

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Questioning/Queer+ History Month

LGBTQ+ Oct. 1-31

Jason Collins

Jason Collins (1978–2026) was the first openly gay active player in any of the four major U.S. men's professional sports leagues. Collins broke barriers in professional athletics through his courage and authenticity, becoming a powerful advocate for inclusion, acceptance and equality.

Collins' path to the NBA was a natural progression. A stellar high school athlete, he won two California Interscholastic Federation state titles with his twin brother, Jarron. Collins also broke the California high school career rebounding record with 1,500 rebounds. The Collins brothers both chose to play at Stanford University where, despite an injury in his freshman year, Jason went on to earn recognition from the All-Pac-10 and the National Association of Basketball Coaches.

His professional career began in 2001 as a first-round draft pick of the Houston Rockets. He was immediately traded to the New Jersey Nets where he played until 2008. A commanding center, Collins played for the Memphis Grizzlies, Minnesota Timberwolves, Atlanta Hawks, Boston Celtics and Washington Wizards.

On April 29, 2013, at the end of the 2013 season, Collins publicly came out as gay. At the time, he said he hoped his decision to live his truth would encourage others to do the same. Even before his announcement, he chose to wear jersey No. 98 as a tribute to Matthew Shepard, a University of Wyoming student who was tortured and murdered in 1998 in a notorious anti-gay hate crime. In November 2014, Collins retired from the NBA as a member of the Brooklyn Nets.



NYSUT, a statewide union of professionals, proudly supports equal rights for all people, a non-discriminatory workplace and non-discrimination based on gender identity and expression. NYSUT's goal is that union members feel safe and welcome in their environment. For more on the contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals, visit nysut.org.