



## **My Drift**

**Title: Pat Riley**

**Written by: Jerry D. Petersen**

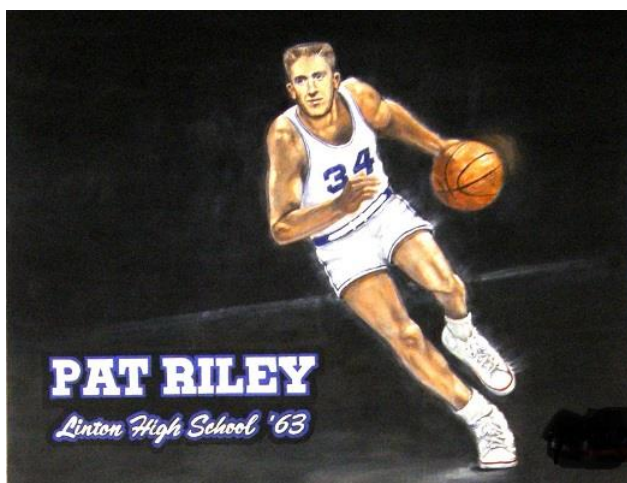
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**Did you know that Pat Riley is the most successful player, coach, announcer, author, motivational speaker, and executive in American basketball history? It's true - Here is his story.**

### **The Early Years**

**Patrick James Riley was born in Rome, New York on March 20, 1945, and raised in Schenectady, New York. He is the son of Mary Rosalia and Leon Riley, who played 22 seasons of minor league baseball as an outfielder and first baseman and appeared in four games for the 1944 Philadelphia Phillies.**



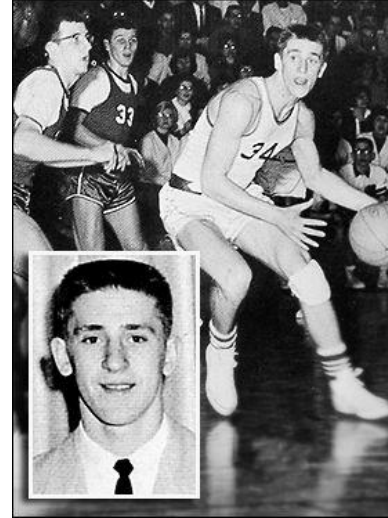
**Riley played basketball and football for Linton High School in Schenectady**



Patrick J. Riley

**Senior Yearbook Picture**

## High School



**Basketball Picture**

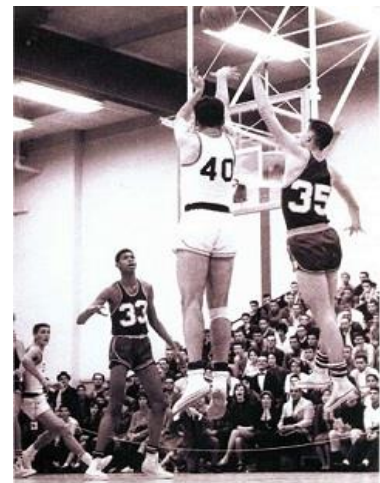
**Do you know who is the greatest high school basketball player ever? No, it is not Pat Riley.**

**It is Lew Alcindor (who later changed his name to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) who changed the game back in high school. Alcindor played for Power Memorial Academy, Manhattan, NY, on the varsity team for four years, and his total of 2,067 points set a New York City high-school record. He led coach Jack Donohue's team to three straight New York City Catholic championships, a 71-game winning streak, and a 79–2 overall record. This earned him "The Tower from Power" nickname.**



**#33 Lew Alcindor**

**Well, one of those two loses was to Pat Riley and Schenectady's squad. Yes, they beat Power Memorial and freshman Lew Alcindor in a high school classic at Linton High School gym. The 74–68 victory over Power Memorial on December 29, 1961, is remembered mostly for its two stars: Lew Alcindor and his future coach with the Los Angeles Lakers, Pat Riley. Bob DeLuca No. 40 (pictured on the right) and Riley (boxing out on left side of picture) both scored 19 points for the Linton team that held Alcindor to 8 points. Riley calls it, "The greatest game in the history of Schenectady basketball."**



**The Big "UPSET"**

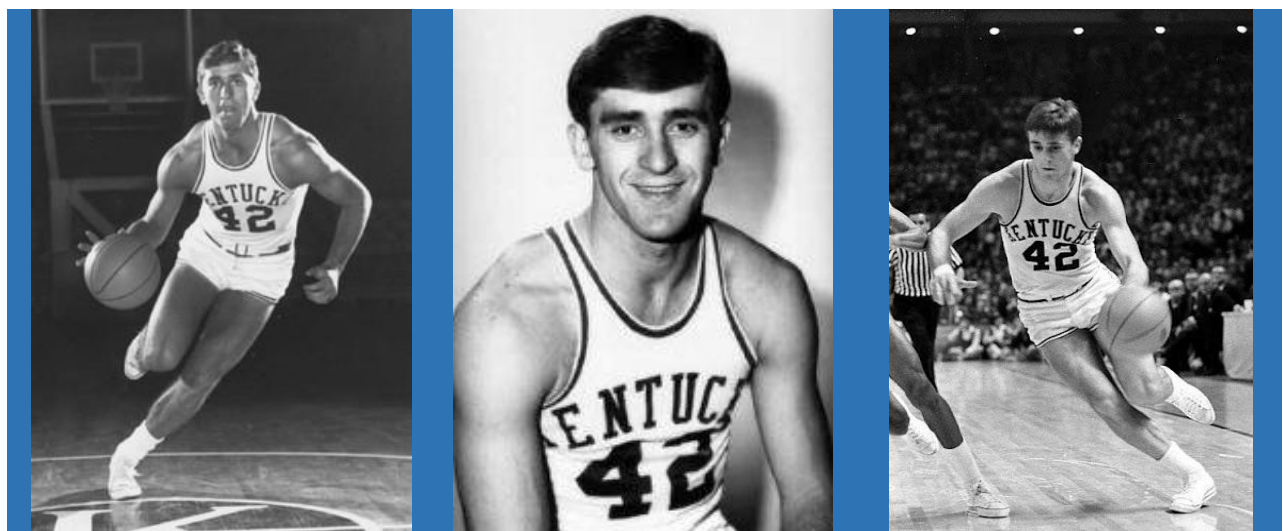
## College

Pat Riley decided to attend the University of Kentucky in Lexington and play basketball for their legendary coach Adolph Rupp. Back in those days (until the 1972-73 season), college freshmen were not allowed to play on the varsity team, so Riley only played three years for Rupp.

As a junior on the 1965–66 Kentucky Wildcats team, he was named First Team All-SEC, All-NCAA Tournament Team, NCAA Regional Player of the Year, SEC Player of the Year and AP Third Team All-American, leading the Wildcats to the 1966 NCAA title game. In his senior year, Riley made First Team All-SEC, one of the only players in storied Kentucky Basketball history to make two or more First Team All-SEC teams.



Pat Riley and Coach Rupp



### Pat Riley Per Game Stats at Kentucky

Season	G	MP	FG	FGA	FG%	FT	FTA	FT%	TRB	AST	PF	PTS
<a href="#">1964-65</a>	25	33.0	6.4	14.8	.432	2.2	3.6	.618	8.5	1.1	3.9	15.0
<a href="#">1965-66</a>	29	37.2	9.1	17.7	.516	3.7	5.3	.699	8.9	2.2	3.7	22.0
<a href="#">1966-67</a>	26	36.7	6.3	14.3	.442	4.7	6.0	.782	7.7	2.6	3.5	17.4
<b>Career</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>.469</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>.714</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>18.3</b>

Riley's best year was his junior year where he averaged 22 points a game.

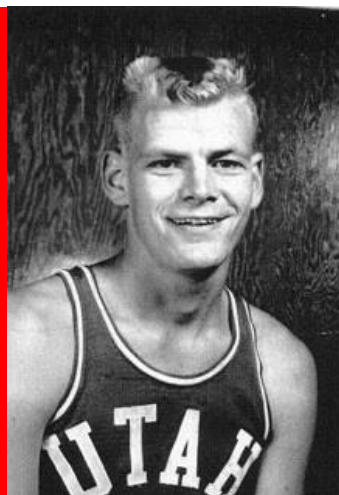


Can you believe that me and Pat Riley have a few things in common?

We are both 6 feet 4 inches tall and our college playing weight was about the same at 205 pounds. Riley played the Shooting Guard position, and I played Small Forward.

We both played for famous coaches. Riley for Adolph Rupp and I played for Jack Gardner who had a 486–235 (.674) record with 10 conference championships.

Utah played in the Final Four in 1961 and a Riley led Kentucky played in the Final Four in 1966.



**My 1961 University of Utah Basketball Picture**

The 1966 Final Four championship game between the highly ranked University of Kentucky and Texas Western (currently called UTEP) is most remembered for the all-black starting five of Texas Western defeating an all-white starting five for Kentucky 72 to 65. Riley scored 19 points in a losing effort. They even made a movie about this game called “Glory Road”. Did you see it?



**Kentucky's 1965-66 Team Picture  
(There are no black players on the team)**



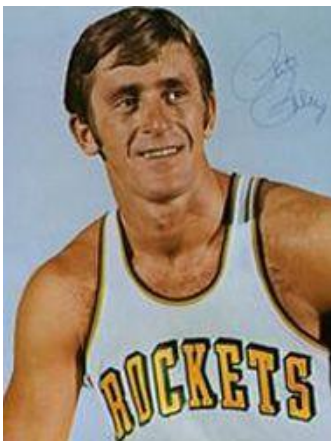
**Texas Western 1965-66 Team Picture  
(5 of the 6 black players started game)**

**FYI –** In 1969, Tom Payne was the first African American to play at Kentucky.

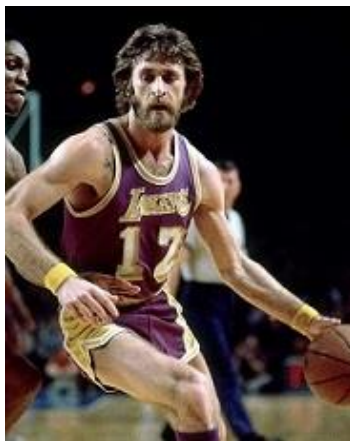
**Comment:** Pat Riley graduated from the University of Kentucky and went on to become rich and famous playing in the NBA and doing those other things listed in paragraph 1. Me, I joined the Navy and went to work for the government as a Computer Programmer. Guess what? I think I had a more fun and interesting career path. I would not trade it even with the great Pat Riley!

## **The NBA**

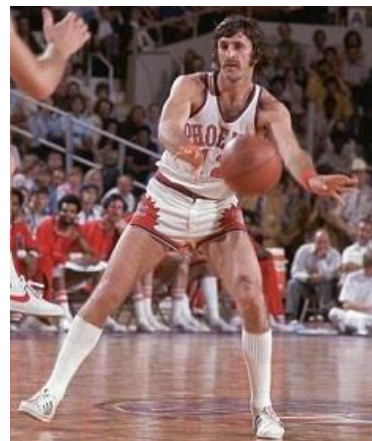
**Pat Riley was selected by the San Diego Rockets with No. 7 overall pick in 1st round of the 1967 NBA Draft and was also drafted as a wide receiver by the Dallas Cowboys in the 11th round of the 1967 NFL Draft. He joined the Rockets and was later selected by the Portland Trail Blazers in the 1970 NBA expansion draft, but was immediately traded to the Los Angeles Lakers, which he helped toward the 1972 NBA Championship both by coming off the bench in games and by guarding friend and Laker guard Jerry West in practice. He retired after the 1975–76 NBA season as a member of the Western Conference champion Phoenix Suns.**



**San Diego Rockets**



**Los Angeles Lakers**

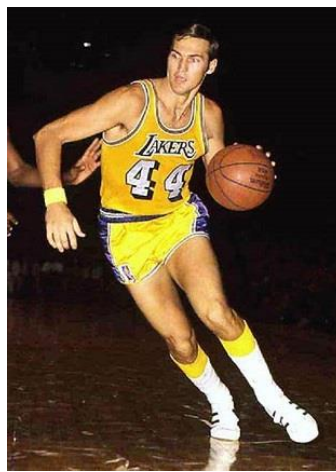


**Phoenix Suns**

**Pat Riley was not a great NBA player. He was never a starter and was considered an average to good sub. He averaged 7.6 points with the Rockets, 7.8 points with the Lakers, and 4.6 points with the Suns. He did help win an NBA Championship with the Lakers in 1972 when they beat the New York Knicks 114 to 100 in five games. Here are the three stars on that Laker team:**



**Wilt Chamberlain**



**Jerry West**

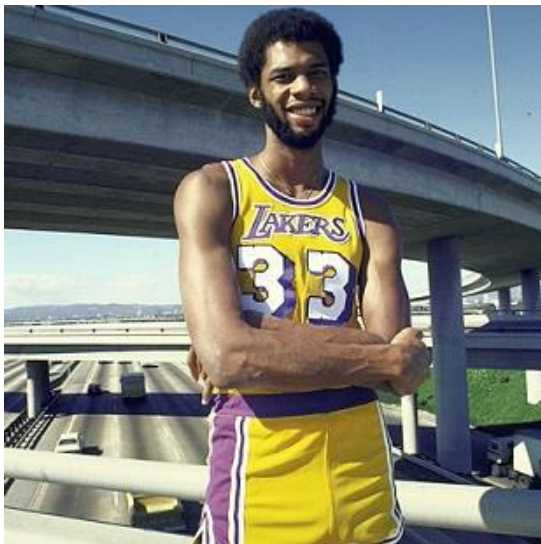


**Gail Goodrich**

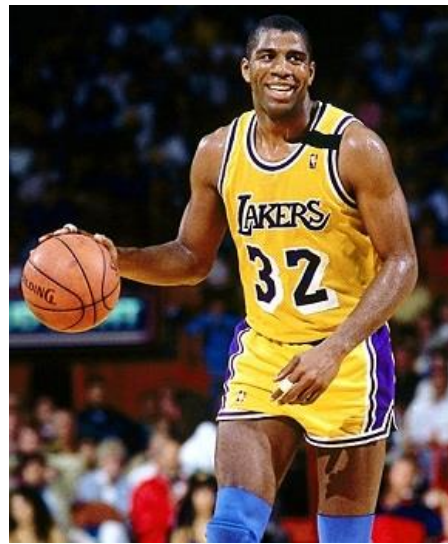
## Coaching

### Los Angeles Lakers

Riley returned to the NBA in 1977 as a broadcaster for the Lakers. During the 1979–80 season, when the team's head coach, Jack McKinney, was injured during a near-fatal bicycle accident, assistant coach Paul Westhead took over the team's head coaching duties. Riley then moved from the broadcast booth to the bench as one of Westhead's assistant coaches. With rookie guard Magic Johnson and longtime star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, the Lakers won the 1980 NBA Finals, defeating Philadelphia in six games, giving Westhead and Riley championship rings in their first year coaching the team. However, the team lost in the playoffs the next year to the Moses Malone-led Houston Rockets.



**Kareem Abdul-Jabbar**



**Magic Johnson**

Six games into the 1981–82 season, Magic Johnson said he wished to be traded because he was unhappy playing for Westhead. Shortly afterward, Laker's owner Jerry Buss fired Westhead. At an ensuing press conference, with Jerry West at his side, Buss named West head coach. West, however, balked, and Buss awkwardly tried to name West as "offensive captain" and then named West and Riley as co-coaches. West made it clear during the press conference that he would only assist Riley, and that Riley was the head coach. Thereafter, Riley was the interim head coach, until his status became permanent.

Riley ushered in the Laker's "Showtime" era, along with superstar players Johnson and Abdul-Jabbar with their running game. Riley became a celebrity in his own right, a fashion icon for his Armani suits and slicked-back hair which complemented the team's Hollywood image.





**Pat Riley - Los Angeles Lakers Head Coach**

**Riley led the Lakers to four consecutive NBA Finals appearances. His first title came in his first season, against the Philadelphia 76ers. Both teams returned to the Finals the next year, and this time Riley's Lakers were swept by the 76ers. The Lakers lost in the Finals again in 1984, to the Boston Celtics in seven games. The Lakers earned Riley his second NBA title in 1985 in a rematch of the previous year, as the Lakers beat the Celtics in six games. The Lakers' four-year Western Conference streak was broken the following year by the Houston Rockets.**

**In 1987, Riley coached a Lakers team that is considered one of the best teams of all time. With future Hall of Famers Magic Johnson, James Worthy and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, plus Michael Cooper, Byron Scott, A. C. Green, Mychal Thompson, and Kurt Rambis, the Lakers finished 65–17 in the regular season, third best in team history. They met with similar success in the playoffs, dispatching the Celtics in six games to win Riley his third NBA title.**

**While the 1988 Lakers did not produce as many wins in the regular season as the 1987 Lakers, they still won the NBA title, becoming the first team in 19 years to repeat as champions. The Lakers beat the Detroit Pistons in seven games in the 1988 NBA Finals. Riley's titles with the Lakers make him one of six men to play for an NBA Championship team and later coach the same NBA team to a championship; the others are George Senesky, Bill Russell, Tom Heinsohn, K. C. Jones, and Billy Cunningham.**

However, in a rematch of the previous year's finals series, the Lakers were swept by the Pistons in the 1989 NBA Finals. Riley was named NBA Coach of the Year for the first time in 1989–90 but stepped down as Lakers head coach after they lost to the Phoenix Suns in the playoffs. At the time of his departure, Riley was the foremost coach in the NBA with a level of fame not seen since Red Auerbach, and he also brought 4 NBA Titles to Los Angeles.

### **New York Knicks**

After stepping down, Riley accepted a job as a television commentator for NBC for one year before being named head coach of the New York Knicks, starting with the 1991–92 season.



**Riley with Knicks Captain Patrick Ewing**

Commentators admired Riley's ability to work with the physical, deliberate Knicks, adapting from his "Showtime" style with the fast-paced Laker teams of the 1980s. The Chicago Bulls had easily swept the Knicks in 1991 enroute to their first championship. However, in 1992, with Riley, the Knicks pushed the defending champion Bulls to seven games in the Eastern Conference semifinals. The physical defense of the Knicks against the Chicago Bull's superstars Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen during the 1992 playoffs led to a feud between Riley and Bulls head coach Phil Jackson regarding the officiating and the Knick's rough style of play. In 1993, Riley led the Knicks to their best regular season record in team history and received his second Coach of the Year award. The Knicks again met the Bulls in the Eastern Conference finals but lost in six games after winning the first two games at home. Jackson's Bulls that season went on to win the finals and accomplish the "three-peat".





**Phil Jackson and Michael Jordan**

**Finally, Riley and the Knicks got a break. Jordan decided to quit the Bulls and go play baseball.**

**This time when the Knicks returned to the NBA Eastern Conference semifinals, they beat the three-time defending champion Bulls (without Michael Jordan) in seven games. However, New York lost in seven games to the Houston Rockets after being up 3–2 in the series. During the 1994 Finals, Riley became the first coach to participate in an NBA Finals Game 7 with two teams, having been with the Lakers in 1984 and 1988. However, he had the unfortunate distinction of becoming the first (and to date, only) coach to lose an NBA Finals Game 7 with two teams, having lost to the Celtics, in 1984. It also denied him the distinction of becoming the first coach to win a Game 7 in the Finals with two teams, having defeated the Pistons in seven games, in 1988.**

### **Miami Heat (Coach and Executive)**

**In 1995, Riley resigned from the Knicks via fax to become president and head coach of the Miami Heat, with complete control over basketball operations. The move caused some controversy, as the Heat were accused by the Knicks of tampering by pursuing Riley while he still had a year remaining on his contract with the Knicks. The matter was settled after the Heat sent their 1996 first-round pick (which the Knicks used to draft Walter McCarty) and \$1 million in cash to the Knicks on September 1, 1995. Riley's coaching of the Heat to playoff contention later made them bitter rivals with his former team.**

**In March 1995, Jordan decided to quit baseball return to the Bulls. He announced, "I'm back"!**

**In the 1995–96 season, Riley led the Heat to a 10-game turnaround to finish 42–40. Miami was swept in the first round of the playoffs by the Jordan led Chicago Bulls, who had completed the regular season with a record 72 wins, a record since broken by the 2015–16 Golden State Warriors. This season was most notable for the ongoing Heat housecleaning that took place, with the arrival of building blocks Alonzo Mourning and Tim Hardaway. The off-season also brought them Nets forward P.J. Brown and Suns swingman Dan Majerle.**



**Alonzo Mourning**  
**(Best Heat Player to Never Win a Title)**

**In 1997, Riley's Heat defeated his old team, the Knicks, in a physical seven-game series. Advancing to the Eastern Conference finals for the first time in franchise history, they again proved no match for Jordan and the Bulls. Riley was selected as Coach of the Year for the third time, however, after leading Miami to a 61–21 regular season record for first place in the Atlantic division.**

**The Heat compiled consecutive seasons over .600. However, the 1998, 1999, and 2000 playoffs were disappointments, as they lost to the arch-rival Knicks - the first two in the opening round and the latter in the second round. In 1999, the Knicks themselves reached the Finals.**

**The team suffered a major setback after Alonzo Mourning was lost for the season due to a kidney ailment. After finishing 50–32 in the 2000–01 season, the Heat were swept by the Charlotte Hornets in the first round of the NBA playoffs. The Heat then lost two of their best players when guard Tim Hardaway was traded to the Dallas Mavericks and Anthony Mason signed with the Milwaukee Bucks. In part because of these departures, the Heat finished**

**36–46 in 2002—the first time that a Riley-coached team had not had a winning season or made the playoffs. Riley was so disgusted with the Heat's performance that he declared he was about to "fire himself".**

**After finishing the 2002–03 season 25–57, Riley did fire himself and was succeeded by longtime assistant Stan Van Gundy. Riley remained President of Basketball Operations. Van Gundy and rookie Dwyane Wade, whom Riley drafted 5th overall, led the Heat back into the playoffs with a 42–40 record after starting 0–7.**



**Shaquille O'Neal and Dwyane Wade**

**Riley concentrated on improving the team even further before the 2004–2005 season. One of his biggest moves was to trade Caron Butler, Brian Grant, Lamar Odom, and a first-round draft pick to the Lakers for Shaquille O'Neal. O'Neal had just come off a successful stint with the Phil Jackson-coached Lakers, winning three straight championships from 2000–02 and a 2004 Finals loss. By this time, Riley and Jackson's feud had cooled. Wade and O'Neal led the Heat to the Eastern Conference finals during the 2005 playoffs, although they lost to the defending champions Detroit Pistons after being up 3–2 in the series.**

**During the 2005 off-season, it was widely speculated that Riley was attempting to run Van Gundy out of his coaching job and take over the job himself now that the team was in position to contend for the championship. Indeed, Van Gundy resigned from his position as head coach on December 12, 2005, just 21**



games into the season, citing a need to spend more time with his family, and Riley resumed coaching the team.



**Riley announces that Stan Van Gundy is resigning, and he is taking over the head coaching duties again.**

**(Five years later in 2010, Van Gundy confirmed that he was fired by Riley, but decided to go out quietly)**

Riley's Heat team defeated the Detroit Pistons in the 2006 Eastern Conference Finals making it the first time the Miami Heat reached the finals. Riley's Heat squared off against the Dallas Mavericks in the 2006 NBA Finals. Despite losing the first two games to Dallas, the Heat rallied to win the next four games and their first NBA Championship. After Game Six, Riley commented that he had packed one suit, one shirt and one tie for the trip to Dallas. It was Riley's fifth championship as a head coach, and his first with a team other than the Lakers. Riley became one of only two NBA coaches to take three teams to the NBA Finals, the other being Alex Hannum. He joined Hannum and Phil Jackson as the only head coaches to lead two teams to NBA titles. He also became the only coach to twice replace a coach in mid-season and take that team to an NBA title.

Citing hip and knee problems, Riley took a leave of absence from coaching from January 3, 2007, through February 19, 2007. Assistant coach Ron Rothstein assumed interim duties. The Heat finished the season 44–38 and were swept out of the first round of the playoffs by the Chicago Bulls; the first defending champions to be swept in the first round since 1957.

The following season, the Heat finished 15–67. The team had lost several of its players to extended injuries, and a disgruntled Shaquille O'Neal was traded in mid-season. Two years after winning the championship, they finished with one

of the worst records of all time. On April 28, 2008, Riley announced that he would step down as coach of the Heat. Former Heat assistant Erik Spoelstra was announced as his replacement. Riley remained team president.



**Riley hires Erik Spoelstra as Miami Heat Coach**

Riley acquired LeBron James and Chris Bosh to form the Heat's "Big Three" with Dwyane Wade, which reached four straight NBA Finals from 2011-14. In 2012, the Heat beat the Oklahoma City Thunder to give Riley his first championship purely as an executive. The Heat repeated the feat in 2013, defeating the San Antonio Spurs.



**LeBron James, Dwyane Wade, and Chris Bosh**

**Before the 2014-15 season, LeBron James returned to the Cleveland Cavaliers.**

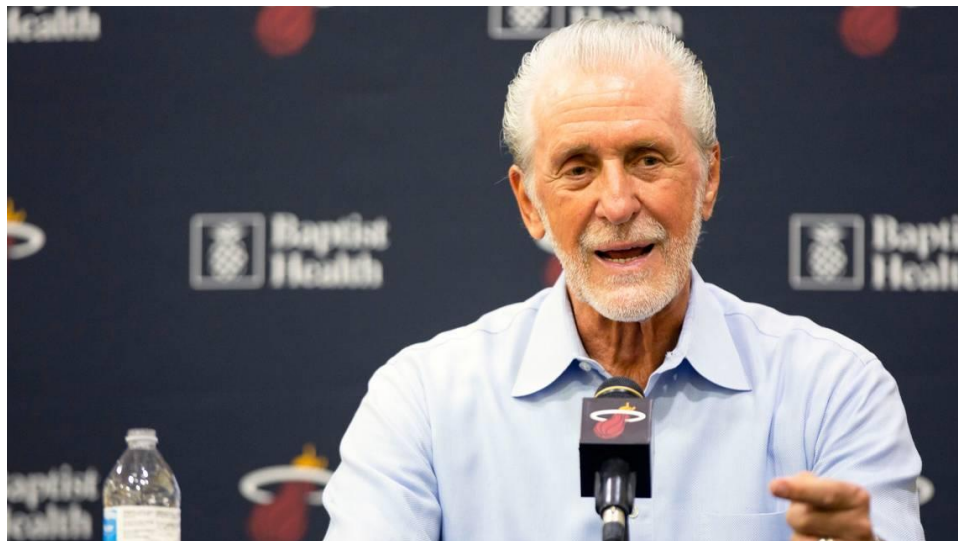
**An era came to an end when Dwyane Wade signed with his hometown Chicago Bulls in July 2016, after 13 seasons with the Heat.**

**Chris Bosh retired in 2017.**

**Without the “Big Three”, the Miami Heat were an average team until the pandemic shortened 2019-2020 season. The Heat became the fourth team in NBA history to finish lower than fourth in their conference in the regular season and make it to the NBA Finals. The 2019-20 Heat has been considered by some to be Riley's "magnum opus" since it was accomplished without a dramatic rebuild nor having the luxury of a Draft pick higher than No. 10 overall. Riley traded for Jimmy Butler, drafted Tyler Herro, signed undrafted Kendrick Nunn, and then before the 2019-20 trade deadline the Heat received Andre Iguodala and Jae Crowder. Facing Riley's former team, the Los Angeles Lakers who were led by former Heat superstar LeBron James, the Heat lost to the Lakers in six games with James winning his fourth Finals MVP.**

**In the 2020–21 Miami Heat season, they made it back to the playoffs but fell to the Milwaukee Bucks in the first round in a four-game sweep. The Bucks went on to defeat the Phoenix Suns for their first NBA Championship since 1971 when Lew Alcindor played for them.**

**Pat Riley is still the Miami Heat President (at age 76) and seems to be holding up fairly well after all this time as a basketball player, coach, and executive. Here is a current picture:**

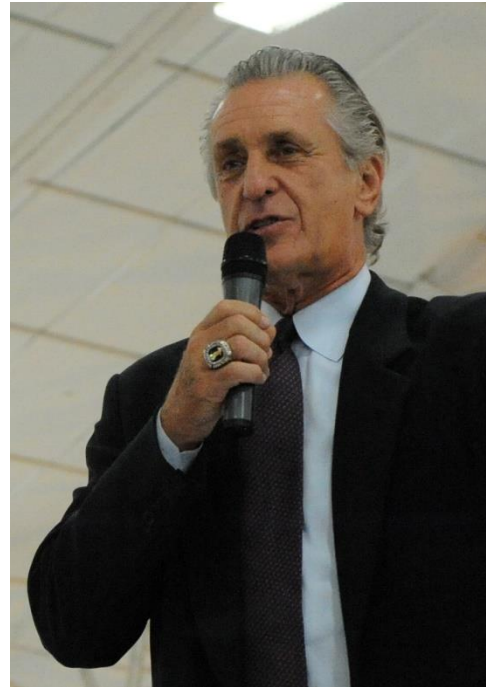


**Pat Riley**



### **Motivational Speaker**

Pat Riley is not only one of pro basketball's winningest coaches, but his speeches before hundreds of corporations have earned him the title – "America's Greatest Motivational Speaker." Pat is a consummate competitor who knows the exhilaration that comes with winning. His philosophy is based upon winning, leadership, mastery, change, and personal growth as well as understanding and controlling the shifting dynamics of a team, any team, whether it is a small company, a giant corporation, a city, or a group of athletes. Pat has also completed an award winning 30-minute motivational video entitled Teamwork in which he applies his winning philosophies to businesses and life in general. Riley's motivational speaking fee is around \$60,000.



**Pat Riley**  
**Motivational Speaker**

### **Author**

His books "Show Time" and "The Winner Within" have appeared on the New York Times Best Seller list.

**Riley with wife Chris Rodstrom Riley**



**Pat and Chris met in 1967 while she was attending San Diego State and he was chilling on the beautiful beaches of the city. He was already a professional basketball player and had been playing for the San Diego Rockets. Pat Riley's wife gave up school to get hitched with him in 1970 and then went back to school to get her bachelor's in 1972 followed by her masters in psychology a few years later. She then became a family therapist, listening to families talk about their varying dysfunctions. That only lasted until 1981 when she decided to quit working. So basically, she went to school for six years to become a therapist for, uh, about six years. They didn't need the money!**

**They have been together for about 54 years (at this writing). That is a long time! Chris appears to be holding up just as good or better than Pat. Their "net worth" is over \$100 million dollars.**

**Yes, Pat Riley has had a very successful career!**

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