

# WHO WOULD CRACK YOUR ALL-TIME RAPTORS LINEUP?

ROGERS SPORTSNET'S PAUL JONES PRESENTS HIS TOP RAPTORS PLAYERS FROM 1995-2010



Vince Carter



ANY SPORTS ORGANIZATION THAT HAS BEEN AROUND FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS CAN BOAST AT LEAST ONE MAJOR ALL-STAR OVER THE COURSE OF THEIR EXISTENCE. THE TORONTO RAPTORS ARE CURRENTLY CELEBRATING THEIR 15-YEAR ANNIVERSARY THIS SEASON AND HAVE WITHOUT A DOUBT, EXPERIENCED THEIR SHARE OF TALENTED PERFORMERS OVER THAT PERIOD. AS THE FRANCHISE TURNS TO CELEBRATE THIS MILESTONE, UMM TAKES A LOOK AT SOME OF THE TOP PLAYERS TO DON A RAPTORS JERSEY.

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A DEBATE ABOUT ANY 'ALL-TIME TEAM' AT ANY LEVEL AND AS THE GUY WHO HAS COVERED THE RAPTORS SINCE DAY ONE, THERE WAS NO BETTER PERSON TO APPROACH THAN ROGERS SPORTSNET'S NBA ANALYST PAUL JONES. AS THE RAPTORS' FIRST RADIO ANALYST BACK IN 1995, JONES LENDS HIS EXPERTISE ON THE TEAM FROM OVER THE YEARS TO FORM HIS TOP 12 PICKS FOR AN ALL-TIME RAPTORS TEAM. SO HERE YOU GO FOLKS, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER.

**Chris Bosh** – This one is an easy pick. Raptors fans may not want to hear it right now but all you have to do is look down the franchise's list of all-time leaders, and Bosh's name is sprinkled in different categories. He came in as an underclassman and worked at his game to become an all-star.

**Tracy McGrady** – Drafted as a high schooler, McGrady had just started to learn the ropes in Toronto when free agency

came calling. The franchise was looking to make a commitment to another young star at the time so T-Mac took his developing talent elsewhere. Too bad, as his defence was solid and his offensive skills were just beginning to emerge.

**Vince Carter** – A terrific talent who brought national recognition and notoriety to Toronto at a time when many were unaware that Toronto was actually part of the NBA

landscape. Carter's high-wire act had TV network executives changing their schedules to ensure everyone could see this entertainment phenomenon.

*Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant, who now has five championship rings, once said that if Carter and McGrady had stayed together in Toronto they would have been the ones with multiple championships.*

**Antonio Davis** – He came to Toronto looking for a chance to start after being a reserve player in Indiana. Davis blossomed into an all-star and was a cornerstone of the successful Raptors teams at the turn of the millennium. Although he was undersized, his willingness to be a rugged competitor helped set a winning tone at a key time for the franchise.

**Charles Oakley** – Speaking of hardy competitors, nobody fit the bill better than 'Oak'. It wasn't uncommon for Oakley to stand up in team meetings or with the media and say what people needed to hear regardless of who might have their feelings hurt.

**Dell Curry** – If you aren't sure how good a shooter he was, all you have to do is look at his son Steph, now a member of the Golden State Warriors, to see where the youngster received his talent. Dell is still the best catch and shoot player with the quickest release in Raptors history.

**Doug Christie** – A solid defender, Christie was also handed the assignment of guarding the opposition's top perimeter player. The franchise's all-time steals leader received the ultimate compliment, when arguably the greatest player in the game, Michael Jordan, responded with Christie's name when asked for his list of the league's toughest defenders.

**Alvin Williams** – Now working with the team as the Director of Player Personnel, Williams is one of the most highly revered Raptors in history. He embodied the city that he calls home, Philadelphia, with his 'blue collar, lunch pail, hard hat' attitude. He played hard and let his effort and skill do all the talking.

**Damon Stoudamire** – They booed him when he was drafted because he wasn't Ed O'Bannon with a national championship, but 'Mighty Mouse' turned that



Jose Calderon



Damon Stoudamire



Chris Bosh

welcoming into becoming the Rookie of the Year. He didn't leave Toronto the way he wanted and when you speak with him now, he regrets it and would do it over. But while he was here, he competed and produced.

**Jose Calderon** – How can you ignore the franchise all-time leader in assists? Calderon came in as an undrafted rookie and at one point was only one of six undrafted NBA players to be in the starting lineup. He does a great job of distributing the ball and protecting it with an always stellar assist to turnover ratio.

**Morris Peterson** – Always a willing defender, 'Mo Pete' was a staple in Toronto for seven seasons. He was solid on the floor and in the community, while still holding the Raptors' 'ironman' record for most consecutive games played at 371. During his tenure as a Raptor, Peterson grew into a role as a dependable three-point shooter, and holds the franchise record for most three point field goals in a season.

**Marcus Camby** – His youth and potential is what eventually led Marcus Camby out of Toronto as he was part of the trade with the New York Knicks that brought Charles Oakley to the Raptors. But in his brief time here, Camby demonstrated glimpses of what would eventually be his trademark in the NBA, good defence.

There have been all-star and Hall of Fame players who have passed through Toronto briefly, as well as fan favourites wearing the Raptor colours, who need to be included in a list of honourable mentions. So consider the following in that category: Hakeem Olajwon, Chauncey Billups, Donyell Marshall, Kevin Willis, Dee Brown, Tyrone Muggsy Bogues, Alvin Robertson, Jerome 'JYD' Williams and Mark Jackson come to mind.



**So knock yourselves out with this list, RAPTOR FANS, it always makes for a great discussion.**