

Celtics Legend Red Auerbach Dies

Received JRF's ROBIE Award in '87

Red Auerbach, the legendary Boston Celtics coach and recipient of the Jackie Robinson Foundation 1987 ROBIE Award has died at the age of 89. Auerbach was not only one of the most recognizable figures in Boston sports history but also was a champion of equal opportunity. His commitment to social progress guided his coaching and management decisions and helped make an indelible impact on the nation.

Best known as the architect of nine World Championship Boston Celtics teams (including an unprecedented eight consecutive), Auerbach made history in 1966 when he hired Bill Russell as the first African American head coach in the National Basketball Association. Earlier in his coaching tenure, during the 1963-64 season, Auerbach became the first coach to employ an all-black starting line up.

Auerbach was one of the game's greatest innovators. The force behind the creation of "fast break" style of play, he also was responsible for popularizing the concept of "the sixth man." "The Coach," as the iconoclastic Auerbach was known, garnered a mind boggling array of awards and accolades: He received seven Honorary Doctorate degrees; He was the first coach in NBA history to win 1,000 games (in 1966) and was enshrined in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1968. The winner of the NBA Coach of the Year in 1965, Auerbach was honored in perpetuity as he saw the league name the Coach of the Year trophy in his honor in 1984. During his storied career, Auerbach held numerous roles with the team. He has been the team's Head Coach, General Manager, Vice Chairman of the Board and most recently served as President of one of sports most venerable franchises.

"Red Auerbach was a pioneer and a friend of human progress," said Rachel Robinson, founder of the Jackie Robinson Foundation. "He had a mighty commitment to excellence and equal opportunity that made him a winner in both sports and life. All of us at the Foundation are deeply saddened by Red's passing."

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