



Vujcic joins exclusive company as a Euroleague Basketball Legend

Nikola Vujcic, a game-changing center whose feats on a basketball court still stand alone more than a decade after he played his last Turkish Airlines EuroLeague game, will be inducted as an official Euroleague Basketball Legend on Thursday, December 8, at Menorah Mivtachim Arena shortly before Maccabi Playtika Tel Aviv's game against Valencia Basket.

Vujcic was the most decorated big man of his generation in the EuroLeague. He was chosen to the All-EuroLeague Teams on five occasions, which is the most of any center in competition history and fifth-most of any player. He rose to continental prominence as a central part of the Maccabi team that won back-to-back championships in 2004 and 2005 and then experienced the glory of winning again as the sporting director when Maccabi captured its next **championship in 2014**.

He becomes the ninth player to receive Euroleague Basketball's highest distinction, after Theo Papaloukas, Juan Carlos Navarro, Ramunas Siskauskas, Sarunas Jasikevicius, Dimitris Diamantidis, Mirsad Turkcan, Felipe Reyes and Vassilis Spanoulis. The late Dusan Ivkovic and Maccabi president Shimon Mizrahi, were both honored as Euroleague Basketball Legends, too, for their work as a head coach and in management, respectively.

When **Vujcic played his final EuroLeague game in 2011**, he was the competition's career leader in performance index rating (3,047), second in rebounds (1,037), third in points scored (2,444) and blocked shots (124) and seventh in assists (524). He was the first player to ever rack up 2,000 points and 1,000 rebounds and remains the all-time leader in assists among centers. Moreover, only two players – LDLC ASVEL Villeurbanne's Nando De Colo and AS Monaco's Mike James – have played as many games as Vujcic (192) and posted an average career PIR higher than his 15.9.

Even though more than 10 seasons with more games than in Vujcic's time have passed since he last played, Vujcic is one of only two players with 2,000 points, 1,000 rebounds and 500 assists. The other is Fenerbahce Beko Istanbul point guard Nick Calathes. Vujcic and Calathes share another historic distinction; they authored the only three triple-doubles in EuroLeague history. Vujcic conjured up two of them: the first was on the opening night of the 2005-06 season when he posted 11 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists in a victory over Prokom Trefl Sopot and the second came the following season with 27 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists against Union Olimpija Ljubljana.

Vujcic grew up near Split, Croatia, where he idolized Toni Kukoc, Dino Radja and the rest of the stars of the Jugoplastika Split dynasty that won three consecutive EuroLeague crowns between 1989 and 1991. By the end of that decade, he would get the chance to play with some of those stars when they would scrimmage in Split during summers while Vujcic was emerging as a star for the same club.

When he was 23 years old, he signed with Maccabi, a club that he gained respect for when watching them in those same Final Fours that Split reached years earlier. Vujcic was loaned to ASVEL for the 2001-02 season and helped that club return to prominence by winning the French championship. Then he began a run of six magical seasons with Maccabi, during which the team reached the EuroLeague Championship Game four times.

Vujcic got to two more Final Fours - and another championship game - with Olympiacos Piraeus, where he played from 2008-2010. He finished his EuroLeague career with Efes Pilsen in the 2010-11 season. Vujcic returned home and spent his final seasons on the court as a player/sporting director with his hometown club, Split, which he rescued from financial ruin and helped to stabilize and put back on a successful path. Vujcic joined Maccabi's front office in 2013 and has been there ever since.

The only big man on the [EuroLeague 2000-10 All-Decade Team](#), Vujcic was selected to the All-EuroLeague Second Team after each of his first two seasons with Maccabi and then to the All-EuroLeague First Team in each of the next three seasons.

Vujcic helped change the way basketball was played as one of the first great centers who could do everything on the court. As his statistics testify, he was among the best passing big men ever in basketball, a force in the low post and the perimeter at both ends of the floor and a dominant rebounder. He led the EuroLeague in rebounding (7.6 rpg.) in 2006-07, was fourth in scoring (17.6 ppg.) in the 2002-03 season and fifth in assists (3.9 apg.) in 2006-07, during which his 46.7% three-point shooting was ninth in the league.

His trophy case is filled with titles from four different countries. In addition to five national championships and four cups from Israel, he also won the Croatian Cup in 1997, the French championships in 2002 and the Greek Cup in 2010.

Forever a basketball hero in his hometown, Split, and his adopted home, Tel Aviv, Vujcic gifted fans things they had never before

seen on a basketball court. His Maccabi teams played some of the most exciting basketball of their era in large part because of Vujcic's ability to do things players at his position could not. In doing so, he helped to inspire a new generation of European big men who would take the basketball world by storm.

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