

lakers head coaches history

Lakers Head Coaches History

The Los Angeles Lakers, one of the most storied franchises in NBA history, have seen a plethora of head coaches guiding their fortunes. From the early days of the franchise to the current era of professional basketball, each of these coaches has played a crucial role in shaping the team's identity and success. This article will delve into the rich history of Lakers head coaches, exploring their backgrounds, coaching styles, and the impact they had on the team's legacy.

Early Years of the Franchise

The Lakers were founded in 1947 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the franchise's early years were marked by a focus on building a competitive team. The first few head coaches laid the groundwork for the organization's future success.

John Kundla (1947-1959)

- Tenure: 1947-1959
- Achievements: 5-time NBA Champion (1949, 1950, 1952, 1953, 1954)

John Kundla was the first head coach of the Lakers and is credited with establishing the team's winning culture. Under his leadership, the Lakers won five championships in the early years of the NBA, primarily leveraging the talents of iconic players like George Mikan. Kundla's emphasis on teamwork and ball movement set the tone for future coaches.

Fred Schaus (1959-1966)

- Tenure: 1959-1966
- Achievements: 1-time NBA Champion (1960)

Fred Schaus took over after Kundla and brought a more modern approach to coaching. He led the Lakers to the NBA Finals multiple times but ultimately fell short against the Boston Celtics. Despite not winning a championship during his tenure, Schaus played a crucial role in developing future stars and maintaining the franchise's competitive edge.

The Showtime Era

The 1980s marked a significant turning point in Lakers history, defined by the arrival of Magic Johnson and the "Showtime" style of play. This era saw a series of head coaches who capitalized on the team's talent and transformed the NBA landscape.

Pat Riley (1981-1990)

- Tenure: 1981-1990
- Achievements: 4-time NBA Champion (1982, 1985, 1987, 1988)

Pat Riley is perhaps the most iconic head coach in Lakers history. He introduced the fast-paced, high-scoring style that became synonymous with the franchise during the "Showtime" era. Under Riley's guidance, the Lakers won four championships and solidified their place as a dominant force in the NBA. His motivational skills and ability to manage egos made him a revered figure in basketball.

Mike Dunleavy (1990-1992)

- Tenure: 1990-1992

Following Riley's departure, Mike Dunleavy took over but struggled to replicate the previous success. His coaching style was markedly different, focusing more on defense. While he led the team to the playoffs, he was unable to capture the magic of the "Showtime" era, leading to his dismissal.

Del Harris (1994-1999)

- Tenure: 1994-1999

Del Harris is another significant figure in Lakers coaching history. He took over in the mid-90s and guided the team through a transitional phase. He helped develop young stars like Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant, preparing the franchise for its next championship run. Although he did not win a title during his tenure, his contributions to player development were invaluable.

The Shaq and Kobe Era

With the rise of Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant in the late 1990s, the Lakers entered a new chapter. This era was characterized by a return to

dominance and the addition of legendary coaches.

Phil Jackson (1999-2004, 2005-2011)

- Tenure: 1999-2004, 2005-2011
- Achievements: 5-time NBA Champion (2000, 2001, 2002, 2009, 2010)

Phil Jackson is perhaps the most successful coach in Lakers history, with a total of eleven NBA championships (six with the Chicago Bulls and five with the Lakers). He is known for his implementation of the "Triangle Offense," which maximized the talents of both Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant. Jackson's leadership and psychological insights helped the Lakers navigate internal conflicts and emerge as champions in the 2000s.

Rudy Tomjanovich (2004-2005)

- Tenure: 2004-2005

Rudy Tomjanovich took over after Jackson's first tenure but faced challenges during his brief time with the team. Health issues and team struggles led to a disappointing season, resulting in his departure after just one year.

Mike Brown (2011-2012)

- Tenure: 2011-2012

Mike Brown was hired to replace Jackson but struggled to implement his vision. With an aging roster and injuries to key players, Brown was unable to find success, leading to his dismissal after just one season.

Bernie Bickerstaff (2012, interim)

- Tenure: 2012 (interim)

Bernie Bickerstaff served as the interim head coach following Brown's departure. His time in charge was short-lived, as the Lakers continued to face challenges both on and off the court.

Mike D'Antoni (2012-2014)

- Tenure: 2012-2014

Mike D'Antoni was brought in to implement an up-tempo style, but his tenure was marked by injuries and inconsistent play. Despite the promise of the "Seven Seconds or Less" offense, D'Antoni was unable to replicate the success he had with the Phoenix Suns.

A New Era

Following D'Antoni's departure, the Lakers entered a phase of rebuilding and re-evaluation.

Byron Scott (2014-2016)

- Tenure: 2014-2016

Byron Scott, a former Lakers player, returned to the franchise as head coach. His tenure was marked by a focus on developing young talent, but the team struggled to find consistency. Scott's emphasis on defense and discipline was admirable, but the team's performance did not improve significantly.

Luke Walton (2016-2019)

- Tenure: 2016-2019

Luke Walton, a former assistant under Steve Kerr in Golden State, brought a fresh perspective. His coaching style emphasized ball movement and teamwork, leading to a more competitive Lakers team. However, Walton faced challenges and was ultimately let go after a challenging season.

Frank Vogel (2019-2021)

- Tenure: 2019-2021
- Achievements: 1-time NBA Champion (2020)

Frank Vogel was hired to lead the Lakers in 2019 and quickly made an impact. His defensive strategies helped the team become a formidable force, culminating in an NBA Championship in 2020 during the Orlando Bubble. Vogel's ability to manage star players and instill a winning mentality made him a respected figure.

Recent Developments

Following Vogel's tenure, the Lakers faced another round of changes as they sought to return to championship contention.

Darvin Ham (2022-Present)

- Tenure: 2022-Present

Darvin Ham took over as head coach in 2022, bringing a new energy and vision to the team. His focus on defense and player development has generated optimism among fans and analysts alike. As he works to build a competitive roster, Ham aims to restore the Lakers to their former glory.

Conclusion

The history of Lakers head coaches is a tapestry woven with triumph, trials, and transformation. Each coach has contributed to the franchise's legacy, leaving an indelible mark on its culture and success. From the early days with John Kundla to the recent leadership of Darvin Ham, the Lakers have experienced a rich variety of coaching philosophies and styles. As the franchise looks to the future, it will be interesting to see how the next chapter unfolds in this storied franchise's history. The Lakers' ability to adapt and evolve has been a testament to their relentless pursuit of excellence in the NBA.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was the first head coach of the Los Angeles Lakers?

The first head coach of the Los Angeles Lakers was John Kundla, who led the team from 1947 to 1959.

How many championships has Phil Jackson won as the Lakers' head coach?

Phil Jackson won five championships as the head coach of the Los Angeles Lakers, during the years 2000, 2001, 2002, 2009, and 2010.

Which Lakers head coach is known for the 'Showtime' era?

Pat Riley is known for the 'Showtime' era of the Los Angeles Lakers, which emphasized fast-paced, high-scoring basketball during the 1980s.

Who coached the Lakers during their back-to-back championships in 2009 and 2010?

Phil Jackson was the head coach of the Lakers during their back-to-back championships in 2009 and 2010.

What was the significant achievement of Rudy Tomjanovich as the Lakers' head coach?

Rudy Tomjanovich coached the Lakers during the 2004-2005 season, although his tenure was short and he did not achieve significant success.

Which head coach led the Lakers to their 16th championship in 2020?

Frank Vogel was the head coach who led the Los Angeles Lakers to their 16th championship in 2020.

How many head coaches have the Lakers had since their move to Los Angeles?

Since moving to Los Angeles in 1960, the Lakers have had 24 different head coaches.

Which former player became head coach of the Lakers in the mid-1990s?

Del Harris, a former player and assistant coach, became the head coach of the Lakers in the mid-1990s, serving from 1994 to 1999.

Who was the Lakers' head coach before Frank Vogel?

Luke Walton was the head coach of the Los Angeles Lakers before Frank Vogel took over in 2019.

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