Wilt Chamberlain's 100-point game

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	1	2	3	4	Total
Philadelphia	42	37	46	44	**169**
New York	26	42	38	41	**147**

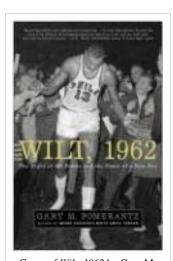|	
Date	March 2, 1962
Arena	Hersheypark Arena
City	Hershey, Pennsylvania
Attendance	4,124

Wilt Chamberlain's 100-point game, named by the National Basketball Association as one of its greatest games,[1] [2] was a regular-season game between the Philadelphia Warriors and the New York Knicks held on March 2, 1962 at Hersheypark Arena in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

The Warriors won the game 169–147, setting what was then a record for the most combined points in a game by both teams. The game is most remembered, however, for the 100 points scored by Warriors center Wilt Chamberlain. This performance ranks as the NBA's single-game scoring record; along the way Chamberlain also broke five other NBA scoring records, of which four still stand.

As Chamberlain broke several other scoring records during the 1961–62 NBA season, his 100-point performance was initially overlooked. In time, however, it became his signature game.

Cover of *Wilt, 1962* by Gary M. Pomerantz (2005), which draws parallels between Chamberlain's legendary 100-point game and the rising of Black America.

Prologue

Chamberlain, the Warriors' star center, was on a unique scoring spree. He had already scored 60 or more points a record 15 times in his career. On December 8, 1961, in a triple overtime game versus the Los Angeles Lakers, he had set a new NBA record by scoring 78 points, eclipsing the previous mark of 71 held by the Lakers' Elgin Baylor. Legendary Laker broadcaster Francis "Chick" Hearn often told the story that after that game, he asked Baylor whether it bothered him to lose the record in that manner, with Chamberlain having had 15 extra minutes of game time to score the points needed to surpass Baylor's total. According to Hearn, Baylor replied that he was unconcerned with the issue because "someday that guy is going to score 100".[3]

Three months later, there was little advance excitement about the pending Warriors-Knicks game, which was a meaningless late-season match. Chamberlain had spent the night before the game in New York, partying all night with a female companion. With no sleep and suffering from a hangover, he boarded the train to Philadelphia at 8 AM, met several friends at the Philadelphia train station and had a long lunch with them, thus almost missing the team bus to Hershey.[2] The other players were similarly bored. Warriors player York Larese said: "The biggest thrill in my life was to see that [the famous Hershey chocolate factories]. There was nothing exciting about the Knicks playing the Warriors in Hershey. Chocolate was more exciting."[4]

Warrior teammate Tom Meschery commented how run-down the Hersheypark Arena was: "The thing was that the Warriors owner and a local promoter arranged a deal: they placed a gym at our disposal for practicing free of charge and we had to play three matches of the season in their god-forsaken place... the town of Hershey was built around a huge chocolate factory, everything there became permeated with the smell of chocolate. It was practically impossible to stay indoors, people felt sick. I was just dreaming to leave the place as fast as I could."[5]

On a cold, rainy Friday night, only 4,124 spectators paid to see the match, partly more to see the players from the local football team the Philadelphia Eagles, who played a show basketball game against their colleagues from the Baltimore Colts before the NBA game started.[2] The opposing Knicks were shorthanded, because their starting center Phil Jordon was injured. So, the inexperienced backup pivot Darrall Imhoff had to play against the scoring champion Chamberlain.[6]

Game report

First 42 minutes

From the beginning, Chamberlain's Warriors dominated against the Knicks. After a few minutes, the Warriors led 19−3, and their star center had already scored 13 points. At the end of the first quarter, the Knicks trailed 42−26, and in his typical style, Chamberlain had already scored 23 points.[2] Imhoff was soon benched in foul trouble.[7] By halftime, the Warriors had lost some of their edge, but still led with 79−68. After 24 minutes, Chamberlain's point total stood at 41. However, as he had scored 60 or more points on 15 previous occasions, the Warriors felt little excitement about this fact. "I often came into the locker room with 30 or 35 points, therefore, 41 points was not a big deal," he later explained.[2] Warriors coach Frank McGuire ordered his men to feed Chamberlain: "Wilt is always open, so pass him the ball".[2]

The simple tactic proved unstoppable. Soon, he had surpassed the 50-point barrier, causing arena speaker Dave Zinkoff[8] to fire up the previously sleepy crowd. He also kept his cool despite getting perpetually triple- and quadruple-teamed by the Knicks, who did not shy away from hard fouls to distract the center. McGuire was irate and demanded that the referees call more fouls, but Chamberlain could not be stopped.[9] He scored another 28 points to lift his Warriors to a commanding 125−104 lead when the third quarter ended. His own total stood at 69, nine shy of his previous scoring record. Knicks third center Dave Budd, who alternated with the foul-troubled Imhoff at pivot, later stated resistance was practically futile: "You couldn't play [Chamberlain] conventionally because he was so big. The only thing you could attempt to do was either front him, and in that case they'd try to lob it in to him, or beat him down the floor and set up where he wanted to get and force him out a couple of extra steps. The guy weighed 300 or

270 [pounds], so that wasn't easy, either."[4] Darrall Imhoff later even stated, "He literally stuffed us through the hoop with the ball. It didn't even help we quintuple-teamed him." Chamberlain at first thought he would possibly break a free throw shooting record,[9] but stated that at the end of the third quarter he realized he could break his own 75-point scoring record (for a 48-minute game) or his record 78 points, set in triple overtime.[9]

In the fourth quarter, 7:51 minutes were left to play when Chamberlain scored his 79th point, breaking his own record and sending the crowd into a frenzy. The 4,124 spectators screamed "Give it to Wilt! Give it to Wilt!" The Warriors suddenly sensed that they could write basketball history, and fed Chamberlain the ball at every attack. Warrior Al Attles later explained: "We wanted that Wilt got the record, because we all liked him." Attles himself led by example, passing up on an easy layup so that Chamberlain could score points 88 and 89, five minutes before the end. In addition, Warriors guard Guy Rodgers would end the game with 20 assists.[2]

Frantic last minutes

However, according to all eyewitnesses, the game became a farce. Fearing the humiliation of allowing Chamberlain to score 100 points against them, the Knicks blindly fouled any Warrior except Chamberlain, to force them to hit free throws and keep the ball out of the center's hands.[2] Effectively, they played the opposite of what a normal club would do if they faced a deficit, willingly giving up many easy points instead of making attempts to rally back.[9] Warriors coach Frank McGuire reacted by pulling out his entire starting five, save Chamberlain, (i.e. forwards Tom Meschery, Al Attles and guards Guy Rodgers and Paul Arizin) and sent in bench players Joe Ruklick, York Larese, Ed Conlin and Ted Luckenbill. The intention was to foul the Knicks, in order to get the ball back after free throws and give Chamberlain the ball. Thus each team spent the last minutes fouling each other.[9]

Opinions were split on this matter. Warriors forward Tom Meschery said: "The rival [New York] was not going to become a part of the history. During last minutes the coach told them to foul anyone with the ball − anyone but Chamberlain. So we had to throw-in from the side line across the floor just to pass the ball to him."[5] However, Knicks player Richie Guerin, who scored 39 points, put the blame on the Warriors and complained: "The Warriors used any means [i.e., fouling tactics] to get the ball to Chamberlain. This had nothing to do with basketball anymore."[9] In any case, the Warriors ended with 25 personal fouls, and the Knicks with 32, and lost Imhoff and Willie Naulls with six fouls.[2]

Chamberlain later admitted feeling embarrassment about the manner in which the game's final minutes were played. He did not address the question of the two teams' fouling tactics, but he acknowledged that he shot the ball excessively in his attempt to reach 100 points, putting up many shots that he otherwise would not have taken. He noted that in contests which he considered to be his best games, his statistics would typically reflect 50 to 60 points scored on perhaps 75 percent shooting, as opposed to his 57 percent shooting in the 100-point game.[10] Although effusive in his praise of Chamberlain, Guerin nonetheless estimated that if the game had played out normally, Chamberlain would have finished 15 to 20 points shy of 100.[10]

With 2:45 left, Chamberlain had 94 points, and after scoring on a jump shot and a layup, he stood at 98 with less than a minute to play. Facing a quintuple-team by the entire Knicks team, Chamberlain trotted into the low post.[9] At the next play, Ruklick passed to Guy Rodgers, who passed to Chamberlain close to the basket. After missing his first shot, Luckenbill rebounded and passed to Chamberlain, but he missed again. Luckenbill again rebounded and this time passed to Ruklick: instead of going for an easy layup, he immediately lobbed a high pass to Chamberlain.[11] With 46 seconds left, Chamberlain got free from the five Knicks, jumped high and put the ball into the basket to hit the century mark.[2] Eyewitness accounts of the historic basket differ as to whether Chamberlain merely laid the ball in[10] [12] or actually stuffed the ball through the hoop for an alley-oop slam dunk.[2] [11] In any event, the arena exploded in a frenzy and over 200 spectators stormed the floor, wanting to touch the hero of the night.[9] Ruklick immediately ran to the scorer's table to ensure that he was officially credited with the assist.[11]

Ending

Some accounts of the game have asserted that after Chamberlain's 100th point, the contest was never resumed to play out the final 46 seconds remaining on the clock;[13] Chamberlain himself was quoted as having made that claim.[14] However, there is considerable evidence to the contrary. Although no film footage exists of the game, the surviving WCAU radio broadcast includes announcer Bill Campbell resuming his play-by-play call after Chamberlain's 100th point and calling the game to its conclusion.[15] German sports journalist Gunter Bork specified that the interruption resulting from Chamberlain's 100th point lasted for nine minutes, after which play continued.[2] The game's official box score notes that Warrior Joe Ruklick missed two free throws after the break.[6]

Over the years, Harvey Pollack, who at the time was in charge of both publicity and statistics for the Warriors, has given conflicting statements on the question. In a 1992 book, he was twice quoted as saying that the game ended with 46 seconds remaining.[10] But in a 2002 interview which was referenced by Chamberlain biographer Robert Cherry, Pollack said that the last 46 seconds were played, and that Chamberlain just stood in the middle circle, waiting for the game to end and not wanting to touch the ball, as "100 sounded better than 102".[16] [9]

Final score

At the end, the Warriors defeated the Knicks 169–147. Chamberlain made 36 of 63 field-goal attempts and 28 of 32 free-throw attempts, the latter a far better rate than his roughly 50-percent career average. He had no three-point field goals since the three-point line had not yet been instituted. Chamberlain set NBA records for most field goals attempted (63) and made (36), free throws made (28) and most points in a quarter (31) and a half (59).[9] George Gervin and Carmelo Anthony have each surpassed the 31-point-in-a-quarter record by scoring 33 in a period (David Thompson has also surpassed the mark by scoring 32), while Adrian Dantley has matched 28 free throws made in a game, but as of 2011, all the other records still stand.[17]

Overlooked in the wake of Chamberlain's performance were the feats of Guy Rodgers and Al Attles. Rodgers finished with a game-high 20 assists and later said: "It was the easiest game ever for me to get assists, all I had to do was pass it to Wilt."[9] Attles was a defensive specialist who rarely scored, yet went 8–8 from the field and hit his single free throw. He later lamented, "In the game where I literally couldn't miss, Wilt had to go out and score 100."[9]

The record of 316 combined points was only surpassed 20 years later when the San Antonio Spurs defeated the Milwaukee Bucks 171–166 (3 OT) on March 6, 1982, for a total of 337 points. This record was erased much more quickly as the Detroit Pistons defeated the Denver Nuggets 186–184 (3 OT) on December 13, 1983, for a total of 370 points.[18]

The following night, Chamberlain got permission to travel back to New York with three Knicks players. According to Cherry, Chamberlain drifted in and out of sleep and got a kick overhearing the NY players talk about the "S.O.B. who scored 100 points on us".[9] Another night later, the Warriors and the Knicks squared off again in Madison Square Garden. This time, Imhoff played all 48 minutes and got a standing ovation for holding Chamberlain to 54 points.[19]

March 2, 1962	**Philadelphia Warriors 169**, New York Knicks 147	Hersheypark Arena, Hershey, Pennsylvania
	Scoring by quarter: 42–26, 37–42, 46–38, 44–41	**Attendance:** 4,124 **Referees:** Willie Smith and Pete D'Ambrosio
	Pts: Wilt Chamberlain 100 **Rebs:** Wilt Chamberlain 25 **Asts:** Guy Rodgers 20	**Pts:** Richie Guerin 39 **Rebs:** Dave Budd 10 **Asts:** Richie Guerin 6

Box score

Philadelphia Warriors

Player	Pos	Min	FGM	FGA	FTM	FTA	Reb	Ast	PF	Pts
Paul Arizin	SF	31	7	18	2	2	5	4	0	16
Tom Meschery	PF	40	7	12	2	2	7	3	4	16
Wilt Chamberlain	C	48	36	63	28	32	25	2	2	100
Guy Rodgers	PG	48	1	4	9	12	7	20	5	11
Al Attles	SG	34	8	8	1	1	5	6	4	17
York Larese	SG	14	4	5	1	1	1	2	5	9
Ed Conlin	F	14	0	4	0	0	4	1	1	0
Joe Ruklick	F	8	0	1	0	2	2	1	2	0
Ted Luckenbill	F	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
Team rebounds							3			
Team totals		**240**	**63**	**115**	**43**	**52**	**60**	**39**	**25**	**169**

New York Knicks

Player	Pos	Min	FGM	FGA	FTM	FTA	Reb	Ast	PF	Pts
Willie Naulls	PF	43	9	22	13	15	7	2	5	31
Johnny Green	SF	21	3	7	0	0	7	1	5	6
Darrall Imhoff	C	20	3	7	1	1	6	0	6	7
Richie Guerin	SG	46	13	29	13	17	8	6	5	39
Al Butler	PG	32	4	13	0	0	7	3	1	8
Cleveland Buckner	SF	33	16	26	1	1	8	0	4	33
Dave Budd	C	27	6	8	1	1	10	1	1	13
Donnie Butcher	PG	18	3	6	4	6	3	4	5	10
Team rebounds							4			
Team totals		**240**	**57**	**118**	**33**	**41**	**60**	**17**	**32**	**147**

Wilt Chamberlain's statistics by quarter

Quarter	Min	FGM	FGA	FTM	FTA	Reb	Ast	PF	Pts
1st	12	7	14	9	9	10	0	0	23
2nd	12	7	12	4	5	4	1	1	18
3rd	12	10	16	8	8	6	1	0	28
4th	12	12	21	7	10	5	0	1	31

Legacy

There was initially little excitement about Chamberlain's 100-point game. Cherry reports that the newspapers did note his 100-point outburst, but it rarely made the front pages:[9] in his prime, Chamberlain was such a dominant scorer that his feat was mostly taken for granted. Warriors player Al Attles said that after Chamberlain's previous record 78-point game, "it was only a matter of time until he reached 100, you could wait for it."[2] Warriors coach Frank McGuire initially thought the same, but then said: "I always thought it was inevitable that he would do it. But when he did, I stopped and thought about it. I couldn't believe it."[4]

In time, the game became legendary. Although Chamberlain won two NBA championships and retired as an all-time leading scorer and rebounder, he was mostly remembered as the man who had single-handedly scored 100 points.[20] The Warriors' PR director Harvey Pollack said an impossible 40,000 people claimed to have seen the game, and some even testified it took place in Madison Square Garden.[9] Chamberlain later stated that it was one of his favorite games, but not the favorite: that title belonged to the match in which he grabbed an all-time NBA high 55 rebounds against perennial Boston Celtics rival Bill Russell.[9]

Two other participants were profoundly affected. Firstly, Knicks center Darrall Imhoff was branded as the player who let Chamberlain score 100 on him, although he only played 20 minutes and fouled out in the fourth quarter. On the other hand, the game immortalized little-used Warriors reserve player Joe Ruklick as the man who gave Chamberlain the 100-point assist.[9] Decades later, the *New York Times* interviewed Ruklick, and found out that he refers to himself as "a walking footnote" of one of basketball's greatest moments.[11] Also, the game produced the famous picture of Chamberlain sitting on a bench, holding up a paper with a scribbled "100". It was a matter of improvisation: when Warriors PR manager Harvey Pollack entered the Warriors locker, he took a paper and scribbled the number on it, and an *Associated Press* photographer who was there at the game (not for professional reasons, but rather because he wanted to give his son a treat) took the photo.[9] Among others, Cherry calls it the "ultimate picture" of Wilt Chamberlain.[9]

In the book *Wilt, 1962* (2005), sports journalist Gary M. Pomerantz uses the 100-point game as a metaphor, saying it proved that blacks could succeed in a world dominated by whites. In this book, Chamberlain acts as a symbol for Black America, and Imhoff is the pendant, standing for White America.[21]

The closest any NBA player has gotten to Wilt's total is the 81 points scored by Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers against the Toronto Raptors on January 22, 2006.[22]

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External links

- NBA.com entry for the 100-point game (http://www.nba.com/history/wilt100_moments.html)
- Excerpt: 'Wilt, 1962' The Night of 100 Points and the Dawn of a New Era (http://www.garympomerantz.com/ excerpts/e_wilt.htm)

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