Earl Francis “Big Cat,” Lloyd Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame 2003

April 3, 1928-

Alexandria, VA

[West Virginia State College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Virginia_State_University) ‘49

Lloyd was a two-time All-American at West Virginia State where he helped lead the Yellow Jackets to

a 30-0 season in 1947-48, a CIAA championship and a National Black college championship.

A forward known for his defense, he led the Yellow Jackets to two more CIAA titles in 1948 and ’49.

The three-time all-conference pick was selected in the ninth-round (no. 100) of the [1950 NBA Draft](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1950_NBA_Draft) by the [Washington Capitols](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Capitols) on October 31, 1950.

Lloyd became the first African-American to *play* in a NBA game when he entered a game against the Rochester Royals

The Washington franchise folded during Lloyd’s first year, but he joined the Syracuse Nationals the next season. During the 1954-55 season, Lloyd average 10.2 points and 7.7 rebounds, helping the Nationals win the NBA title.

Later, he and teammate Jim Tucker were the first black players to win a NBA title with the Syracuse Nationals, which changed professional basketball. The 6-foot-8 Lloyd enjoyed a solid NBA career with the Capitols, Syracuse Nationals and Detroit Pistons.

A rugged power forward who became a starter on Syracuse's NBA championship team in 1955, Lloyd was known for his defensive play on the opponent's top scorer, rugged rebounding and effective offensive game.

In 1968, he became the first black assistant in the league, working with Detroit and spent the next 10 years as a scout and assistant coach. Lloyd became the first African-American coach of the Pistons during the 1971-72 season, after Butch van Breda Kolff resigned. But the Pistons were just 20-52 the rest of the season, and Lloyd was fired just seven games into the next season.

Lloyd displayed the ultimate conduct, grace, style and professionalism both on-and-off court during an era of segregation became the model for others to follow.

Honors

CIAA "Player of the Decade" for the 1940s

NAIA Silver and Golden Anniversary Teams

Member, NBA Championship Team, 1955

First African-American bench coach, 1968

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| Virginia sports Hall of Fame, 1993 |  |
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Three other black players drafted played in the same season: [Chuck Cooper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_Cooper_%28basketball%29), [Nathaniel Clifton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathaniel_Clifton), and [Hank DeZonie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hank_DeZonie).