** homo  
**SPORT**

# Homophobia in sports culture

## THINK **positive** about **homosexuals**

Heteronormativity can be seen as the dominant paradigm in sports culture, stemming all the way into children's athletics in school. Heteronormativity describes "the myriad ways in which heterosexuality is produced as a natural, unproblematic, taken-for-granted, ordinary phenomenon." It is defined as a world/ common view of heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexuality. This way of thinking has been documented as an emphasis on hegemonic masculinity in sports is often taken to the extreme in sports culture. Arnd Krüger has shown that the history of homosexuality in sports is closely linked to the history of sports and goes back until antiquity. The priority of heteronormative thinking in athletics has led to a traditional view in sports culture that is highly intolerant of homosexuality. This homophobic attitude has been documented in adolescent sports especially, as a recent study by Danny Osborne and William E. Wagner, III showed that male adolescents who participated in football were significantly more likely to hold homophobic attitudes than other peers their age. In a 2009 study on the well being of same-sex-attracted youth in the United States, Lindsey Wilkinson and Jennifer Pearson found that lower self-esteem and higher rates of depression in same-sex attracted youth were correlated with the prevalence of football in high schools. Sociology researchers Sartore and Cunningham also found a similar stigmatization in the view of homosexual coaches, as high school parents were shown to have an unwillingness to allow their children to be coached by a homosexual. They also found a similar attitude from high school athletes themselves toward participating on teams coached by either gay or lesbian coaches. In spite of the apparent prevalence of homophobic thinking in athletic culture, recent scholars have documented an increasing trend toward openly gay athletes in high school and collegiate level sports.

This trend, however, has not been seen in professional sports, where homosexuality still remains largely stigmatized in the four major North American professional sports leagues. Only Jason Collins of the NBA has come out while active, and only nine players have come out after their careers were over: Wade Davis, Kwame Harris, Dave Kopay, Ryan O'Callaghan, Roy Simmons, and Esera Tuaolo (NFL); Billy Bean and Glenn Burke (MLB); and John Amaechi (NBA). This same trend can also be found in England's Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), as a recent ad campaign devised by the PFA against homophobia failed because no professional football player was willing to associate themselves with the advertisement.

Sociologists who have examined the issue of lesbians in American sport in the 1980s and 1990s normally found overt and covert mechanisms of social discrimination. However, homophobia has been on a rapid decline over previous decades, and studies show attitudes toward female homosexuality in sport have improved since the research conducted on lesbian athletes in the mid-1990s.

There has been an increase in numbers of individual athletes who have publicly come out as LGBTQ. Recent attempts by organizations such as the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) have also been made to break down homophobic attitudes in collegiate and professional team sports. NCLR has worked with the San Francisco 49ers, as well as collegiate athletic departments at universities such as North Carolina, Florida, and Stanford at revising team policies to more openly accommodate LBGT athletes.

Out on the Fields, a survey conducted in 2015 initiated by members of the organizing committee of Bingham Cup Sydney 2014, the world cup of gay rugby, and members of the Sydney Convicts, Australia's first gay rugby union club, is the first and largest study conducted on homophobia in sports. It surveyed 9494 athletes with varying sexual identities (25% of which identified as heterosexual). The survey found that only 1% of the participants believed that lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletes were 'completely accepted' in sport culture, while 80% of respondents said they had witnessed or experienced homophobia in a sporting environment. The rates and occurrences of discrimination based on sexuality in sports are high with 62% of survey respondents claiming that homophobia is more common in team sports than any other part of society.

There is also a gender difference when it comes to the responses to male and female athletes who come out as LGBT. Brittney Griner softened the blowback from announcing her sexuality, by casually announcing her coming out in an interview almost immediately after being drafted into the WNBA. This was a month before Jason Collins came out and there was a media uproar for him while there was barely any coverage over Griner's announcement.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association announced its support of LGBT student-athletes, coaches, and administrators in intercollegiate athletics. Since then, the association has been defending its core values of equality, inclusion, fairness, and respect in regard to all people involved in NCAA sports and events. The defense of these values has very publicly come into play in determining host cities for championship events. The NCAA expressed concern over Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the hosting of the 2015 Men's Basketball Final Four Tournament, and it banned North Carolina from hosting championship events until 2019 after it passed the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act



**Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other non-heterosexual or non-cisgender (LGBTQ+) athletes have faced intolerance due to heteronormativity within sports culture.**







# +homosexuals

## Collin Martin



Collin Martin, born on November 9, 1994, is an American professional soccer player who plays as a midfielder for San Diego Loyal in the USL Championship. He has played for D.C. United and Minnesota United FC in Major League Soccer, and for Richmond Kickers and Hartford Athletic in the United Football League.

He came out as gay in June 2018, making him the only out man in any of the big five American sports leagues or any top-division professional men's national soccer league.

Martin, 26, shared the news on Twitter, noting he had been openly gay to his friends and family for years, but never on such a large platform.

# Robbie Rogers

Robert Hampton Rogers, born May 12, 1987, is a former American professional soccer player. He played as a winger and as a left back. Rogers has also represented the United States men's national soccer team.

Despite his successful contract, Rodgers never made it to Heerenveen's starting eleven squad. In his memoirs, "Coming Out To Play," Robbie recounts feeling left out and alienated when he was in Netherlands, even though he hadn't yet made his sexuality public.

This later contributed to him leaving the club in 2007 by mutual consent and before returning to the States.









# Glen Anton Hysen

Glenn Anton Hysén, born December 13, 1990, is a Swedish footballer who plays in the Swedish Football Division 2 for Torslanda IK, as a defender.

In 2014, he played with the American fourth division team Myrtle Beach FC. In 2015, he signed with Torslanda IK.

Anton is the son of former Swedish international Glenn Hysén, and was born in Liverpool, when his father was playing for Liverpool F.C..

Anton Hysén came out as gay to the Swedish football magazine Offside in March 2011. Daily Mail has described Anton as the “first high-profile Swedish footballer to announce that he is gay” and as the second active professional football player to come out, after English footballer Justin Fashanu in 1990. The BBC called him “a global one-off”.

His older brothers are football players Tobias Hysén (half-brother) and Alexander Hysén. He won the seventh season of Let's Dance, being the first openly gay person to win this competition.

Anton Hysén said: ‘I am a footballer and gay. If I perform as a footballer, then I do not think it matters if I like girls or boys.’ He stated that, “I know that many LGBT people have been the victims of assaults and hate crimes. I can therefore understand if some people have been upset by the airport incident, so I want to be clear: I think that it is completely unacceptable that anybody should be subjected to assaults, insults or hate crimes due to their sexual orientation or gender identity,...The incident had been blown out of proportion in the media...In order to finally flush the Frankfurt Airport punch down the toilet: it is not the case that I beat up a gay .

# Thomas Hitzlsperger

Thomas Hitzlsperger, born 5 April 1982, is a German director of football and former footballer who played as a midfielder. Since February 2019, he has been the head of VfB Stuttgart sport.

In the winter transfer window in 2010, he switched to Lazio for six months and then, in June 2010, he moved to West Ham United. His debut there was in February 2011 in the FA Cup game against Burnley.

He was called to play for the Germany U19 and U21 teams and earned his first cap for the senior team on 9 October 2004 when he substituted Bernd Schneider in a 2-0 victory over Iran

Hitzlsperger had thought about coming out while still playing for Wolfsburg in 2011-12 but then listened to people who warned him of the negative consequences. "They all said 'don't do it, a big wave will crash on you'," he says. "But in the end, I realized that nobody knows. There was no precedent, so everybody could only speculate on what would happen."

While Germany as a country has noticeably become more and more relaxed about homosexuality in recent years, he had also noted there was an unhelpful media obsession with finding the first gay footballer. All sorts of well-intended but ultimately unhelpful interventions from heterosexual players – who either opined that gay players would benefit from coming out or cautioned against it – did not exactly fill him with confidence that this was indeed the right step.







# Gay Athletes Who Are Out And Proud

These athletes prove  
sexuality has nothing  
to do with athletic  
ability...









# Notable homo- sexual rugby players and per- sonalities

# Ian Roberts

The very first high-profile rugby player to ever come out to the public as gay is former Australian international Ian Roberts.

A second-row forward, Roberts was born in London in 1965 and moved to Australia two years later where he would become one of the most respected rugby league players in the country's history.

Roberts publicly acknowledged his sexual orientation in 1995 and has since been named to the South Sydney Dream Team as well as one of the top 25 greatest New South Wales players.

Finally, he was awarded the Australian Sports Medal for his contribution to the development of rugby league





# Keegan Hirst

Even though Ian Roberts may have been the first high-profile player to openly admit being gay, Keegan Hirst was the first to ever do it while still active. Currently a Wakefield Trinity prop, Hirst has become one of the most notable gay athletes, earning himself a starting role after signing a contract with the League side in 2016.

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# Sam Stanley

Sam Stanley became the first openly gay Rugby Union and Sevens player in the UK. The former Saracens full-back also played with England in the World Rugby Sevens Series from 2013 to 2015 but has been sidelined from the sport due to a recurring injury.

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# Gareth Thomas

Gareth Thomas is one of the greatest rugby players in the history of the UK, captaining the Welsh international side as well as the British and Irish Lions during his career.

Thomas publicly came out in 2009 and has since described his experience as a secretly gay player, revealing how the social pressure and stereotypes pose a significant challenge for many athletes today.

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**Being an offensive lineman, obviously you're a little bit different than most athletes, so our body types are going to be drastically different. I think that's one of the cool things about football -- there's a place for every kid to play, regardless of size, shape or speed.**



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**At the same time, there are many misconceptions about this beautiful sport, which has led to the marginalization and targeting of gay players. Some high-profile stars like Israel Folau have recently made headlines due to potentially homophobic posts on social media.**

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**homosexual**  
**BASKETBALL**  
**players**





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# Homosexuality and the NBA

Professional basketball has long been viewed as one of the most masculine team sports within United States culture (Kian & Anderson, 2009, p. 805). Within basketball exists a strong sense of hegemonic masculinity, in which players often fit into a cookie-cutter view of the idealistic man: tall, strong, and aggressive. Basketball games are characterized by an immense demonstration of strength, endurance, and skill through intense physical contact. Driving the ball to the basket requires the player out-muscle his opponents and assert dominance. Dunking the ball proves that a player is tall and powerful.

Homosexuality, however, is viewed to be feminine, and femininity directly challenges the hegemonic masculinity that exists in basketball, making it difficult for those in the NBA to be both homosexual and conform to the masculinity expected by them. Though the rest of US society has grown increasingly accepting of LGBT culture, basketball seems to lag behind, with the first former player coming out only in 2007, and the first active player coming out in 2013. In this paper, I will analyze the historical development of sexuality in the NBA, with focus on several figures that have had an impact on league's views regarding homosexuality. Then, I will analyze recent development in the NBA that have made it more accepting of LGBT culture.

Demographics play a large part on one's political views, with certain minorities being more or less accepting than others. Oftentimes, views about homosexuality are generational or religiously reinforced. Competitive team sports are one of the primary institutions that reinforce and support homophobia in US society (Anderson, 2002). Many NBA players are religious, in which their beliefs often promote bigotry towards potential gay teammates. "Gay" is used as a pejorative term, implying that a player is weak and doesn't play like a man (Livingston, 2007, p. C1).

In 2004, 73% of players across the 30 NBA teams were black (Kian & Anderson, 2009, p. 800). Research has shown elevated rates of homophobia within Black culture, in which within black culture, homosexuality is viewed as more of a white man's problem (Froyum, 2007; King, 2004). In a survey of 175 first-year NFL players, 91.7% of white players said they would be comfortable with a gay teammate, compared with only 60% of black players (Anderson, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is also reinforced in US black culture, in which black athletes often dominate US professional basketball (Kian & Anderson, 2009, p. 802). The discrepancy between views of NFL players of different races potentially also applies to the NBA and could explain why the NBA as a whole might be less accepting of homosexuality than modern US culture.

Homosexuality is often a taboo subject that is not discussed much in the NBA. The first incident that notably brought attention to the subject of homosexuality was when Earvin "Magic" Johnson announced that he was diagnosed with HIV in 1991. Magic Johnson was a prominent player, a five-time NBA champion and three-time finals MVP. His illustrious career came to an end simultaneous to his announcement of being HIV positive. At the time, HIV/AIDS was still widely perceived as only targeting the gay community (Newsweek, 2011). People were reluctant to admit they had the disease and be stereotyped to the gay community. Magic Johnson's revelation sent shockwaves through the NBA, both in the fact that he had the disease, but also because it resulted in him immediately retiring.

Mass speculation ensued that Magic Johnson was either gay or bisexual, which he vehemently denied in multiple interviews after the announcement (DailyMail, 2016). In his original article on Sports Illustrated where he disclosed his diagnosis, Magic Johnson outright stated that he believed most of America thought he was gay, and he emphasized that he had never had a homosexual encounter, ever (Sports Illustrated, 1991). Magic Johnson later became an important figure for advocating the use of condoms and protected sex. With such a prominent figure in professional sports contracting HIV, Johnson dispelled stereotypes that the so-called gay disease could not affect straight people, opening up the conversation across America but also in the NBA itself.

In 2007, John Amaechi became the first former NBA player to come out. Amaechi had a relatively unknown five-year NBA career, retiring after the 2002–2003 NBA season. Though his career garnered little media attention, he received international media attention after coming out as gay in 2007. Amaechi came out during a time in American culture where acceptance of LGBT culture was increasing, with a 2007 poll showing that 46% of Americans supported gay marriage (Kian & Anderson, 2009, p. 804).

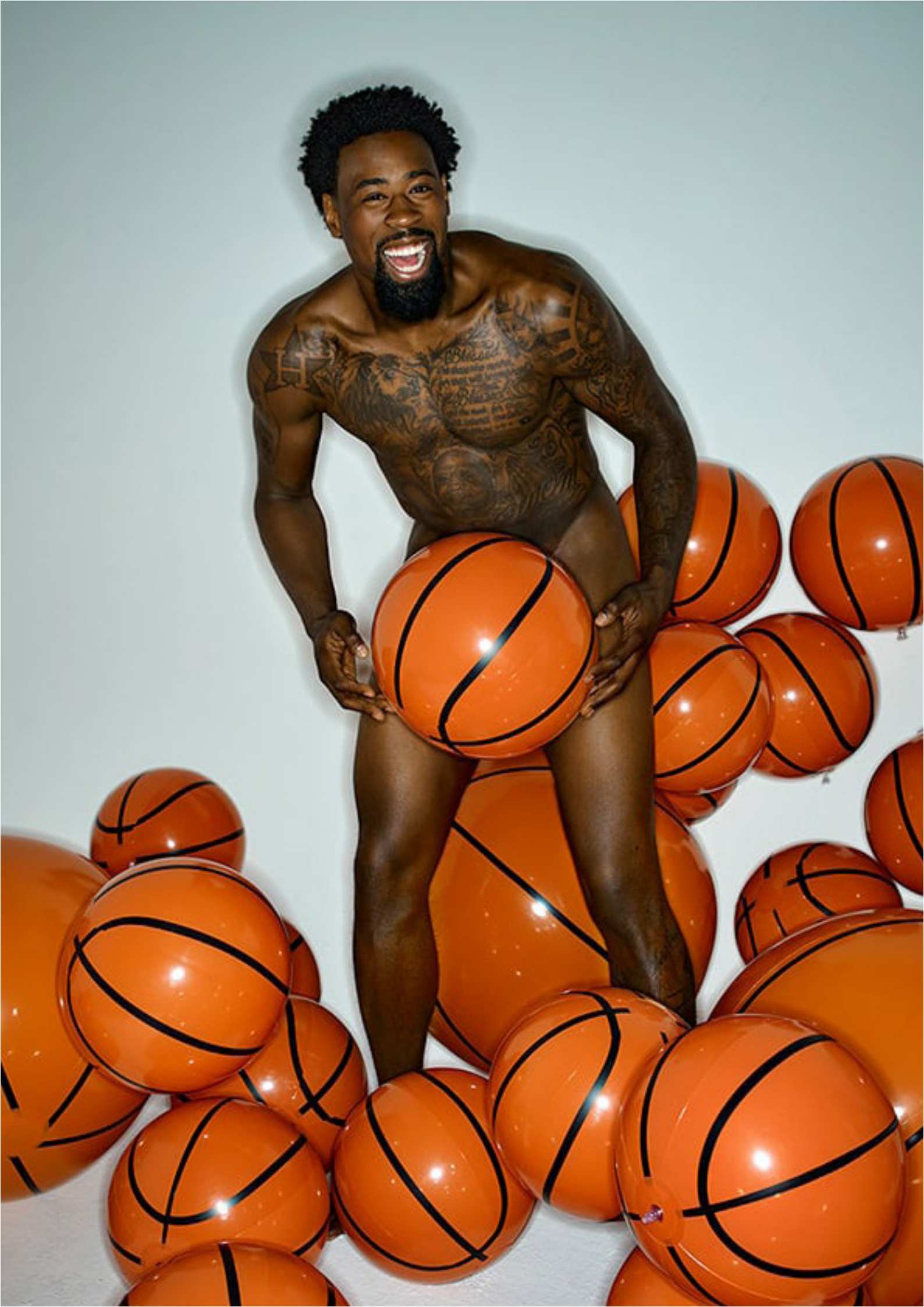
Despite the growing acceptance within American culture, Amaechi faced critical backlash from the NBA, most notably former Miami Heat star Tim Hardaway. Hardaway, in a radio interview, made several homophobic remarks about Amaechi after Amaechi came out. Hardaway stated that he hated gay people, and that he wanted that to be known. He even stated that he is homophobic and that gay people do not have a place in the world or in the US (Banks, 2007).

In addition to Hardaway's criticism, sports reporters also expressed homophobic and stereotyped sentiments in reaction to Amaechi coming out. A predominant narrative found in sport reporters' articles concerning Amaechi's coming out was that gay men did not belong in the locker room (Kian & Anderson, 2009, p. 806). A reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle believed that an openly gay man couldn't survive in a testosterone-rich and mentally impoverished locker room environment, and that this was the last frontier of intolerance in society (Knapp, 2007, p. D1). Athletes feared that their personal sexuality safety would be invaded if a gay man was also inhabiting a locker room (Mott, 2007, p.10).

Other reporters assumed that a gay athlete would face physical threats from opponents and teammates, which violated the macho image, creating a threat in the shower rather than on the court (Powell, 2008, p. A73). On the contrary, however, many athletes already knew a teammate was gay, and it had negligible effect on morale. Athletes may have been closeted, but it didn't matter as much, demonstrating a change in the locker room culture (Burwell, 2007; Anderson, 2005a).

The extreme reaction from Tim Hardaway and the disagreement between sports reporters demonstrates that the NBA, and sport in general, lags behind the dominating culture regarding social inclusivity of homosexuality (Kian & Anderson, 2009, p. 807). Sport culture, in addition to mass media attention, would make it very difficult for an active player to come out.





# Homosexuality and the NBA

In 2011, Rick Welts, the chief executive and president of the Phoenix Suns, came out as gay. Welts had spent 40 years with the NBA, starting from being just a ball boy and working his way up to team president. Welts had never felt comfortable being open about his sexuality, especially in the NBA. Welts, in an interview with *The New York Times*, stated that the NBA was one of the last industries where the subject of homosexuality is off limits. In 1994, Welts' long-time partner died from AIDS-related complications. He hid his grief, fearing that if he made his sexuality public, it would hinder his career (*New York Times*, 2011).

Though Welts may not have been a player for the NBA, he was a high-ranking executive and his coming out was still significant for the NBA in regards to the culture within it surrounding homosexuality. In 2011, no current executive or player in the NBA had ever come out, speaking directly to how difficult it was for Welts to do so. The next day, Kobe Bryant was fined for shouting a homophobic slur towards a referee.

Backlash from Kobe Bryant's homophobic remarks toward a referee in 2011 resulted in a \$100,000 assessed by the league. Just one month later, Joakim Noah, who at the time played for the Chicago Bulls, was also fined \$50,000 for using homophobic remarks directed at a fan. NBA commissioner David Stern, in response to both players' remarks, released a statement that while basketball can be an emotional game, insensitive and derogatory comments are not tolerated in the league or in society (*Huffington Post*, 2011).

It wasn't until 2013, did the first active NBA player, Jason Collins, come out as gay. In fact, Jason Collins was the first active player in any of the four major men's professional team sport leagues in the US to publicly come out (*LaCaruba*, 2013, p. 1).

Jason Collins had an incredible college career at Stanford, earning the number 18th pick overall in the 2001 NBA draft. Though he may not have had a successful career, Collins, unlike Amaechi, had a long tenure with the NBA and was not an unfamiliar name in the NBA. Collins didn't come out until his 12th season in the NBA and played sparingly after in his final season before retiring. During his career, Collins said he lived a double life. He had worked on building a straight façade by dating women, and even got engaged. He was so dedicated to hiding his sexuality that he believed that it was necessary to marry a woman and raise kids (*Sports Illustrated*, 2013).

When asked why he didn't come out sooner, Collins stated that his loyalty to his teams was the reason, in which he wanted to commit himself fully to the game and not let his personal life be a distractor (*Sports Illustrated*, 2013). Response to Collins coming out was extremely supportive and positive, unlike the criticism seen just six years earlier when Amaechi came out. Collins' coming out was described as historic, monumental, landmark, etc. by sports journalists, starkly contrasting the locker room talk journalists were fixated on when Amaechi came out (*Kian & Anderson*, 2015, p. 625).

Among notable supporters of Collins were the Obamas, the Clintons, and the Kennedys, with their political prominence demonstrating a shift in American society towards being more accepting. This shift was especially seen in the NBA's overwhelmingly positive response. Past and present NBA superstars, such as LeBron James, Magic Johnson, and Shaquille O'Neal, also expressed their support for Collins. The positive support went beyond just the players, with coaches such as Doc Rivers, Mavericks' owner Mark Cuban, and even NBA commissioner David Stern commending Collins on coming out.

The change in the views that are prevalent in the NBA is best seen with Kobe Bryant, whose personal ideological evolution on homosexuality symbolizes the general shift of societal acceptance not only within the NBA but also in the US itself (*Kian & Anderson*, 2015, p. 627). Kobe Bryant had historically controversial views and statements regarding homosexuality, even once being fined for firing a homophobic slur at a referee during a game. Bryant had also been known to tweet homophobic remarks in response to fans on twitter, facing backlash. Bryant's response to Collins, however, was supportive and positive, tweeting that he was proud of Collins for coming out in the face of ignorance (*Hoffman & Haughney*, 2013, p. 4–6). Bryant's mention of the ignorance of society demonstrates his own self-realization of his own prior ignorance, and his change of heart reflects the growing trend of acceptance in the NBA.







The NBA has been very responsive in recent years to the growing changes prevalent in American society regarding LGBT rights. In 2011, notably after Bryant and Noah's use of slurs, the NBA teamed up with Athlete Ally and GLAAD to provide LGBT awareness training to rookies. The awareness training emphasized the importance of being an ally in the context of sports (GLAAD, 2011). The initiative taken by the NBA reflects its desire to change the culture within the NBA concurrent to the ongoing changes in American society regarding inclusivity and tolerance. This ultimately leads to future increased acceptance and support in the league, starting with the newest generation of rookie players.

In the same year, the NBA, following in the steps of the NFL and MLB, also announced that the league was adopting a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation as part of the collective bargaining agreement, further demonstrating the NBA's shift towards being more inclusive, a move commended by the Human Rights Campaign, the largest organization for LGBT rights and equality (HRC, 2011).

In 2012, NBA players appeared in a public service announcement called 'Think Before You Speak' in partnership with the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network. The PSA featured Phoenix Sun's star Grant Hill, among other famous figures such as Hilary Duff and Wanda Sykes, with Hill serving as a representative for the NBA. The message of the PSA focuses around the use of anti-LGBT language among teens, raising awareness among a younger and new audience regarding the negative impact of anti-gay slurs (Huffington Post, 2012).

In 2013, Denver Nuggets star Kenneth Faried became the first NBA player to join Athlete Ally, an organization devoted to combating homophobia in sports. The fight for equal rights of LGBT people is a fight close to home for Faried, who was raised by two mothers. Faried became an Athlete Ally because he wanted the LGBT community to feel welcome in the NBA and its communities (Huffington Post, 2013). NBA executive vice president for social responsibility and player programs Kathy Behrens commended Faried for his involvement, thanking him for his leadership on the issue, a stepping stone in the NBA's own efforts to raise awareness and eliminate homophobia in sports. (Huffington Post, 2013).

An important milestone in the NBA's progress towards eliminating homophobia in its culture and showing support for the LGBT community was in 2016, when the NBA decided to move the All-Star game from North Carolina in protest to the state adopting homophobic laws. North Carolina enacted a state law that eliminated anti-discrimination protections for LGBT people, also barring transgender people from using public bathrooms that did not correspond with their birth gender. The NBA released a statement that the league did not believe it could host its All-Star festivities in the climate created by the North Carolina law (New York Times, 2016).

The NBA embedded itself into social issues that were gripping the nation, taking a major step forward in its attempt to become more involved in current events. The move by the NBA was a statement that ignited further controversy and debate into North Carolina law, with many other famous figures such as Bruce Springsteen and Ringo Starr following the NBA's footsteps by cancelling concerts in protest to the law (New York Times, 2016).

The NBA has gone through a drastic evolution in regards to homophobia. The NBA has come a long way, and now has become a major gamechanger in the steps taken to eliminate homophobia in sports. The NBA has helped to change the conversation in professional sports with the first active player in any of the United States' major sporting league coming out, in addition to partnerships with various organizations to promote the league's stance as an ally to the LGBT community.

## **We should be proud of ourselves**

## Kye Allums

Kye Allums isn't in the NBA, but he's best known as a transgender pioneer in the basketball world. He played college basketball for the George Washington Colonials women's basketball team at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Allums came out as a transgender male in 2010. He told [outsports.com](http://outsports.com), "My biological sex is female, which makes me a transgender male."

Allums also made a name for himself in the academic world. He graduated from GWU with a bachelor's degree in fine arts in 2011. However, he did attempt to take his own life after ESPN published a controversial story on transgender athletes. That's not a good thing at all. But negative things happen and all you can do is deal with the outside noise with the best of your abilities and move on with your life.

## Rick Welts

To add onto the topic of the Warriors, president Rick Welts came out as gay in an interview with the New York Times in 2011. Welts has never played in the NBA, but he has worked as a ball boy for the then-Seattle SuperSonics before becoming a director of public directions when the SuperSonics won their only NBA championship in 1979. Welts later worked in some of the NBA's offices and eventually rose to become an executive.

The fact that Welts came out in a time where LGBT politics were just getting started was really courageous of him because he had the guts to speak out about something like that. And, of course, Durant tweeted his support for him in the last tweet we shared with you in his section above. Homophobia is something that shouldn't have a place in sports because LGBT folks can be fans, media members, employees and executives too.





# Travon Free

Travon Free is another example of a “what if.” The Los Angeles Times described Free as “the team’s best player” in 2002 when he started playing basketball at Dominguez High School in Compton, Calif. However, Free chose to stay local and played college basketball for the California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). Free had his chances to earn a starting role, despite the struggling program. Unfortunately, injuries like a torn meniscus in his right knee halted his dreams of playing in the NBA, and he apparently didn’t want to play overseas.

Free made headlines in 2011 when he came out as bisexual. He was one of the few Division I men’s basketball players who have come out. Even in the NCAA, the topic of sexuality isn’t much of a cultural norm, so he was a brave soul to admit something that big.

# Derrick Gordon

As you can see, former NCAA basketball player Derrick Gordon is wearing a black customized Nike t-shirt with the hashtag “#Be-True” written in rainbow letters. Gordon played college basketball for Western Kentucky (2011-12), UMass (2013-15) and Seton Hall (2015-16). He graduated from UMass in 2015.

Gordon never made it to the NBA, but he has cited retired NBAer Jason Collins as his primary inspiration in the coming out process. His family reportedly had mixed emotions towards the announcement, but he still changed the game, becoming the first Division I men’s basketball player to come out as gay and play in games. He also received praise from Collins and former NFL defensive end Michael Sam, who became the first openly gay football player. Although it’s unclear why Gordon made NCAA history and then suddenly stepped out of the limelight, he has made a slight difference in helping young LGBT men and women realize that they’re not wrong for being the way they were.

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