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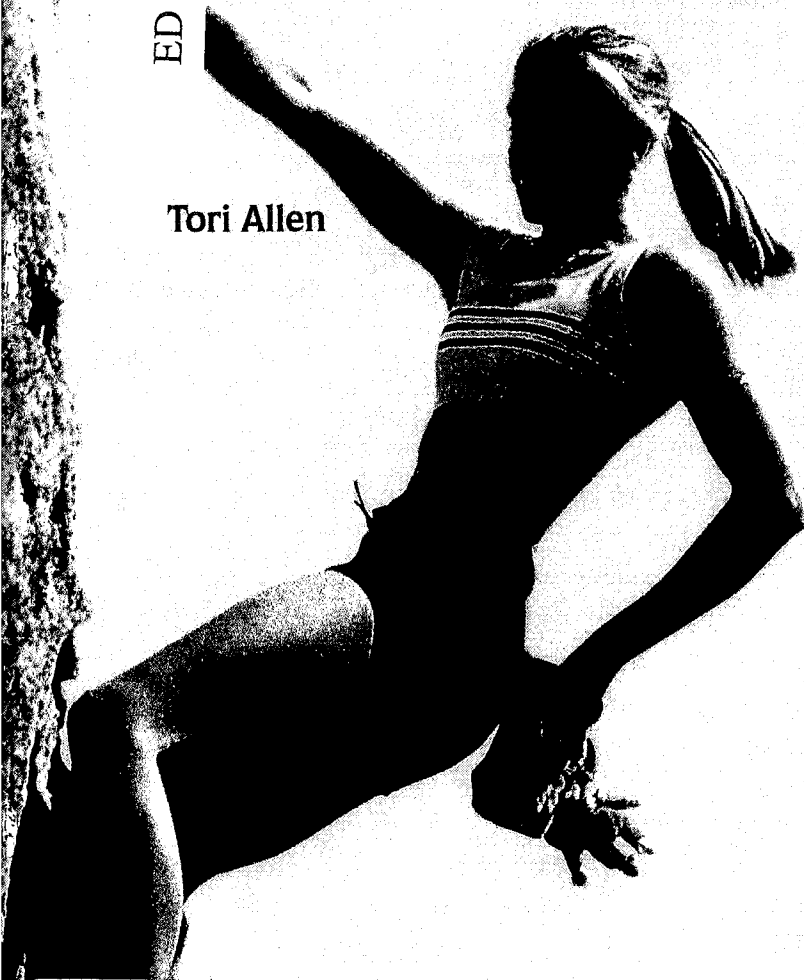
ABSTRACT

This ninth volume of the "Biography Today Sports" series is intended to appeal to young readers in a format they can enjoy reading and readily understand. Each alphabetically-arranged sketch provides at least one picture of the individual profiled, and bold-faced rubrics lead the reader to information on birth, youth, early memories, education, first jobs, marriage and family, career highlights, memorable experiences, hobbies, and honors and awards. Each entry ends with a list of easily accessible sources designed to lead the student to further reading on the individual and a current address. Obituary entries are also included, written to provide a perspective on the individual's entire career. The featured athletes are: Tori Allen (American rock climber); Layne Beachley (Australian professional surfer); Sue Bird (American professional basketball player); Fabiola da Silva (Brazilian professional aggressive in-line skater); Randy Johnson (American professional baseball player); Jason Kidd (American professional basketball player); Tony Stewart (American professional race car driver); Michael Vick (American professional football player); Ted Williams (American professional baseball player); and Jay Yelas (American professional fisherman). (SM)

Biography Today

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Tori Allen



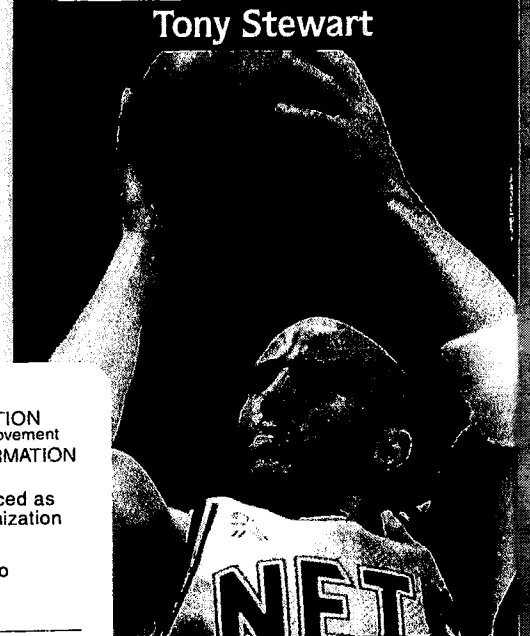
Michael Vick



Tony Stewart



Jason Kidd



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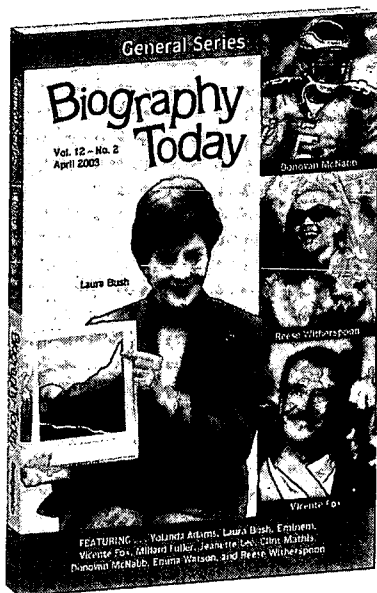
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FEATURING . . . Tori Allen, Layne Beachley, Sue Bird, Fabiola da Silva, Randy Johnson, Jason Kidd, Tony Stewart, Michael Vick, Ted Williams, and Jay Yelas

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Biography Today

High Interest Biographies for
Today's Young Reader.



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Biography Today features current, high-profile individuals of interest to young readers. These include authors, actors, musical performers, business and political leaders, athletes, scientists, inventors, and more—people who are making a difference right now.

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Biography Today

*Profiles
of People
of Interest
to Young
Readers*

Sports

Volume 9

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Preface

Welcome to the ninth volume of the **Biography Today Sports**. We are publishing this series in response to suggestions from our readers, who want more coverage of more people in *Biography Today*. Several volumes, covering **Artists, Authors, Performing Artists, Scientists and Inventors, Sports Figures, and World Leaders**, have appeared thus far in the Subject Series. Each of these hardcover volumes is 200 pages in length and covers approximately 10 individuals of interest to readers ages 9 and above. The length and format of the entries are like those found in the regular issues of *Biography Today*, but there is **no duplication** between the regular series and the special subject volumes.

The Plan of the Work

As with the regular issues of *Biography Today*, this special subject volume on **Sports** was especially created to appeal to young readers in a format they can enjoy reading and readily understand. Each volume contains alphabetically arranged sketches. Each entry provides at least one picture of the individual profiled, and bold-faced rubrics lead the reader to information on birth, youth, early memories, education, first jobs, marriage and family, career highlights, memorable experiences, hobbies, and honors and awards. Each of the entries ends with a list of easily accessible sources designed to lead the student to further reading on the individual and a current address. Obituary entries are also included, written to provide a perspective on the individual's entire career. Obituaries are clearly marked in both the table of contents and at the beginning of the entry.

Biographies are prepared by Omnigraphics editors after extensive research, utilizing the most current materials available. Those sources that are generally available to students appear in the list of further reading at the end of the sketch.

Indexes

A new index now appears in all *Biography Today* publications. In an effort to make the index easier to use, we have combined the **Name** and **General Index** into one, called the **Cumulative Index**. This new index contains the names of all individuals who have appeared in *Biography Today* since the series began. The names appear in bold faced type, followed by the issue in

which they appeared. The Cumulative Index also contains the occupations, nationalities, and ethnic and minority origins of individuals profiled. The Cumulative Index is cumulative, including references to all individuals who have appeared in the *Biography Today* General Series and the *Biography Today* Special Subject volumes since the series began in 1992.

The Birthday Index and Places of Birth Index will continue to appear in all Special Subject volumes.

Our Advisors

This series was reviewed by an Advisory Board comprised of librarians, children's literature specialists, and reading instructors to ensure that the concept of this publication—to provide a readable and accessible biographical magazine for young readers—was on target. They evaluated the title as it developed, and their suggestions have proved invaluable. Any errors, however, are ours alone. We'd like to list the Advisory Board members, and to thank them for their efforts.

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Our Advisory Board stressed to us that we should not shy away from controversial or unconventional people in our profiles, and we have tried to follow their advice. The Advisory Board also mentioned that the sketches might be useful in reluctant reader and adult literacy programs, and we would value any comments librarians might have about the suitability of our magazine for those purposes.

Your Comments Are Welcome

Our goal is to be accurate and up-to-date, to give young readers information they can learn from and enjoy. Now we want to know what you think. Take a look at this issue of *Biography Today*, on approval. Write or call me with your comments. We want to provide an excellent source of biographical information for young people. Let us know how you think we're doing.

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Tori Allen 1988-

American Rock Climber

Winner of a Gold Medal in Speed Climbing at Age 14
at the 2002 X Games

BIRTH

Victoria Ann Allen—known to her family and friends as Tori—was born on July 30, 1988, in Auburn, Alabama. Her father, Steve Allen, and her mother, Shawn Allen, worked as Christian missionaries in Africa during her childhood. When Tori and her younger brother, Clark, became interested in rock climbing, their parents bought a climbing gym in Indianapolis, Indiana.

YOUTH

As Christian missionaries, the Allens agreed to spend several years in Africa spreading their religion and helping the local people. When Tori was four years old, the family left the United States and moved to Albertville, France, to receive missionary training. They spent a year there learning French, and they also attended the 1992 Winter Olympic Games. After Tori's parents completed their training, the family moved to Benin, a small country located on the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, near Nigeria. They spent the next four years living in the village of Savalou among French-speaking Africans.

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“I had a very original childhood,” Allen recalled. “I grew up in a West African village. I spent my days in the village cooking with the women, selling in the market place with my favorite vendors, tying babies on my back, playing games in the courtyards. . . . I loved it there.”

——— ” ———

“I had a very original childhood,” Tori recalled. “I grew up in a West African village. I spent my days in the village cooking with the women, selling in the market place with my favorite vendors, tying babies on my back, playing games in the courtyards. . . . I loved it there.” Growing up in Africa helped Tori get used to being the center of attention. “She was the only white kid in a village of 5,000, and people stared,” her father noted.

One of Tori's favorite things about Africa was playing with her pet Mona monkey, Georgie. “She was just days old when we got her so she thought I was her mom,” she remembered. “She just hung on my dresses and went everywhere with me—to school, to market, on walks, to church.” Tori particularly

enjoyed climbing trees with Georgie. In 1996, as the Allens concluded their scheduled mission and prepared to return to the United States, Georgie was bitten by a poisonous snake and died. But Tori never forgot her first pet and favorite playmate. Once the family settled in Indianapolis, Indiana, she began collecting the toy monkeys that would eventually fill her bedroom.

Tori was a very athletic girl who enjoyed all sorts of sports. She became an accomplished ballerina and figure skater shortly after moving to Indianapolis. But she discovered her best sport by accident in December 1998, when she accompanied her father on a shopping trip to Galyan's—an

outdoor-equipment store that contained an indoor climbing wall. "We'd never done rock climbing until right before Christmas, when Dad and I went shopping at Galyan's," she recalled. "They had a climbing wall, and it looked like a blast. We put on some climbing shoes and just did it." The tiny girl impressed bystanders by making it all the way to the top of the wall on her first try. She soon returned to Galyan's with her younger brother, who also became hooked on climbing. A month later, Tori entered and won her first junior climbing competition.

EDUCATION

Allen was home-schooled by her mother until she was 13 years old. She entered Lawrence Central High School in Indianapolis as a freshman in the fall of 2001, and she expects to graduate in 2005. She is a good student and also competes on her high school track team in the pole vault event.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Claiming Numerous Junior Climbing Titles

Climbing competitions usually take place indoors, on artificial walls covered with oddly shaped hand- and foot-holds, in order to ensure that all competitors face the same conditions. Competitions can be conducted under a number of different formats. In bouldering, for example, competitors must climb a predetermined route up a 20-foot wall. In speed climbing, competitors race to see who can climb to the top of a 60-foot wall and tag a buzzer first. In difficulty events, competitors can win either by finishing the most climbs in a series or by reaching the highest point on a route. In dyno events, competitors start off by using a certain set of holds and must jump upwards to grab another set of holds.

Thanks to the controlled conditions indoors, this sort of climbing is not dangerous when it is done properly. The competitors wear sling-shaped harnesses connected to ropes that are held by spotters on the ground. The ropes remain slack when the competitors are climbing, but they become taut and catch the competitors if they slip off the wall. "The kids have never had so much as a bruise [from competitive climbing]," Shawn Allen said.

Within a few months of her first climbing experience, Allen was winning climbing competitions across the Midwest. After winning her age group at the Ohio River Valley Regional Tournament, she qualified for the 1999 U.S. Competition Climbing Association (USCCA) Junior National Championship. Allen defeated 30 top young climbers from all over the United States



Tori Allen (left) competes in speed climbing against Evi Neliwati of Indonesia (right) at the X Games.

to claim the junior title and be named to the U.S. Junior National Team. Her brother, Clark, finished third in his age group and also made the national team. In September 1999, they went on to compete against 90 kids from six countries at the Touchstone International Tournament in San Francisco, California. Both of the Allen siblings finished first in their age divisions and earned the right to represent the United States at the 2000 Junior Olympic Games in Moscow, Russia.

Tori Allen went on to claim more than two dozen junior climbing titles over the next three years, including four consecutive Junior National Championships. In 2000 she won the junior division at the Gorge Games, a prestigious competition held each year in the Columbia River Gorge near Portland, Oregon. The Gorge Games feature climbing, kayaking, mountain biking, and other outdoor adventure sports. In 2001 Allen entered the adult competition at the Gorge Games. She was the youngest participant in any event, and most of her competitors in the climbing competition were 20 to 30 years old. But Allen easily won the bouldering event, climbing every route without a fall. She also finished third

in the dyno event. "Getting first in the actual climbing competition was the main thing," her father said afterward. "The dyno thing is more like trick climbing." In the fall of 2001, Allen defeated adult competitors once again to win the women's bouldering event at the Outdoor Rock Climbing World Championships in Orlando, Florida.

Setting World Records with Outdoor Climbs

In addition to participating in organized climbing competitions, Allen enjoyed challenging herself by climbing natural cliffs outdoors. In 2000, for example, she successfully climbed a route called Harvest in Kentucky's Red River Gorge. In rock climbing, different routes are ranked between 5.0 and 5.15 (from easiest to hardest), based on their degree of difficulty. Climbs that are rated above 5.10 are further divided into a, b, c, and d levels (from hardest to easiest). Harvest was rated as 5.13a, making it a very difficult climb. In fact, an average person would require many years of

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One of Tori's favorite things about Africa was playing with her pet Mona monkey, Georgie. "She was just days old when we got her so she thought I was her mom. She just hung on my dresses and went everywhere with me — to school, to market, on walks, to church."

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training and practice before they could master the route. By completing Harvest, Allen set a world record as the youngest person ever to climb a route with a 5.13a degree of difficulty on the first attempt.

In September 2001 Allen established another world record as the youngest woman ever to climb to the summit of a famous mountain called El Capitan in Yosemite National Park in California. She spent three days

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“Right now I am camping out on a ledge called Dolt Tower,” Allen wrote in her online diary about her experiences climbing El Capitan in Yosemite. “I am about 1,500 feet in the air and I am getting ready to go to sleep in my hammock hanging from the rock. Everything you do on a rock face is an experience; from sleeping to going to the bathroom. The second one is especially hard for girls.”

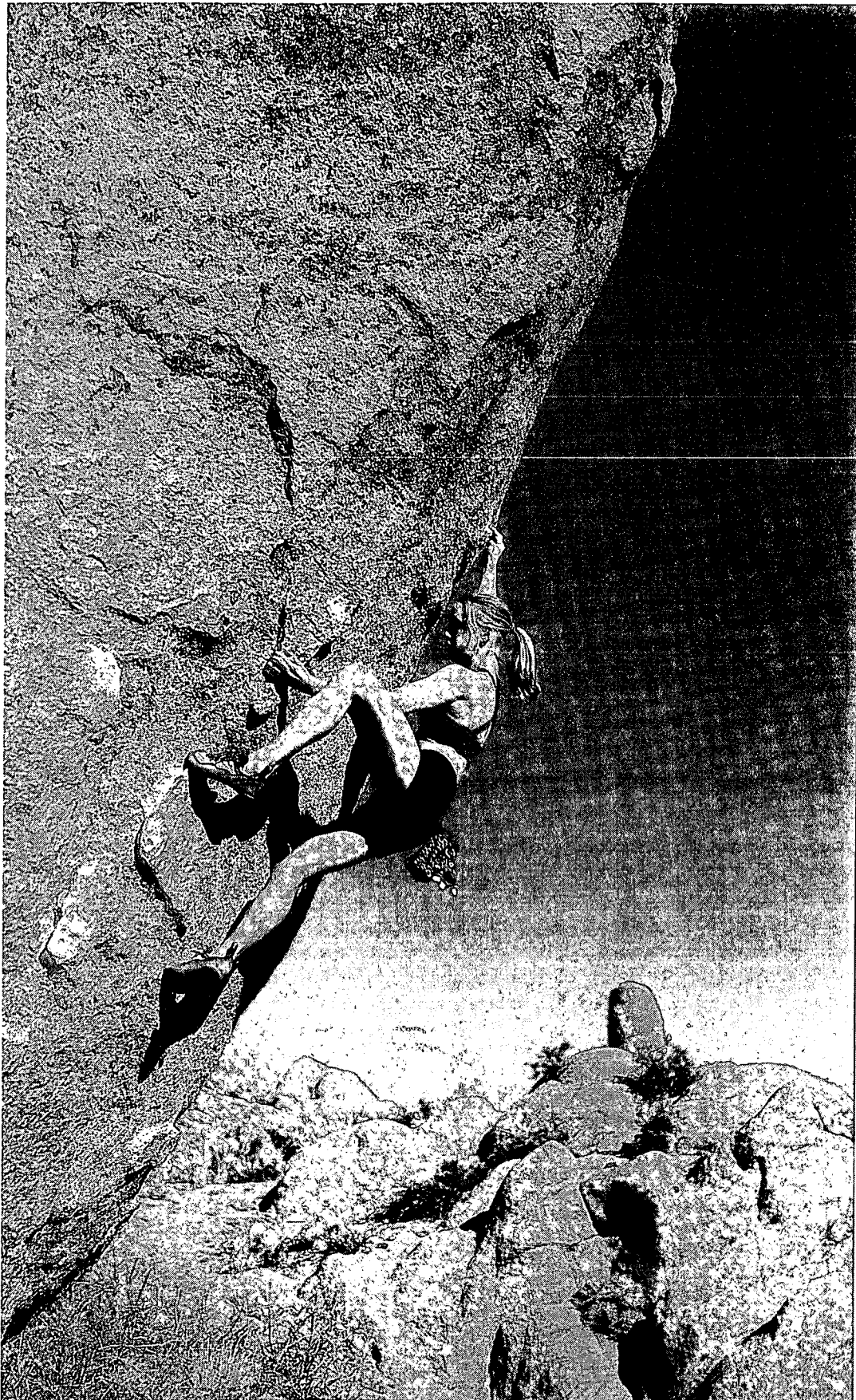
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climbing 3,000 feet up a route called The Nose. She was accompanied by the famous speed-climber Hans Florine and a film crew that captured the feat on video. Allen kept an online diary of her experiences on El Capitan. “Right now I am camping out on a ledge called Dolt Tower,” she wrote. “I am about 1,500 feet in the air and I am getting ready to go to sleep in my hammock hanging from the rock. Everything you do on a rock face is an experience; from sleeping to going to the bathroom. The second one is especially hard for girls.”

Upon reaching the summit, Allen only got to enjoy her accomplishment for a few minutes before she had to return to the real world. “Hans and I got to put a rock on the summit tower and sign the summiteers’ paper in the box,” she recalled. “After we had summited ‘The Nose,’ we got the joy of hiking eight-and-a-half miles down the back side of it. To make it worse, I had 30 pounds of gear on my back. I have never been so happy and so tired in my life.” Swarms of reporters met Allen at the bottom of the mountain. After completing a series of interviews, she returned to her motel room to catch up on her homework.

Taking Up Competitive Pole Vaulting

At the time Allen climbed El Capitan in 2001, she had just started classes as a freshman at Lawrence Central High School. She had also joined the school’s track team as a pole vaulter. In the track and field event known as the pole vault, athletes run at full speed while carrying a long, flexible pole.



At the end of the runway, they plant the end of the pole in a small box set into the ground. Holding the other end, they use the pole to launch themselves high into the air. The goal is to propel their bodies over the top of a crossbar that rests gently between two uprights or stanchions. The winner of the pole vault event is the athlete who goes the highest without knocking down the crossbar. Pole vaulting requires a wide range of athletic abilities, including speed, coordination, timing, strength, body control, and courage.

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Girls' pole vault was not a sanctioned event in Indiana high school athletics, so Allen was forced to practice with the boys' team at Lawrence Central. She felt that it was unfair for her to have to compete against boys who were much larger and stronger than she was. "A 15-year-old girl can't bench press as much as a 15-year-old boy, so it's ridiculous to put us against each other," she stated. "It's just not right."

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Allen was inspired to begin pole vaulting competitively after watching American Stacy Dragila win the first gold medal ever awarded in women's pole vault at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. (For more information on Dragila, see *Biography Today Sports*, Vol. 6.) Allen immediately showed great natural ability in the pole vault. In fact, she was invited to attend an elite pole vault camp at the University of Nebraska in the summer of 2001.

Girls' pole vault was not a sanctioned event in Indiana high school athletics, however, so Allen was forced to practice with the boys' team at Lawrence Central. She felt that it was unfair for her to have to compete against boys who were much larger and stronger than she was. "A 15-year-old girl can't bench press as much as a 15-year-old boy, so it's ridiculous to put us against each other," she stated. "It's just not right." To demonstrate her point,

Allen noted that the Indiana state record for boys' high school pole vault (16 feet, 9 inches) was nearly a foot higher than the world record for women's pole vault held by Dragila.

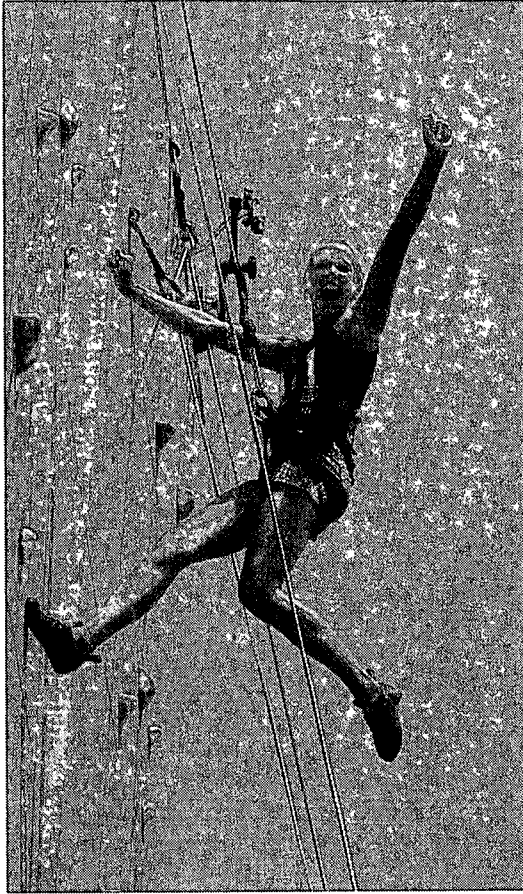
Upon doing some research, Allen found out that girls' pole vault was a sanctioned high school athletic event in 42 other states. Girls in these states had the opportunity to earn college scholarships in pole vaulting and possibly qualify for the U.S. Olympic Team. Allen and her parents eventually decided to file a lawsuit against the Indiana High School Ath-



letic Association (IHSAA) to force them to sanction the event. The lawsuit argued that Indiana violated Title IX—a 1972 law that prohibited people from being excluded on the basis of sex from any education program or activity that received federal funding—by not giving Allen the opportunity to compete in girls' pole vault.

Unfortunately, as of the end of 2002 it did not appear that the situation would be resolved soon. The commissioner of the IHSAA claimed that the state was not discriminating against Allen because she was free to compete on the boys' pole vault team if she wanted to. He also took a poll of state track coaches and found that only 30 percent favored adding girls' pole vault to the list of sanctioned events.

Meanwhile, Allen managed to win the pole vault event at her county's freshman track meet despite competing against boys. After competing for only two years, she improved her best jump to 10 feet, 7¾ inches and set a national record for girls her age. She also won the youth girls division at the USA Track and Field Junior Olympics in the summer of 2002. Allen remained hopeful that Indiana would sanction her event before she graduated from high school. "I hope this comes not just for me," Allen said. "I know there are other girls who also would like to pole vault."



Allen celebrates after winning the speed climbing event at the Summer X Games in Philadelphia, August 2002.

Winning a Gold Medal at the X Games

In addition to pole vaulting, Allen continued with her climbing training. By the beginning of the 2002 indoor climbing season, Allen was one of the top-ranked climbers in the United States. She regularly competed against—and defeated—the best adult women climbers in the nation. In April, for example, she won the U.S. National Championships in indoor climbing in San Francisco, California. In July she overcame a fall on the first route to win another gold medal at the Gorge Games. Although some of her older competitors did not like losing to a teenager, most of them respected her talent and appreciated her energy and hard work. “There are some women who basically want a rule to be made that you have to be a certain age to compete [in the adult events],” her mother acknowl-

edged. “Other women see a lot of the future of the sport in Tori. . . . The women are coming around. They see how hard she trains, how much work she puts into it. It’s pretty hard not to like her.”

In August 2002 Allen made her first appearance at the X Games in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The X Games are sometimes called the Olympics of alternative or extreme sports. The annual event features sports like skateboarding, wakeboarding, street luge, speed climbing, and motocross. Athletes from around the world compete in a variety of events for medals and more than \$1 million in prize money. It attracts thousands of spectators as well as a national television audience. Over 200,000 spectators attended the 2002 X Games, and hundreds of thousands more watched events broadcast on prime-time television. Allen competed in the speed-climbing event. Since her competitors included many experienced European speed-climbing specialists, the 14-year-old Allen was not expected to win the event.

But Allen thrilled the pro-American crowd by scaling the 60-foot wall in 13.417 seconds—breaking the record set the previous year by nearly four seconds—to win the competition and claim \$20,000 in prize money. She thus became the first American woman to win an X Games medal in speed climbing. “My competition was tough, many gold medal winners,” she noted. “But I just tried as hard as I could to get to the top of the wall without slipping.”

Allen was pleased with the outpouring of support she received from the crowd in Philadelphia. She hoped that her success would help attract more Americans to the sport of climbing. “I hope this really gets Americans into the sport, to show that we can compete with anyone in the world,” she stated. “I think me being in this and winning helped draw a big crowd. It was pretty cool to hear the crowd going like that.” In September 2002, Allen claimed another high-profile victory against international competition by winning gold medals in both the speed climbing and difficulty events at the Youth World Championships in France.

Promoting the Sport of Climbing

At five feet tall and under 100 pounds, Allen might seem to be an unlikely champion in a sport that requires strength and a long reach. Climbing experts attribute her success to her flexibility, her strength in comparison to her weight, and her “positive ape index”—a climbing term that describes someone with exceptionally long arms and fingers.

Allen also works hard to stay on top of her sport. She climbs four days per week for about four hours each time. She concentrates on endurance for two of these days, and on power for the other two days. She also runs, lifts weights, participates in kickboxing, and trains for the pole vault. “I am not

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“I am not obsessed with what I eat but I try to always make good decisions about eating, sleeping, and other activities,” Allen said about her training program.

“I would never do anything to intentionally hurt my body and that is why I am totally against drugs, drinking, and smoking. I am proud of my hard work and my reputation. I don’t plan on ruining things by giving in to the people around me who are making poor decisions.”

———— ” ————

ing, sleeping, and other activities," she explained. "I would never do anything to intentionally hurt my body and that is why I am totally against drugs, drinking, and smoking. I am proud of my hard work and my reputation. I don't plan on ruining things by giving in to the people around me who are making poor decisions."

Allen has received a great deal of media attention for her climbing feats. She has been featured in every major climbing publication, for example, as well as in various newspapers and in *Sports Illustrated*. "She's accessible and energetic, and she has already become a great ambassador for this sport," said junior climbing official Jeanne Niemer.

Although Allen knows that many people would find climbing scary, she finds it exhilarating. "I love heights," she said. "To think you're so high up there and that you're in charge, you know?" Allen tries not to think about specific routes or holds, and instead tries to let her body take over. She believes that trying her best can take her a long way. "My dad bought me one of those inspirational pictures called 'Perseverance.' It says, 'You can't let go and still win.' So I don't let go," she explained. "I

hate falling. It just frustrates me. But if it's a really hard move, I'll just jump and go for it. I never look down. I always look up. If you never reach for your goals, you're never going to get them!"

———— “ ————

"In Kentucky I grabbed a nice hold to rest on and all of a sudden a flying squirrel popped out, jumped onto my shoulder, and leapt off.

I was so shocked, I couldn't scream. Another time I was climbing and I just got past a hard part, clipped a clip and reached around a ledge where a spider nest had just hatched. There were lots of little ones and they climbed all over me. . . ."

Allen admits that she prefers climbing on indoor artificial walls instead of outdoor natural rocks. Part of the reason for her preference is that she has had a number of strange and unexpected experiences while climbing outdoors. "In Kentucky I grabbed a nice hold to rest on and all of a sudden a flying squirrel popped out, jumped onto my shoulder, and leapt off. I was so shocked, I couldn't scream," she remembered. "Another time I was climbing and I just got past a hard part, clipped a clip and reached around a ledge where a spider nest had just hatched. There were lots of little ones and they climbed all over me. I was freaking out. When I got

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down it looked like I had chickenpox from all of the bites. And then my favorite one: I was climbing this route, not super-hard, and a bee landed on my lip. I bit at my lip and I heard this crunch. My lip was so swollen I couldn't talk. That was nasty."

As both a climber and a pole vaulter, Allen has experienced many positive things through sports. She hopes to share her experiences with young girls in order to encourage them to take advantage of opportunities to participate in sports. "I am responsible for making sure that all the little girls out there right now will continue to have unlimited opportunities in athletics. As a matter of fact, I am responsible to see that they have MORE opportunities than exist for them right now,"

she stated. "Not only am I going to continue to be a good role model, I am going to be an encourager to young girls and a spokesperson for what sports have done in my life. . . . I am going to start with rock climbing and move out from there. Look for me—I'll be the one leading the parade of smiling girls who have discovered the fun, fulfillment, and friendship in athletic participation in any sport they want!"

FUTURE PLANS

Allen hopes that her future will hold a trip to the Olympic Games as an athlete, either in rock climbing or in pole vault. "I want to go to the Olympics," she stated. "That's my life dream." So far it seems as though pole vault might provide her best opportunity to compete. Women's pole vault was included as a medal sport for the first time in the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia. While rock climbing has not yet been sanctioned as a medal sport, it has been included in the Games as an exhibition sport.

Allen also plans to attend college in the future. She hopes to earn an athletic scholarship as a pole vaulter. She is considering attending Pepperdine University in California because of its proximity to natural cliffs for rock climbing. "Have you seen the rock out there?" she said. "How could you not want to get out there every day?"

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"I was freaking out. When I got down it looked like I had chickenpox from all of the bites. And then my favorite one: I was climbing this route, not super-hard, and a bee landed on my lip. I bit at my lip and I heard this crunch. My lip was so swollen I couldn't talk. That was nasty."

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As far as a future career, Allen wants to be either a kindergarten teacher or a spy. She has even set aside some of her earnings from climbing to start an all-girls' kindergarten someday.

HOME AND FAMILY

Allen lives in the Rocky Ripple neighborhood of Indianapolis with her family. Her parents are very supportive of her athletic goals. In fact, a year after she started climbing competitively they bought Climb Time, the Indianapolis climbing gym where she practiced. "We wanted to be with our kids," her father noted. "We didn't know the first thing about climbing." Nevertheless, the Allens turned Climb Time into a successful business. They gave the facility a thorough cleaning, replaced all the floor padding, repaired the existing holds, and added thousands of new holds

to create diverse routes for climbers of all abilities. Thanks to their hard work, membership in the gym increased from 20 to 200 and monthly revenue doubled from about \$11,000 to \$23,000.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Allen has a collection of over 500 toy monkeys. She often climbs with a tiny Curious George doll clipped to her belt in memory of her first climbing partner, Georgie the monkey. In fact, monkeys have become sort of a trademark for Allen — she often throws tiny monkey dolls to the crowd at climbing competitions.

Thanks to her success in climbing competitions and her bubbly personality, Allen has signed endorsement deals with 10 different companies. Her agent predicts that she could earn as much as \$100,000 in sponsorship and prize money in 2003. Allen says that she will use part of earnings to help a family in Benin buy a house. She would also like to buy a pet monkey, but her parents are not so sure about the idea.

Allen wants to share her love of climbing with others and tries to help spread the popularity of her sport. For example, she does some coaching and has started a youth climbing club at her parents' gym. She also designs her own climbing clothes and hopes to start own line of clothing someday. "I think my success will help others," she noted. "I just want climbing to be big. Really big."

In her spare time, Allen enjoys going to the movies. She also plays electric bass guitar in the youth group band at her church and volunteers at the Indianapolis Children's Museum.

HONORS AND AWARDS

U.S. Climbing Competitions Association (USCCA) Junior National
Champion: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002

U.S. Junior National Team: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002

World Record: 2000, as youngest person to on-site a 5.13a difficulty climb,
Red River Gorge, KY

World Record: 2001, as youngest woman to summit El Capitan, Yosemite
National Park, CA

Gorge Games, Women's Bouldering: 2001, first place; 2002, first place

X Games, Women's Speed Climbing: 2002, first place

USCCA Adult National Champion: 2002

Youth World Champion, Speed Climbing: 2002

Youth World Champion, Difficulty Event: 2002

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Indianapolis Business Journal, Jan. 21, 2002, p.57
Indianapolis Monthly, Mar. 2002, p.224
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Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Ledger, Oct. 14, 2001, p.C12
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Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 17, 2002, p.E7
Sports Illustrated, Aug. 20, 2001, p.22
Sports Illustrated Women, Mar. 1, 2002, p.33; May 1, 2002, p.56
Washington Post, Aug. 15, 2002, p.C12

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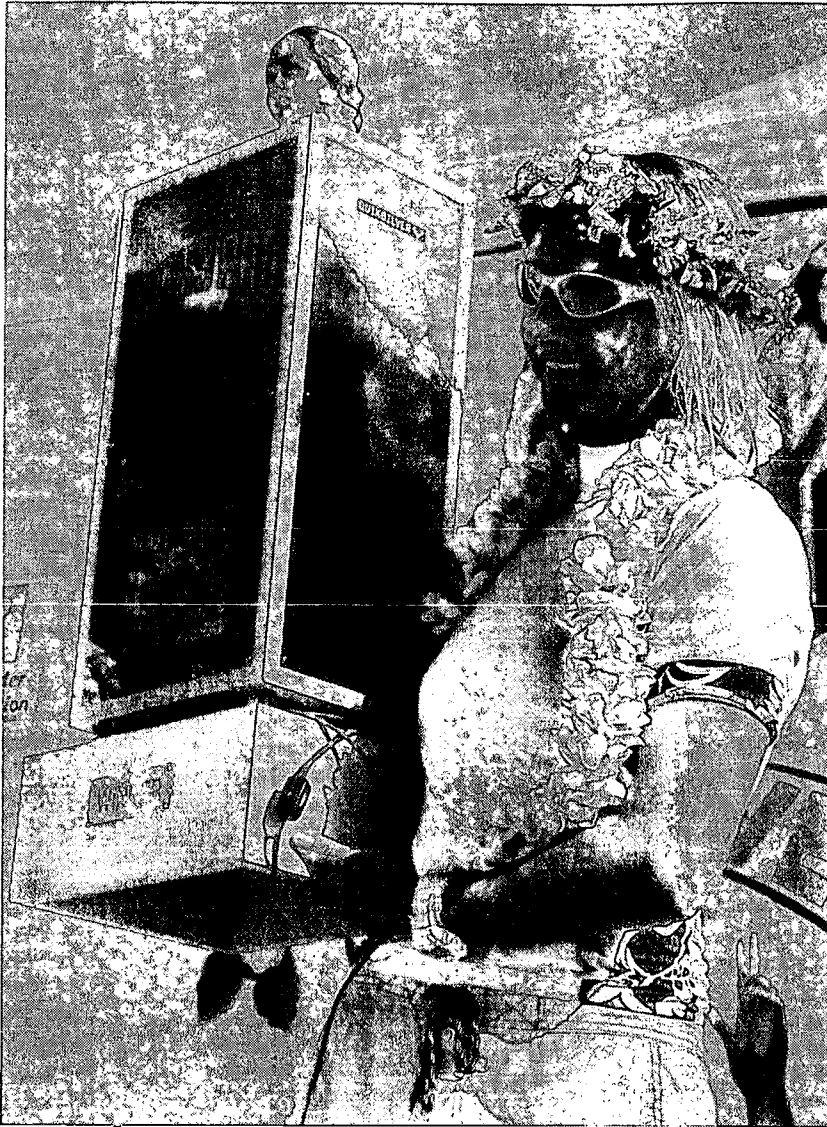
- <http://www.delawareonline.com/newsjournal/sports/specials/2002xgames/news/18teenmakes> ("Teen Makes Quick Climb to Top," *Delaware News Journal*, Aug. 18, 2002)

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WORLD WIDE WEB SITES

- <http://www.toriallen.com>
<http://www.womensportsfoundation.org>



Layne Beachley 1972-

Australian Professional Surfer

Five-Time World Champion of Women's Surfing

BIRTH

Layne Beachley was born on May 24, 1972, in Sydney, Australia. She was the adopted daughter of Neil Beachley, who worked as a marketing manager, and his wife Valerie. Her adoptive family also included an older brother, Jason. Layne's biological mother, Margaret Nickerson, made contact with her in 1998, and they have remained in touch since then.

YOUTH

Beachley grew up as a tomboy who enjoyed playing outdoors with a group of neighborhood boys. She was very well-coordinated and learned to ride a skateboard at the age of two. "I remember stealing my brother's skateboard during one of his birthday parties and charging down the street,

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“Joan is a wonderful, nurturing woman who was the only mothering influence I would ever accept,” Beachley recalled about the family friend who cared for her after her mother’s death. “I was a wretched child. I just wanted to play, to be outdoors, to be a tomboy. She let me do my thing, skateboard down the street at 100 miles per hour or ride my bike around the block and disappear or play tennis in the middle of the road, hit golf balls up the hill, climb trees. I was very hyperactive. If it was light, I was outside.”

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only to return home with half of my big toe missing,” she noted. By the time she was three, Beachley could ride her skateboard while her father ran along and towed her behind him on a rope.

Beachley’s childhood home in Sydney was located a short bus ride from Manly Beach, where her father taught her to surf at the age of four. “I just pushed her out on the board and told her to stand up, and she did,” her father recalled. Beachley started out by riding the waves created by a passing ferry along the shoreline, surfing on a styrofoam board. “She always had amazing balance,” her brother recalled. “She used to jump fully clothed on a surfboard, plane to the other end, and get out without getting wet.” At the age of five, she began paddling out to the edge of the roped-off swim area and then surfing back in, often running into swimmers along the way.

Sadly, Beachley’s adoptive mother died from complications of surgery in 1978, when Layne was six years old. “I remember Dad coming home and telling me and I put my face in my pillow and cried for a while and that was it,” she noted. “I don’t think I really understood the implications of it all.”

Being so young, Beachley retained only limited memories of her mother. “I don’t have a clear recollection of her,” she stated. “I do remember sitting on her lap early in the morning drinking the dregs out of her coffee cup. That must be why I have never liked coffee. I also remember the tantrums I would throw when she called me in

from playing outside for my afternoon nap. I still have the homemade blanket she used to cover me with.”

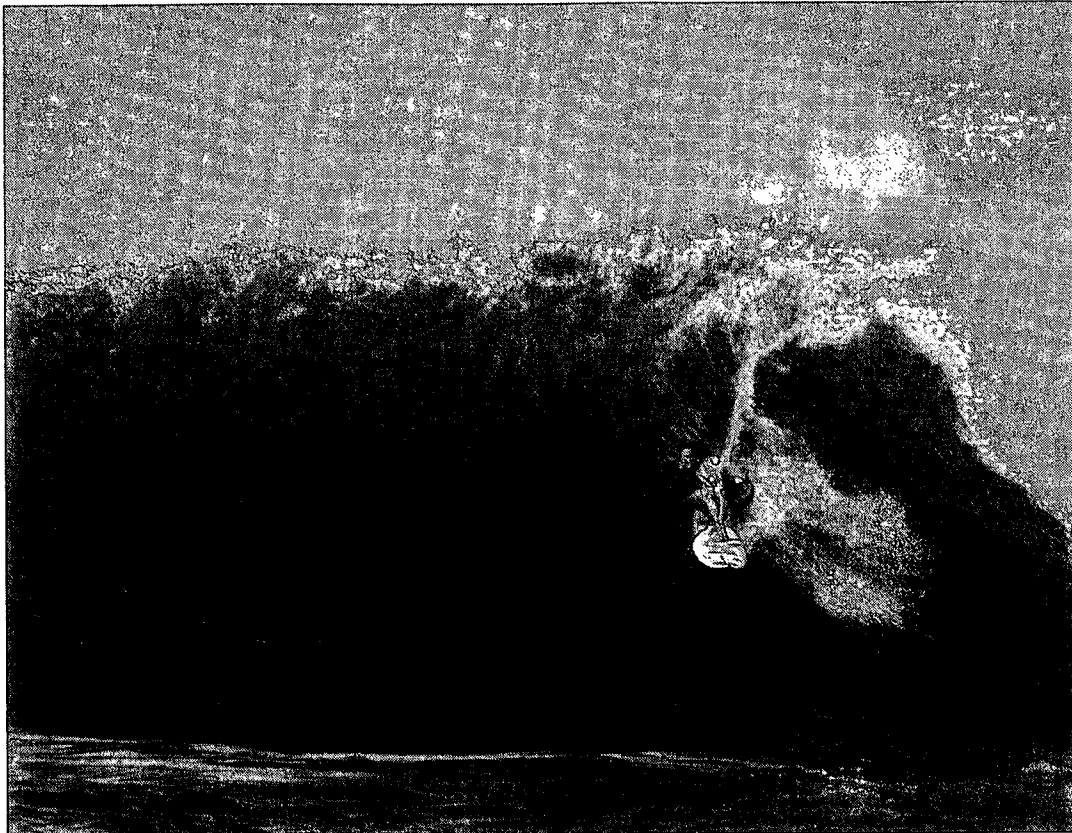
Following his wife’s death, Neil Beachley depended on a family friend, Joan Tate, to help him care for the children. Tate played the role of a nanny—picking the children up after school, fixing them meals, allowing them to stay at her house when their father went out of town for business—but she also became a mother figure for young Layne. “Joan is a wonderful, nurturing woman who was the only mothering influence I would ever accept,” she recalled. “I was a wretched child. I just wanted to play, to be outdoors, to be a tomboy. She let me do my thing, skateboard down the street at 100 miles per hour or ride my bike around the block and disappear or play tennis in the middle of the road, hit golf balls up the hill, climb trees. I was very hyperactive. If it was light, I was outside.”

Throughout her childhood, Beachley continued to spend a great deal of time at the beach. She learned early on that she faced an uphill battle as a girl involved in surfing—a sport dominated by boys. The boys around Sydney tended to be very protective of their favorite surfing spots, claiming that girls were not allowed on certain parts of the beach. Beachley ignored their warnings and often tried to surf in the boys’ territory. “They’d pick me up by my wrists and ankles and heave me over the beach wall,” she remembered. “I’d get right up, run back over the wall, and give as good as I got—and get thrown over again. This would sometimes happen two or three times a day. I think that had a lot to do with who I am now.”

Beachley entered her first surfing contest at the age of 13, around the same time that she got her first fiberglass surfboard. At first, she did not really view surfing as a potential career. Instead, she planned to be either a professional tennis player or a stockbroker. She actually took a job in the stock exchange at one point, but it did not take long for her to migrate back to surfing. “After a couple weeks I realized, nope, that’s not it,” she recalled. “I was an athlete.”

EDUCATION

Beachley attended McKellar Girls High School in Sydney, where she competed on the girls’ surfing team. She won scholastic titles at the regional and state levels, then went on to compete in the National Scholastic Titles at Bells Beach in 1988. She earned her HSC—the equivalent of an American high school diploma—the following year.



Beachley rides a wave to her second consecutive ASP world surfing title, 1999.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Joining the Pro Tour

Once Beachley decided to become a professional surfer, she worked hard to achieve her goal. She began competing on the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) World Championship Tour (WCT). In professional surfing events, competitors earn championship points and prize money by progressing through early group stages into later knock-out rounds. The last surfer remaining after a series of head-to-head matchups is the winner.

Beachley began competing on the WCT part-time in 1990. But without sponsors to provide equipment and help with travel expenses, she had to pay her own way by working at a series of odd jobs in restaurants, surf shops, and clothing stores. In 1991 she joined the pro tour full-time. She traveled to 15 competitions around the world between March and December, lugging six surfboards with her everywhere she went. "At first it was a real struggle," she acknowledged. "Long plane rides, not knowing where I was going, where to stay, how to get there, foreign languages, foreign food, being away from friends and family and the comforts of home for

long periods of time. There is a lot more to doing the world tour than just surfing, but I was open to the experience."

Beachley trained very hard during her early years on the WCT. In fact, she seemed to spend more time working out than practicing on her surfboard. "I was kind of psychotic about it," she admitted. "I'd run up sand dunes with logs on my back. I'd ride a bike for 20 miles, run four miles, do 100 sit-ups, then run back and do another 100 sit-ups. Just stupid things. I'd wake up feeling like death. Sick with the flu, I'd go out and cycle at 5:30 a.m. in the pouring rain to make myself feel better. Otherwise, I'd feel guilty. . . . It made me mentally tough but physically ill. I over-trained. . . . But without that training, I wouldn't have come this far. [There are] times in competition when you just cannot go any further, and you have to push yourself. That's what the training prepared me for."

Beachley claimed her first professional surfing victory in 1993 at the Diet Coke Women's Classic at Narrabeen, Australia. "That's when my career changed for the better," she said of her first professional win. "I started believing in myself, which is what makes a huge difference, especially in competition. From then on I won at least one event every year."

Beachley won another event in 1994 and finished the year ranked fourth in championship points. American Lisa Anderson won the world title that year. Beachley claimed her third professional victory in 1995 and moved up to second in the world rankings behind Anderson. Beachley broke through to win five out of 11 WCT events in 1996, but inconsistent performances in the remaining events left her third in points at the end of the year, as Anderson claimed her third consecutive world championship.

By the end of the 1996 season, Beachley developed chronic fatigue syndrome. Her doctors blamed the condition on overtraining, too much traveling, and a poor diet that did not recognize her allergies to yeast and wheat.

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"At first it was a real struggle," Beachley acknowledged about joining the pro tour. "Long plane rides, not knowing where I was going, where to stay, how to get there, foreign languages, foreign food, being away from friends and family and the comforts of home for long periods of time. There is a lot more to doing the world tour than just surfing, but I was open to the experience."

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“I wasn’t allowed to surf for over a month,” she recalled. “I couldn’t stay awake past eight o’clock at night, I couldn’t get up before ten in the morning. I was dog-tired. It would be a beautiful sunny day outside and all I could do was sit on the couch and watch videos, then by four in the afternoon I was in tears, suicidal, because I couldn’t go surfing, couldn’t go training, couldn’t do anything I wanted to do.”

Beachley recovered during the off-season by making changes in her diet and cutting back on her training. She had another good year in 1997, winning two events and making the finals of many others. But she finished second in the world rankings once again, as Anderson claimed her fourth consecutive championship. At this point, some critics claimed that Beachley did not have what it took to be a champi-

on. The media started referring to her as a “bridesmaid,” meaning that she stood in the shadows while her rival Anderson took the spotlight.

Winning Her First World Championship

During the off-season, Beachley became romantically involved with fellow surfer Ken Bradshaw. Bradshaw, an American who was 20 years older than Beachley, was a legend in the world of surfing known for his mastery of big waves. He originated the sport of “tow-in surfing,” in which surfers use motorized watercraft to tow them into the path of huge waves that break up to a mile offshore. Bradshaw used this method to ride waves up to 80 feet high, or the equivalent of a 10-storey building, at Outer Log Cabins off Hawaii. Bradshaw became Beachley’s boyfriend, mentor, coach, and traveling companion, and he played a large role in her later success. “Before I met Ken I doubted myself so often,” she admitted. “I was afraid to win and step above everyone. He made me believe in myself.”

In addition to gaining Bradshaw’s help, Beachley made some other changes before the 1998 season. She remained in Hawaii for several months in order to improve her technique in the small surf that she often encoun-

tered in women's contests. "I had to change my strategy and learn how to surf small waves," she explained. "I get more of an adrenaline rush out of surfing big waves than just surfing in general. When there's power behind me, I don't have to put so much power into the wave; it's already under my feet. I can just generate my technique without having to concentrate on placing myself in a position on a wave where I can get the most power out of a turn."

Beachley had a phenomenal year in 1998. She won three of the first four events on the pro tour on her way to claiming five victories for the year. In the meantime, her rival Anderson struggled with a back injury for much of the season. Beachley's early success helped her clinch the world championship with three events remaining. She captured her first world title by 2,420 points—the largest point margin in the history of the sport—and took home \$75,300—the most prize money ever earned in a single season by a female surfer. She also stopped Anderson's string of consecutive championships at four.

Beachley was thrilled finally to become the world's top female surfer. But Bradshaw made sure that winning did not reduce her competitive drive. "I spent eight years getting to number one and I was almost relaxed and happy with that," Beachley recalled, "until Ken came up and said, 'You are the best women's surfer there is. Why can't you dominate for five years? Lisa [Anderson] won four consecutive. I'm setting you this goal: you win five world titles.' So basically Ken sets my goals and I go out and achieve them."

Meeting Her Birth Mother

In addition to achieving one of her professional goals in 1998, Beachley also accomplished one of her personal goals—meeting her birth mother. Beachley had done some searching for her birth mother several years earlier, but she was only able to find limited information. In 1998, however, her birth mother, Margaret Nickerson, managed to find her. Nickerson explained that she had given her daughter up for adoption because she was 17 years old, unmarried, and due to leave Australia and return to Glas-

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It made me mentally tough but physically ill. I over-trained. . . . But without that training, I wouldn't have come this far. [There are] times in competition when you just cannot go any further, and you have to push yourself. That's what the training prepared me for."

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gow, Scotland. "She said she desperately wanted to keep me but she really didn't have the resources to do it," Beachley noted. "She had to go back to Scotland, and a single mother wasn't socially accepted, so she had to give me up."

After speaking several times on the telephone, Beachley agreed to meet her birth mother in California, where Nickerson lived. The two women have met several times since then, and they are working together to define their relationship. "I tried to push her away a couple of times because I'm so focused on my career," Beachley admitted. "We are creating a friend-

ship, but I think she wanted a bit too much, too soon." Beachley claims that she has no hard feelings toward Nickerson for giving her up for adoption. "There's not an inch of resentment," she stated. "I have no problem with it because I love the way I was brought up. I loved my childhood. It created who I am, and I wouldn't change who I am for the world. Every experience I had was part of me."

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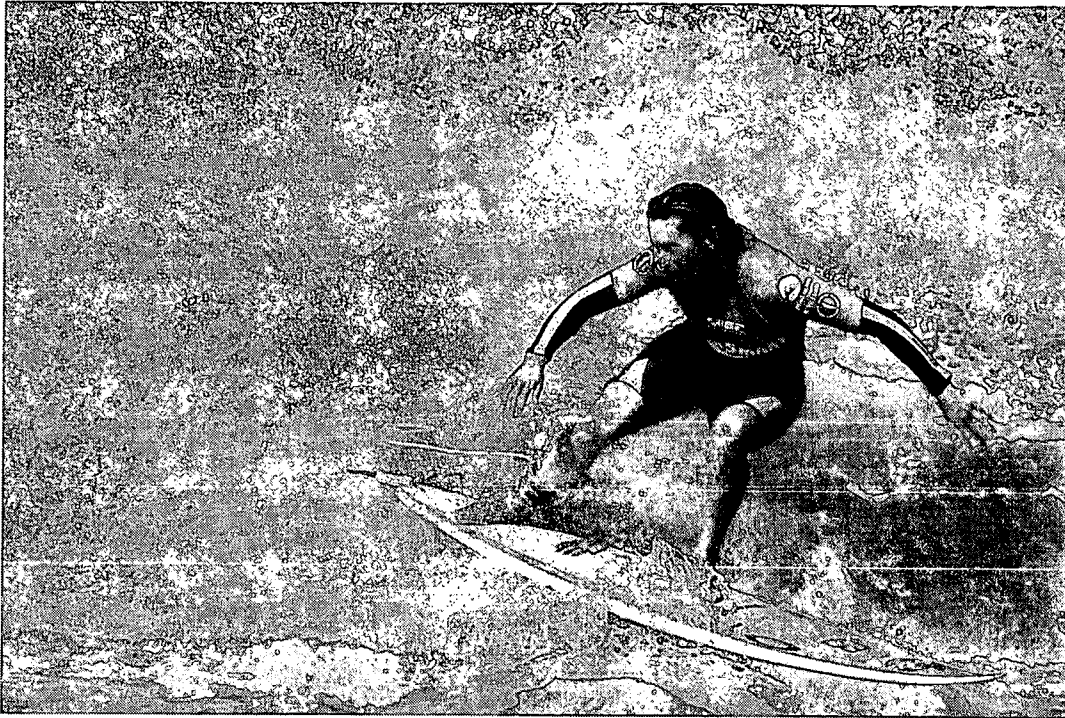
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I know the talents I have.
I guess this season, I've got
higher expectations more
than anything."*

Defending the World Title

As the 1999 WCT got underway, Beachley was determined to prove that her first world championship had not been a fluke. "I would like to be regarded as the best surfer ever," she stated. "When you achieve your goals,

you set higher ones, and after winning the title, I know the talents I have. I guess this season, I've got higher expectations more than anything." At the same time, Beachley realized that her competitors would be equally determined to knock her off the throne. "I'm the one the other girls are going to target," she acknowledged. "I've got a bullseye this year and everyone's going to be aiming at it."

Beachley turned in another fine performance in 1999. She won five events—despite suffering a torn knee ligament in the middle of the season—and successfully defended her world championship. Some people discounted her achievement, though, because her main rival, Anderson, had taken the year off to recover from injuries. "It's a lot of work being world champion," Beachley noted. "It's so much easier being number two. No one comes up to you and says, 'You suck, you don't deserve to be world



Beachley surfing at Bells Beach in Victoria, Australia, April 2001.

champion.' Or, 'You shouldn't have won today, you weren't on.' When you're number two, everyone gives you encouragement. They say, 'You can do it, you're the greatest, you deserve to be there.' I've learned not to take these things personally. I remember when I was number two, wanting to take Lisa out. That's what makes a true champion, being able to stay in there, handle the criticism, the ridicule, and the attention."

Beachley silenced many of the critics in 2000, when she won four WCT events to capture her third consecutive world title. Her most satisfying victory came in the season-opening Billabong Pro in Australia in March, when she defeated Anderson head-to-head in the final. "I placed so much importance and emotion on the first contest victory that I felt like I had achieved it all," she remembered. "I came against Lisa Anderson in the final, and for the last two years the critics have been saying I wouldn't have won the two world championship titles if it hadn't been for her absence because of her back injury. Finally I got to beat her outright, fair and square—it was a major accomplishment and I finally got to silence all the critics."

Beachley started out strong in the 2001 season, but then the European leg of the pro tour was canceled following the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. As a result, the world championship came down to the final event in Hawaii. Beachley came into the event leading by only 30

points, which meant that 10 of her competitors remained in the running to win the title. "I have never gone to Hawaii with less than a 600 point lead so it's a lot of pressure on me," she admitted. To make matters worse, Beachley's practice time was limited by a painful neck injury.

When Beachley lost in the quarterfinals to South African Heather Clark, she figured that her hopes of winning a fourth consecutive world cham-

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"I remember chasing the thing down and everyone just backing off because it was one of the biggest that came through," Beachley recalled about riding a 30-foot wave. "As soon as I let go of the [tow] rope and I was going down the face I knew it was the biggest thing I'd ever ridden. I looked back at this 30-foot barrel behind my head and I was just telling myself, 'Stay standing, stay standing— all you have to do is stay on your feet and you'll be fine.' Meanwhile, I was going faster and faster. It was insane."

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ampionship were over. She was so upset about her poor performance that she stayed out in the water afterward, sitting on her board and crying. "I just wanted to cry like I'd never cried before," she explained. "I had to let go, I had to go through that emotional grieving." To her amazement, however, all of the other title contenders were knocked out of the competition one by one. She ended up winning the championship and equaling the record of four straight titles held by Lisa Anderson. "I was hoping it would be a lot more convincing than that," she said later. "I wanted to win. I didn't want to wait for other people to lose. But you can't have it your way all the time."

Beachley knew that her close call in 2001 would only give her competitors greater confidence going into 2002. "They've had a taste of what it's like to get close and next year will be tougher," she stated. "I'm going to have to work on some new moves and surf with more power and speed. I'm sure the judges get sick of seeing the same old stuff."

Conquering the Big Waves

While she was winning her fourth consecutive world championship in 2001, Beachley was also earning a reputation as the world's best female big-wave surfer. She had always enjoyed riding large waves, and her association with Bradshaw had introduced her to tow-in surfing. On January



Beachley surfing at the Billabong Pro event, the second ASP tour event of the 2001 season, in Tahiti.

12, 2001, she rode the biggest wave ever surfed by a woman — a 30-footer at Outer Log Cabins. "I remember chasing the thing down and everyone just backing off because it was one of the biggest that came through," she recalled. "As soon as I let go of the rope and I was going down the face I knew it was the biggest thing I'd ever ridden. I looked back at this 30-foot barrel behind my head and I was just telling myself, 'Stay standing, stay standing—all you have to do is stay on your feet and you'll be fine.' Meanwhile, I was going faster and faster. It was insane."

In 2002 Beachley became the only woman to join a group of elite men surfers in the Billabong Odyssey—a \$1 million, three-year quest to ride the world's biggest waves. She joined the group after Bradshaw's usual jet-ski partner suffered an injury. "I'm one of the boys and I don't consider myself just a girl in this situation," she stated. "When you're against Mother Nature, it's survival of the fittest, survival of the strongest—it's not gender biased. The reason I rode that 30-foot wave so successfully was because I was mentally and physically prepared for the worst wipeout of my life. You've got to prepare yourself for the worst possible scenario and then hope for the best." As part of the Billabong Odyssey, Beachley surfed a 33-foot wave at Todos Santos Island off the Mexican coast. "I wasn't really that challenged by it at all," she said afterward. "I didn't get my hair wet."

Beachley actually preferred riding big offshore waves to surfing at some of the WCT locations, where the waves break in shallow water over dangerous reefs. Her least favorite spot to surf is Teahupoo in Tahiti, which features razor-sharp coral that is nearly exposed as large waves approach it. She suffered broken ribs and herniated discs in her neck there once, but she came back to win a competition at the same place in 2001. "I'm so comfortable in big waves when there's deep water," she explained. "I'm

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"I'm so comfortable in big waves when there's deep water. I'm not going to hit anything, just go down deep, and I'm very comfortable underwater, getting tossed around, like in a washing machine. I can relax very easily. I have good lung capacity, I'm prepared for it. But reefs scare me. When I'm getting scraped across reefs, I'm getting skin torn off me, I'm not good with that."

not going to hit anything, just go down deep, and I'm very comfortable underwater, getting tossed around, like in a washing machine. I can relax very easily. I have good lung capacity, I'm prepared for it. But reefs scare me. When I'm getting scraped across reefs, I'm getting skin torn off me, I'm not good with that."

Claiming a Record-Breaking Fifth Consecutive Championship

As the 2002 WCT season got underway, Beachley was distracted by a change in her personal life—she and Bradshaw decided to end their relationship after nearly five years together. The main reason for the breakup was that Beachley wanted to live in her native Australia, while Bradshaw wanted to remain in Hawaii. "I miss my home, and Ken's place is Hawaii," she stated. "Traveling with me also stopped him from pursuing his dream,

which is traveling around the world looking for the biggest waves to surf." The former couple parted on good terms and remain friends. "He and I are still prepared to work with each other in regards to my career and his big wave surfing," Beachley said. "But the romantic side of the relationship is over."

Beachley put a great deal of pressure on herself as the 2002 season began. She badly wanted to win a fifth consecutive world championship in order to beat Anderson's record of four straight titles, as well as to claim her place in history as Australia's most successful surfer. But this desire made her overly anxious in the first few events of the WCT season. "I'm trying

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too hard," she explained. "I came out all guns blazing this year and just put way to much expectation and pressure on myself." Though her performances were consistent, Beachley did not record her first victory until October at the Roxy Pro in France. None of her competitors had won more than one event either, though, so the victory moved her into first place in the point standings with only one event remaining.

Beachley entered the season-ending Billabong Pro in Hawaii with a 340-point lead over her closest rival. But she fell on the first wave of her quarterfinal match and was knocked out of the competition. Her mistake opened the door for her competitors, three of whom were poised to take away her title by winning the event. Once again, Beachley found herself watching and waiting to see whether luck would bring her another championship. The finals were delayed a week due to poor weather conditions, which gave Beachley even more time to ponder her situation. When the day of the competition finally arrived, she tried to calm her nerves by free-surfing out of earshot of the announcers. "I can't stand to sit on the cliff and watch it all unfold without my participation in it," she explained.

Just as had happened the previous year, Beachley's top rivals were eliminated from the competition one after the other. The contest organizers eventually sent someone over to where she was surfing to inform her that she had won her fifth world championship. "It was *deja vu*. It's a really frustrating way to win," she stated. "I'm in a state of disbelief. The guys on the jet ski came out and said, 'You've won, you've got to come in.' I said, 'I don't believe you.'"

By claiming a fifth consecutive world title, Beachley became the most successful surfer in Australian history. No other Aussie has ever won more than four world titles. In fact, only American Kelly Slater has won six career world championships, and his titles did not come in consecutive years. Beachley's 24 wins between 1993 and 2002 on the ASP World Championship Tour also tied fellow Australian Wendy Botha for most career professional surfing victories by a woman. Yet Beachley was not ready to stop there. "Now that I've won the five, I'm sure some of them are thinking, 'Well, she's got what she wanted and that's it, Layne Beachley's done,'" she acknowledged. "But the goal is now six. I'm determined to continue achieving."

Promoting the Sport of Surfing

Beachley—whose nickname is "Beast"—believes that part of her job as world champion is to promote the sport of surfing, especially among young women. "I want to continue to be a role model for all female ath-



Beachley takes part in a ceremony in Fiji in which she is welcomed to the island, prior to the Roxy Pro event in 2002.

letes and lead the way into a new era of women's surfing," she stated. Toward this end, Beachley agreed to appear as herself in the 2002 feature film *Blue Crush*. The movie follows the adventures of a group of independent-minded teenaged girls who live in Hawaii and love to surf. It features exciting scenes of surfing action, many of which were provided by Beachley's competitors on the pro tour.

Beachley is gratified that surfing has been gaining popularity among women. In fact, 100 women competed on the pro tour in 2002—twice as many as five years earlier. "It's fantastic to see so many women getting involved and inspiring each other," she noted. Makers of surfing equipment and apparel responded to the trend by expanding their offerings for women. At the same time, though, Beachley points out that professional women surfers still earn far less money than their male counterparts, and that women's competitions are often held in less-desirable locations.

Although she admits that the life of a professional surfer has some negative elements, Beachley loves her career. "It gets a little tedious at times," she said. "You learn to be comfortable living out of a suitcase and moving house every week or two. But I won't have this job for my whole life, so all in all it's not too bad getting paid to see the world." She always tries to be-

have in a manner that makes her a good representative for her sport. "It's my responsibility as a world champion to be a role model and inspiration," she noted. "I've never done drugs, I've never tried pot, never had a puff of a cigarette. I'm completely drug-free."

Beachley recognizes that surfing involves an element of danger, but she claims that this only makes the sport more fun. "I've never suffered a wipeout to the point where I want to give it away," she stated. "It just makes me more motivated to get back out there. You just get tossed around like you're on spin cycle, then you're on rinse, then you're on washing, and then you're on spin again . . . and then you're spat out. I pretend I'm a rag doll and start joking with myself. It's all mental. You've just got to accept that you're going to take the biggest poundings of your life and be able to relax under extreme duress. That's the secret. So there . . . you can all go out there yourselves and do it now."

The ups and downs that Beachley experienced early in her career taught her a great deal about herself and helped her to become a five-time world champion. When she is asked to give advice to beginning surfers, she tells them to set goals, work hard to achieve them, and learn from their mistakes. "If you fight for something I think you appreciate it a lot more. I wouldn't change any of the adversity I've endured over my career because it's character-building. It's who I am. I was not born a world champion or a big-wave surfer. It stems from desire and commitment and sacrifice. You've got to know what you want from life, then go out and get it," she said. "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger! Every mistake is a learning experience no matter how many times you may make the same error. Believe in yourself and surround yourself with people that believe in you too!"

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HOME AND FAMILY

When she is not traveling to surfing competitions around the world, Beachley lives in Dee Why, Australia. She says that spending time away from Australia always makes her anxious to return home. "I miss my fami-

ly and friends," she explained. "I miss the Australian culture, the sense of humor, the sarcasm. I miss being understood."

Beachley is not married, though she has been linked romantically with several well-known men. After breaking up with legendary big-wave surfer Ken Bradshaw in 2002, she began dating Kirk Pengilly, a member of the rock band INXS.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

In her spare time, Beachley enjoys reading, watching movies, playing tennis, and practicing yoga. She also does promotional activities on behalf of her sponsors, which include Billabong, Oakley, Baby G, Gallaz, Island Style, and Boost. During the off-season, she sometimes appears as a sports analyst on an Australian television station. Beachley has invested some of her prize money in real estate, and she owns three homes near Sydney in addition to the one she lives in.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Women's World Champion (Association of Surfing Professionals — ASP):
1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002

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Sue Bird 1980-

American Professional Basketball Player with the
WNBA Seattle Storm

Winner of Two NCAA Championships with the
University of Connecticut Huskies

BIRTH

Suzanne Brigit Bird — known as Sue for short — was born on October 18, 1980, in Syosset, a quiet suburb on Long Island in New York. Her father, Herschel, was a medical doctor specializing in cardiac rehabilitation. Her mother, Nancy, worked as a nurse at Syosset High School. Sue has an older sister, Jennifer.

YOUTH

Bird showed a strong competitive streak even as a child, when she hated to lose at board games like Candyland and Risk. She was an athletic girl who enjoyed playing all kinds of sports, including soccer, tennis, track, and basketball. She honed her basketball talents by playing pickup games against neighborhood boys. One childhood friend recalled an incident when he beat her in a game, then took off his shirt and started to make a victory lap around the court. He was shocked when the basketball came flying across the court and hit him in the stomach. "I was just throwing the ball," Bird said innocently. "I didn't mean to hit you there."

Bird began playing organized basketball at the age of seven in a league organized by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). "My sister, who is five years older, played intramurals at a young age and I became interested by attending her games," she recalled. She ended up playing for a top-notch girls' team called the Liberty Belles, which won a regional championship and traveled to Salt Lake City, Utah, to compete for the AAU national championship. Bird played in a number of competitive leagues over the next few years. During this time, she developed into a complete player. "I

have the ability to shoot the ball. I can go by you. I can pull up," she explained. "I don't have one superior strength in my game. I just do a lot of things pretty good, and it makes me a pretty good player."

Bird's parents separated when she was 15 years old, and they eventually divorced. Though this situation was difficult for Bird, she remained close to both parents and learned a great deal from each of them. Her father tended to be blunt and often pointed out her mistakes, while her mother was always supportive and emphasized the positive. "I had one telling me the truth and one being ultrasupportive," Bird remembered. "It probably shaped my personality. They're so different, and I have both of them in me."

EDUCATION

Bird attended Syosset High School for two years. She was an honor roll student and earned varsity letters in soccer and track. But it was on the

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basketball court that she truly excelled, starting at point guard and averaging 20 points per game during her freshman year. In her sophomore season she averaged 17.7 points, 6.0 rebounds, 5.6 assists, and 5.4 steals per game.

Before the beginning of her junior year of high school, Bird decided to transfer to Christ the King, a private Catholic school in Queens, New York, that was known for its outstanding girls' basketball program. Christ the King had won seven consecutive state championships and produced a number of great women's basketball players, including WNBA star Chamique Holdsclaw. (For more information on Holdsclaw, see *Biography Today*, Sep. 2000.) Several of Bird's AAU teammates attended Christ the King, and Bird wanted to join the Lady Royals in order to face tougher competition on the court. "It's two different levels of competition," she explained. "I knew if I played against the best, it would make me a better player." Bird's parents rented an apartment in Middle Village, Queens, a few blocks away from her new school. They took turns living there with their daughter during the week, and spent weekends in Syosset.

Some people criticized Bird's decision to change schools. They accused Christ the King of recruiting players, which is not allowed in high school basketball. But Bird denied these charges.

"Not at any point did any of the coaches ever approach me in a way, like, come to Christ the King," she said. "I had played with these girls in AAU and AAU started in sixth grade. So it was friends [that helped convince me to change schools]." Bob Mackey, one of Christ the King's assistant basketball coaches, marveled at how Bird brushed off the criticism and remained focused on her goals. "She was going through a lot then, with the criticism for transferring and her parents getting divorced," he stated. "She was on top of everything, though. She was on top of her books, her basketball, and life. All around her there was adversity and she never let the problems get her away from life. I think it all prepared her for the college level."

During her junior year, Bird averaged 17.4 points, 6.5 assists, and 5.0 steals per game. She led the Lady Royals to a 23-3 record and the New York State High School Championship. In her senior season, Bird averaged 16.3 points, 3.9 rebounds, 7.3 assists, and 8.5 steals per game. Her strong performance at point guard helped Christ the King post a perfect 27-0 record and claim both the state and national championships. At the end of her high school career, Bird was honored as the player of the year for New York City and New York State for 1997-98. She was also named a high school All-American by *Parade* magazine.

Bird's basketball talents attracted the attention of many college scouts, and she received a number of scholarship offers from the nation's top women's basketball programs. Upon graduating from Christ the King in 1998, Bird decided to attend the University of Connecticut (UConn) in Storrs. "I have goals and I feel Connecticut is the place that will help me achieve them," she noted. "They have the greatest fans. The support is unbelievable." Bird went on to make the dean's list as a student at UConn. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in communications in 2002.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

College—The University of Connecticut Huskies

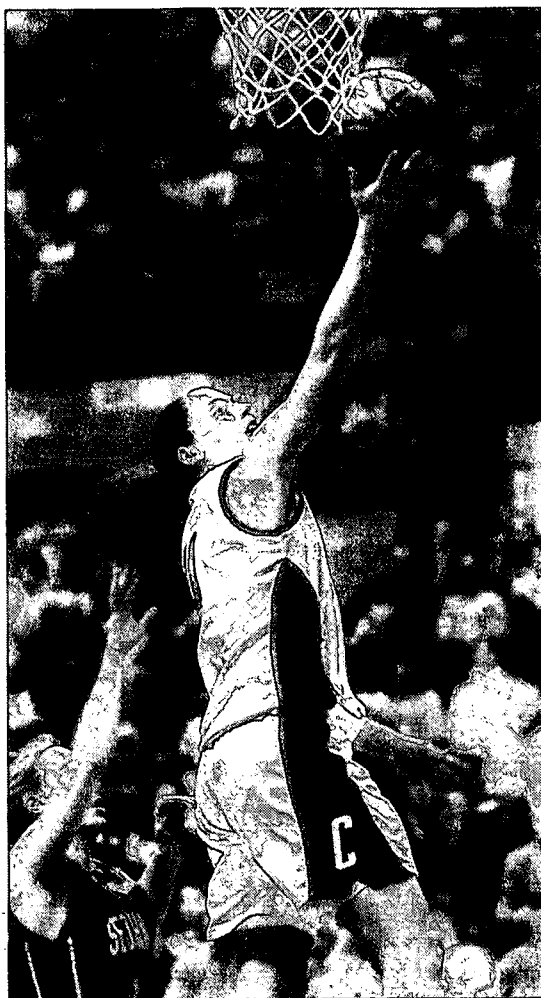
Bird entered UConn as part of one of the best recruiting classes in the history of women's basketball. She joined the Lady Huskies along with three other highly recruited players—center Tamika Williams and forwards Swin Cash and Asjha Jones. Many experts predicted that this group might be capable of winning four National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) national championships.

Bird won the starting point guard job for the Lady Huskies as a freshman. She only started eight games in 1999, however, before suffering a season-ending knee injury. Bird was disappointed to miss most of her freshman season, and she found it very frustrating to watch from the bench. But the injury helped her realize that she had taken the game and her talent for granted. She vowed to come back and play with greater intensity from that time on. "I was dying to be out there. It's really hard to sit there and know there's nothing you can do. It's a helpless feeling," she noted. "Because of that experience, I value each game much more. You have to play every game like it's your last because it could be."

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Bob Mackey, one of Christ the King's assistant basketball coaches, marveled at how Bird handled criticism and remained focused on her goals. "She was going through a lot then, with the criticism for transferring and her parents getting divorced," he stated. "She was on top of everything, though. She was on top of her books, her basketball, and life. All around her there was adversity and she never let the problems get her away from life. I think it all prepared her for the college level."

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Bird playing for Connecticut against Seton Hall, February 2002.

Bird also used her time on the sidelines to watch her teammates. She memorized their tendencies and noticed their strengths and weaknesses. When she was ready to return to the lineup, she used this information to improve her game. "I got to see what our team likes to do, what individuals like to do," she recalled. "Even though I didn't actually get playing experience, I got watching experience. I was there every step of the way. . . . I kind of took notes. And I think that's kind of helped me."

Without their star point guard on the floor, UConn struggled in the 1999 NCAA tournament. The highly touted Lady Huskies ended up being upset by Iowa State in the regional semifinals. But Bird came back during her sophomore year to average 10.9 points and 4.3 assists per game. Her contributions helped lift her team to the NCAA championship against their arch-rivals, the University

of Tennessee Lady Volunteers. When the season concluded, Bird was honored as the Nancy Lieberman-Cline National Point Guard of the Year for 2000.

By her junior year, Bird had gained a reputation as a go-to player who was capable of making key plays in pressure situations. One of the biggest moments of her college career came in the 2001 Big East Conference championship game. She hit a clutch shot at the buzzer to beat the top-ranked Notre Dame Fighting Irish by a score of 78-76 and give UConn its eighth consecutive conference title. The Lady Huskies reached the Final Four of the NCAA tournament that year, but they lost in the semifinal round. Bird once again averaged 10.9 points per game but increased her assist average to 5.0. She earned her second Nancy Lieberman-Cline National Point Guard of the Year award, and she was also named to the All-Big East Conference team.

A Perfect Season

As Bird's senior season got underway, UConn was the number one women's basketball team in the nation and the favorite to win the NCAA championship. The Lady Huskies' starting five—Bird, Cash, Jones, Williams, and sophomore guard Diana Taurasi—were widely regarded as the best in the game. Although each player possessed outstanding individual talents, it was the way they played together as a team that was most impressive. Many people credited Bird with the success of her team. As the point guard, she was the leader on the court. She brought the ball down the floor, called plays, distributed passes, and helped her teammates reach their potential. "If we get everyone involved and the offense and defense is flowing, we're really impossible to stop," Bird acknowledged.

In addition to being a good ballhandler and playmaker, however, Bird was also a strong shooter. Throughout her college career, she engaged in a constant battle with Connecticut Head Coach Geno Auriemma, who always tried to convince her to shoot more. "For Sue it was always like, 'Who can I pass to now?' rather than taking the shot herself," Auriemma noted. "And I wanted her to shoot more because she's a natural scorer who is very difficult to defend because defenders know that while she's a very good shooter, she loves to pass." Bird tried to follow her coach's instructions, but shooting never came as naturally to her as passing and creating scoring opportunities for her teammates. "It's not really a battle," she said of her ongoing struggle with Auriemma. "I think he just wants certain things out of me so it'll help the team. It's not that I'm against that. It goes against some of my personality traits. I'm definitely willing to chip in and do whatever I need to do and fill a role. He's still going to get mad at me if I pass up a shot but I think I've been doing a much better job."

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she loves to pass."*

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Part of the secret of the Lady Huskies' success was the close relationship that developed among the team's senior starters. Bird shared an off-campus apartment with the three other members of her recruiting class—Swin Cash, Asjha Jones, and Tamika Williams. Bird learned a great deal from her African-American roommates. "Coming to college and rooming with someone of another race gave me a different view of what people have to go through," Bird noted. Her teammates also talked about that

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“When you're in high school thinking about college, you have all these ideas about how your career is going to play out and all these fantasies. I did have high expectations. What's happened this year, what's happened in my career, has outdone what I thought.”

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learning experience. As Swin Cash explained, “The biggest thing she's learned from me is just that there's another side to the world,” Cash said. “Where I come from—growing up in public housing and seeing drugs and alcohol and things she may not have experienced—I think it helps her to understand how society looks at people like me. I think it has helped her understand what it's like being African-American in the here and now.”

Thanks in part to the bond among the four senior starters, UConn exceeded all expectations in 2002. The Lady Huskies finished the season with a perfect 39-0 record to match the best season ever in NCAA women's basketball (set by Tennessee in 1998). They led the nation in scoring average with 87.7 points per game, and

set a new NCAA record by holding opponents to an average of 50 points per game. In fact, only one opponent ever came within 10 points of defeating the Lady Huskies all year.

UConn defeated the Tennessee Lady Volunteers by a score of 79-56 in the semifinals of the NCAA tournament. Bird scored 18 points in that game, which was attended by the largest crowd ever to watch a women's basketball game. Then the Lady Huskies went on to face second-ranked Oklahoma in the NCAA finals. Though Bird struggled a bit early in the game, she nailed six straight free throws down the stretch to help ice the victory, 82-70. UConn thus became only the fourth team in NCAA history to go undefeated and claim the championship. Bird averaged a team-high 18.5 points during the season-ending tournament.



Tamika Williams (left), Diana Taurasi (center), and Sue Bird celebrate their win against Oklahoma in the NCAA Final Four championship, March 2002.

Bird completed her college career with a total of 1,378 points, 585 assists, and 243 steals. Her career averages were 11.7 points and 5.0 assists per game. She left UConn as the school's all-time career leader in three-point shooting percentage (45.9) and free throw percentage (89.2), and also set a school record for most assists in a season (231 during her senior year). The Lady Huskies posted an amazing record of 114-4 with Bird in the lineup.

Looking back on her days with UConn, Bird admitted that her college basketball career had unfolded in an even more spectacular fashion than she had hoped. "When you're in high school thinking about college, you have all these ideas about how your career is going to play out and all these fantasies," she noted. "I did have high expectations. What's happened this year, what's happened in my career, has outdone what I thought."

At the end of her senior year, Bird received many postseason awards in recognition of her individual performance and her contributions to her

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Bird felt reluctant to leave her college teammates.

"Sometimes I find myself sitting in the locker room like a dork just thinking about how teams in the WNBA are probably not as close as we are," she explained. "How they don't eat pregame meals together and things like that.

I'm going to miss how we just hang out here. I'm going to miss that the most."

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team's remarkable season. She earned her third consecutive Nancy Lieberman-Cline National Point Guard of the Year award, for example, and was named Big East Conference Player of the Year. She also was named a Kodak All-American and the Naismith Player of the Year. To top off her outstanding college career, she received the Honda Award and the Wade Trophy. Bird accepted all of these honors with humility, always sharing credit with her coaches, teammates, and family. "When you have teammates who are just as talented as you are, it's kind of weird to get all the attention," she said.

WNBA — The Seattle Storm

Upon graduating from UConn in 2002, Bird planned to begin a career as a professional basketball player in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), which plays in the

summer. Although she looked forward to joining the WNBA, she also felt reluctant to leave her college teammates. "Sometimes I find myself sitting in the locker room like a dork just thinking about how teams in the WNBA are probably not as close as we are," she explained. "How they don't eat pregame meals together and things like that. I'm going to miss how we just hang out here. I'm going to miss that the most."

Bird was selected as the first overall pick in the 2002 WNBA draft by the Seattle Storm. She thus became the only guard ever taken with the top pick in the draft. "Point guards like her don't come along very often," said Storm Coach Lin Dunn. "She has great court vision and surprisingly good



The University of Connecticut placed four players in the first six picks of the 2002 WNBA draft. From left to right: Tamika Williams, Sue Bird, Swin Cash, and Asjha Jones.

speed and quickness. She can score, pass, and handle the ball, and she can lead. Her presence on the floor makes everybody better." Bird's starting salary with the Storm was \$57,500, but she was expected to make ten times that amount through endorsement contracts.

Bird was excited that her fellow seniors from the Lady Huskies were also selected high in the draft. In fact, UConn dominated the 2002 WNBA draft the way they had dominated the NCAA, with four players among the first six picks. Cash was selected second overall by the Detroit Shock, Jones was taken fourth overall by the Washington Mystics, and Williams went sixth overall to the Minnesota Lynx.

Perhaps the biggest adjustment Bird had to make upon entering the WNBA was playing for a losing team. The Storm had posted a 10-22 record in 2001, and it had notched a dismal overall record of 16-48 during its first two years of existence. Bird was not accustomed to losing. She had lost only three games during her high school career with Christ the King, and only four games during her career at UConn—a total of seven losses in six years. Some observers pointed out that she could lose that many games in a month as a member of the Storm. "I personally really, really, really don't like to lose, so that's probably going to be a problem," Bird admitted.

In the first game of her professional career, Bird scored 18 points and dished out six assists. But she also committed five turnovers as she struggled to adjust to the greater size and quickness of WNBA players. "I thought at times Sue looked like a rookie and at times she looked like an all-pro player," Dunn said afterward. "She did some good things for us offensively and was able to get us some big buckets, but she can't have five turnovers." Though she initially struggled on the court, Bird made an immediate impact on the Storm with her star power. Her charm and positive

attitude made her an instant favorite among fans, and her team saw a surge in ticket and merchandise sales as soon as she took the floor.

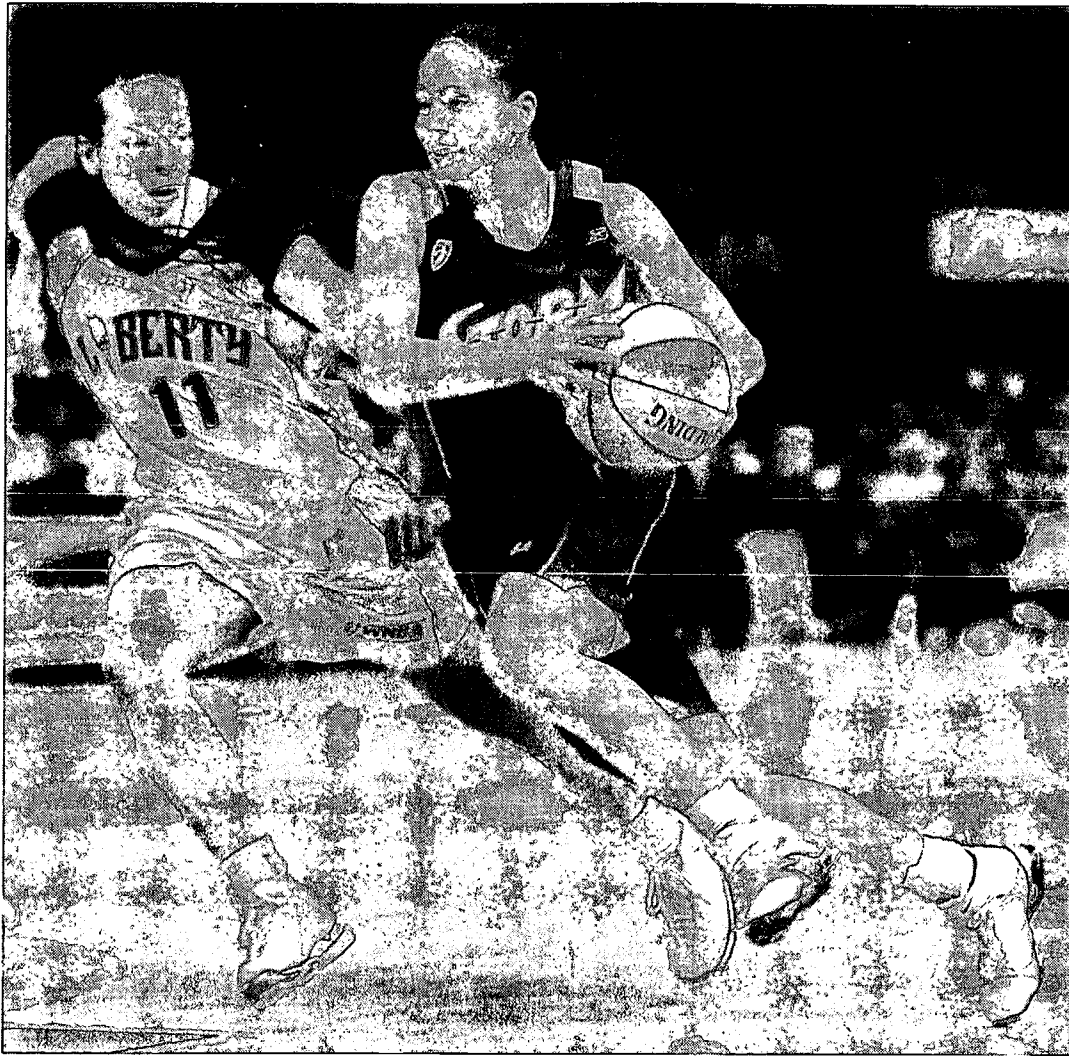
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*"She's the best," said
Christ the King Coach
Bob Mackey. "Adults love her
because basically they want
to see their kids grow up like
her. Kids love her. Players
look to her. Sue always has
it together. She's the
complete package."*

Bird improved steadily over the course of her rookie season. In August she scored a franchise-record 33 points against the Portland Fire to help her team make the playoffs. The Storm finished the 2002 season with a 17-15 record, which earned them fourth place in the Western Conference and the first playoff appearance in team history. Bird averaged 14.4 points and 6.0 assists during her rookie season. She was named to the All-WNBA Team and was runner-up in voting for the WNBA Rookie of the Year award.

Although the Storm lost to the Los Angeles Sparks in the first round of the playoffs, Bird had led the team to a remarkable turnaround. "As disappointing as it is, I see the future and there is a lot of promise in it," she stated. "This was still a successful season because we got into the playoffs."

NWBL — The Springfield Spirit

When the WNBA season concluded, Bird signed a contract to play winter basketball with the Springfield Spirit of the National Women's Basketball League (NWBL). This relatively new six-team league offered top WNBA players a chance to play professionally in the United States rather than in Europe during the off-season. The Springfield Spirit featured several former UConn players, including Rebecca Lobo, Kara Wolters, and Rita Williams. Bird's college roommate, Swin Cash, also joined the team in 2002. The Spirit hoped that the addition of Bird and Cash would help the team improve on its last-place finish of 2001.



Bird drives past Teresa Witherspoon in this game between the Seattle Storm and the New York Liberty, July 2002.

Bird also became a member of the USA Basketball women's team, which represented the United States in international competitions, including the Olympics. She was the youngest member of the American team that went 9-0 and won a gold medal at the World Championships in China in 2002. Barring injury, Bird is expected to become the starting point guard for Team USA at the 2004 Olympic Games.

In recognition of Bird's outstanding year—which saw her lead teams to an NCAA championship, a world championship, and the WNBA playoffs—she was honored as the 2002 Sportswoman of the Year in the team category by the Women's Sports Foundation. People who knew her lined up to offer praise for her accomplishments on the court, as well as her leadership qualities off the court. "She's the best," said Christ the King Coach Bob

Mackey. "Adults love her because basically they want to see their kids grow up like her. Kids love her. Players look to her. Sue always has it together. She's the complete package."

HOME AND FAMILY

Bird, who is single, remains close to her family. Her mother attended all of her home basketball games when she played for Connecticut, and her sister made it to many games as well. Her father moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, after the divorce, but he traveled to see her play in the NCAA tournament and also watched several WNBA contests.

People often ask whether Sue Bird is related to former NBA star Larry Bird. The two basketball players are not related, though Sue sometimes teases fans by making up an elaborate story about a family connection between herself and the Boston Celtics legend. "I tell them he's my half-uncle," she admitted. "I'll make up a total story about how my grandfather, on my dad's side, was married to Larry Bird's mother and they had Larry. Then, my grandfather and Larry Bird's mother got divorced and my grandfather remarried and had my dad. It really gets them going, but he's not my uncle. I wish, though, but he's not."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

In her free time, Bird enjoys hanging out with friends, listening to music, and watching movies. She has a remarkable memory for movie dialogue and can come up with a quote to fit almost any occasion. She also claims that she can recall the score and virtually every moment of every basketball game in which she has ever played.

HONORS AND AWARDS

AAU All-American: 1997
New York State High School Player of the Year: 1997-98
New York State High School Tournament MVP: 1997-98
High School All-American (*Parade*): 1998
Nancy Lieberman-Cline National Point Guard of the Year: 2000, 2001, 2002
ESPN National Point Guard of the Year: 2001, 2002
All-Big East Conference: 2001, 2002
Big East Conference Player of the Year: 2002
Kodak All-American: 2002
Honda Award: 2002
Naismith Player of the Year: 2002
Wade Trophy (National Association of Girls and Women in Sport): 2002

National Women's Player of the Year: 2002
 ESPY Award: 2002, Top Female College Athlete of the Year
 WNBA All-Star Team: 2002
 All-WNBA First Team: 2002
 Sportswoman of the Year, Team Category (Women's Sports Foundation):
 2002
 Women's Basketball World Championship: 2002, gold medal (as member
 of Team USA)

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ADDRESS

Sue Bird
 National Women's Basketball League
 P.O. Box 1361
 La Jolla, CA 92038

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Fabiola da Silva 1979-

Brazilian Professional Aggressive In-Line Skater
Winner of Six Gold Medals in the X Games

BIRTH

Fabiola (pronounced fab-ee-OH-lah) Oliveria Samoes da Silva was born on June 18, 1979, in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Brazil is the largest country on the continent of South America, and her hometown is a major city located near its Atlantic Coast. Her father, Ernesto, made a living by selling lottery tickets, while her mother, Claudette, worked as a housekeeper. Da Silva has

a younger sister, Fabiana, who is also an outstanding athlete. In 1997, Fabiana won a gold medal in the 1,500-meter event at the Pan-American Games junior track and field championships. Da Silva grew up speaking Portuguese, and she later learned to speak English.

YOUTH

Although da Silva's family did not have much money, she had an enjoyable childhood. "Growing up in Brazil was fun," she recalled. "My parents worked hard and tried to give us the best they could. My sister and I learned pretty much how to do everything. We were very independent." Da Silva spent as much time as possible playing outdoors. She was a tomboy who liked swimming, volleyball, basketball, and skateboarding. "When I was little I always liked to play with the boys," she noted. "They had more fun toys than the girls."

Da Silva took up kickboxing at the age of 12. She was good enough to become the junior regional champion in her weight class within a year. But when an opponent broke her nose during a practice match, she decided to look for another sport. It was around this time that da Silva received her first pair of in-line skates.

She had enjoyed skating with traditional roller-skates for several years. When her mother saw how much Fabiola liked skating, she saved up money from her housekeeping job to buy her some in-line skates. These skates cost the equivalent of \$500 in American money.

After making the transition to in-line skates, da Silva found that they were much easier to maneuver than her old roller-skates. "When I first tried it out I felt weird and uncoordinated," she remembered. "It took me a while to feel comfortable, but after that I picked it up real quick." Da Silva started hanging around at a skate park called Rollerbrothers in Sao Paulo, where local teenaged boys went to practice doing tricks on their skateboards and in-line skates. Although da Silva was one of the only girls at the park, she quickly learned to perform tricks and stunts like the boys. "It looked cool, so I started doing it," she said. Before long, da Silva joined the other kids in forming teams and putting on amateur shows and competitions.

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As she grew more interested in skating, da Silva began watching videotapes of the world's best skaters. She would replay their tricks over and over until she figured out how to do them. In 1995 two American superstars of professional skating, Chris Edwards and Arlo Eisenberg, visited Sao Paulo to put on a demonstration for the local skaters. "After they did their stuff, I got to skate a bit with them," da Silva recalled. "They really liked to see a girl skating out there! Afterwards, they asked me for my address, but I thought they were just being nice and that I wouldn't hear from them again."

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"I would love to go to school but I travel so much that I don't have time for it. I would like to be a vet but I know I would have to choose study or skating. Skating is my life and it's what makes me happy. So I'll keep skating until my body can't take it no more and then in the future I'll go to school. I know school will always be there and skating is not forever."

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A few months later, however, da Silva received an invitation from the American skaters' sponsors to come to the United States to participate in a competition sponsored by the Aggressive Skaters Association (ASA). She was thrilled to make her first journey to America. "I was so excited," she remembered. "Everything was so cool. I kept saying, 'Wow, everyone speaks English. Wow, I'm in the USA. Wow, all these people can skate.'" The unknown 17-year-old girl from Brazil amazed onlookers by capturing first place in the "vert" competition at the 1996 ASA World Tour event in Miami, Florida.

In the vert (short for vertical ramp) competition, skaters glide back and forth through an 11-foot-tall, U-shaped tube called a halfpipe. They gain speed on the downward ramps and perform tricks at the top of the upward ramps. Skaters are judged on

the difficulty, performance, flow, and style of their tricks. Competitors usually perform between 15 and 19 tricks within the 50-second time limit.

Da Silva thrilled the crowd at her first organized competition by sailing five to six feet in the air above the halfpipe and performing tricks that only the best male skaters would dare to try. She completed two 360-degree spins, an invert (a handstand performed on the coping at the upper edge of the halfpipe), and a backflip. When she finished, all the professional skaters who had been watching rushed over to congratulate her. "It was

my favorite moment of skating," she remembered. "Everyone was coming up to me and telling me they liked me. They said, 'Oh, you're good. You are so good.' It made me feel good inside."

EDUCATION

After winning the first competition she entered in the United States, da Silva knew she had the talent to be a professional aggressive in-line skater. But her mother insisted that she complete her education first. For the first two years of her career, da Silva lived with her family in Brazil, went to school, and traveled five times per year to skating competitions around the world. She graduated from Goaquin Leme Prado in Sao Paulo—the equivalent of an American high school—in 1998.

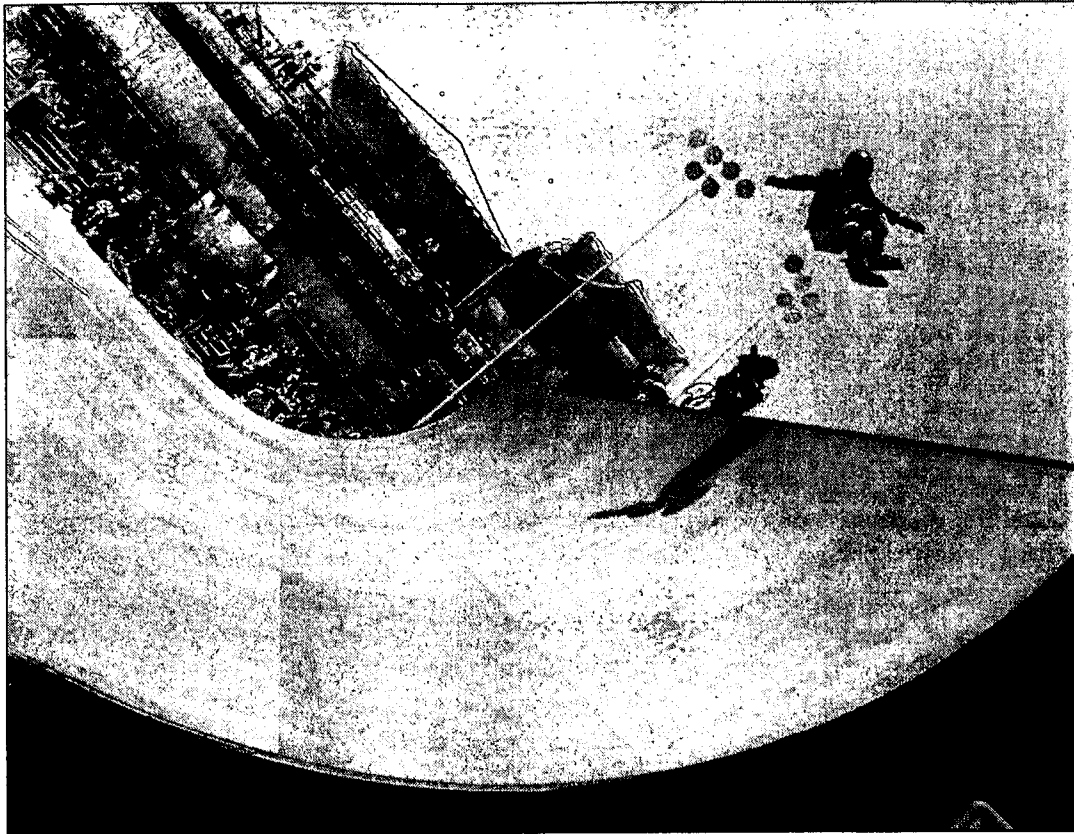
Da Silva plans to attend college when her skating career is over. "I would love to go to school but I travel so much that I don't have time for it," she explained. "I would like to be a vet but I know I would have to choose study or skating. Skating is my life and it's what makes me happy. So I'll keep skating until my body can't take it no more and then in the future I'll go to school. I know school will always be there and skating is not forever."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Winning Gold Medals at the X Games

Da Silva's surprise victory in Miami in 1996 earned her a sponsorship deal with Rollerblade, one of the leading manufacturers of in-line skates. Rollerblade paid for her travel expenses and gave her free equipment, and she competed professionally as a member of the Rollerblade Riders team. "I had no idea they would pay you money to skate," she said after receiving her sponsorship. Da Silva won a second ASA event in Queens, New York, and then appeared at the 1996 X Games in Newport, Rhode Island.

The X Games are sometimes called the Olympics of alternative or extreme sports. The annual event features sports like skateboarding, wakeboarding, street luge, speed climbing, and motocross. Athletes from around the world compete in a variety of events for medals and prize money. It attracts thousands of spectators as well as a national television audience. Da Silva continued her successful rookie season by claiming a gold medal at the X Games in the women's vert competition. She accomplished this feat even though she and her coach were not informed that the time of her event had been changed. Without having a chance to warm up beforehand, da Silva performed a flawless, high-flying routine.



Da Silva competing in the final round of the women's aggressive vertical in-line skating at the 1997 X Games. Da Silva went on to win the event.

Da Silva earned a second consecutive X Games gold medal in the women's vert competition in 1997, and she claimed a third straight gold medal in 1998. After graduating from high school in Brazil that year, she moved to Santa Rosa, California. She felt that living in the United States would benefit her career by bringing her closer to professional in-line skating events, sponsors, and fans. "One of the reasons I moved to the United States was to learn English better, so I could speak to all my fans, especially the kids, about the lifestyle of skating," explained da Silva, who grew up speaking Portuguese.

As a three-time champion, da Silva was the favorite in the women's vert competition at the 1999 X Games. Many people were surprised when she lost in the finals to Ayumi Kawasaki of Japan. But da Silva took the loss in stride and vowed to use the experience to her advantage. "There's been so much pressure on my back for three years," she admitted. "It's good if you don't win all the time and take a little break. Then you can get yourself right and come back stronger. That's my thinking. That's what I'm going to do."

True to her word, da Silva came back with a spectacular routine to reclaim the women's vert gold medal at the 2000 X Games. She performed a 720 (two full rotations in the air) and a flatspin (a handstand spin with the body parallel to the ground) to defeat Kawasaki by half a point in the finals. "I think the way I put tricks together worked," she said afterward. Then da Silva went on to capture gold in the women's park competition at the X Games. In the aggressive in-line skating events known as park or street competitions, skaters have 65 seconds to make their way through an obstacle course filled with benches, rails, and ramps. They make use of the obstacles to perform between 10 and 17 tricks, which are judged on their difficulty and flow. Da Silva capped off her outstanding 2000 season by winning the ASA World Championship in the women's vert event.

Competing against the Men

During the 2001 season, da Silva was the top-ranked female skater in the ASA for both street and vert events. She won the women's vert competition at the X Games once again in 2001 to claim her sixth gold medal. Unfortunately, she and her rival Kawasaki were the only women to qualify for the competition.

Though highly popular among men, the vert event did not attract many women skaters. Some women felt that it was too difficult to master or too dangerous, and they generally preferred the street or park competition. "I am not discriminating against girls," da Silva noted. "But sometimes girls say, 'Oh, I can't do that. I'm a girl.' I hate it when they say that. I want to *die* when they say that." Other women simply recognized that da Silva was so dominant in the vert that the best they could hope for was second place. The X Games ended up dropping the women's vert event from its schedule for 2002, and the ASA eliminated the women's vert competition that year as well. At this point, da Silva had claimed the ASA World Championship in women's vert three years in a row.

Da Silva was disappointed that her best event was being eliminated from the ASA Pro Tour and the X Games. But the cancellation of women's vert did not end da Silva's days of competition. Two years earlier the ASA had made a special rule, often called the "Fabiola Rule," that allowed her to

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compete in the men's vert. "You don't get motivated if you don't have somebody to push you," she acknowledged at that time. "With guys, you can't just put something easy together." Once the Fabiola Rule was put in place in 2000, da Silva competed in the men's vert at scattered regional competitions and often finished in the top 10. In 2001, she and Kawasaki

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"I believe that girls can [compete against men] and I am going to keep skating and trying my hardest. In the beginning it will be hard, but in the future it's going to be good. I'm used to skating with guys most of the time. It's always been that way. To be honest, I don't care what people think, and I don't care if I skate with girls or boys. I just want to skate and have fun."

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competed in the men's division as well as the women's division at the X Games, although both women failed to make the finals of the men's vert competition.

In 2002 da Silva had no choice but to compete against men full-time in the vert. "I believe that girls can do it and I am going to keep skating and trying my hardest. In the beginning it will be hard, but in the future it's going to be good," she said. "I'm used to skating with guys most of the time. It's always been that way. To be honest, I don't care what people think, and I don't care if I skate with girls or boys. I just want to skate and have fun."

Da Silva proved that she could be competitive in the men's division by finishing third at a 2002 ASA Pro Tour event in Dallas, Texas. She followed this accomplishment by taking second place in men's vert at the 2002 Latin American X Games in Brazil. "I hate when guys say girls can't do things," she stated. "In fact, I'd say that is what pushes me to be better. I just

want to show that girls can do anything they want to." By the end of the 2002 season, da Silva was ranked 15th in the world in vert. She was the only woman included on the list of top competitors.

Da Silva recognized that some men did not appreciate losing to a woman. "Some people get upset, you know, 'cause it's that macho thing," she noted. "But who cares. All the girls are going to feel great." Another advantage to joining the men's division was that it gave da Silva the opportunity to compete for twice as much prize money as was offered in the women's division.



Da Silva skates at the 2002 Mobile Skatepark Series in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Reaching the Top of Her Sport

Da Silva is now widely regarded as the best women's vert skater in the world. She is also one of the most visible and respected athletes—among men or women—in her sport. In her home country of Brazil, she is known by her first name alone, like many of the country's top professional soccer players. Her fans around the world call her "Fab."

Despite her widespread popularity, however, da Silva remains humble and often tries to downplay her impact on in-line skating. "I don't want people to think of me as a big head," she explained. "It is so ugly on people, having a big head. You should be simple. I'm not like Michael Jordan. I'm just like everybody else."

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"I care about the way I carry myself. Kids look up to me. I try to stay in shape and keep my body good for anything that I do. No drinks or anything like that. I try to stay as healthy as I can. I work out and skate every day."

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Da Silva feels that being a well-known athlete gives her a responsibility to be a role model for young fans. "I care about the way I carry myself. Kids look up to me," she noted. "I try to stay in shape and keep my body good for anything that I do. No drinks or anything like that. I try to stay as healthy as I can. I work out and skate every day." Da Silva has earned a reputation as a fair competitor who is always willing to share her tricks. "I like helping everyone," she said. "I don't like to hide my tricks. We should all try and help each other, because then we can have a great competition."

Da Silva plans to continue competing for another 10 years. She hopes that her influence will help attract more girls to the sport. "I just want to enjoy skating, try to push my sport, and get more girls involved," she stated. "And boys, too." Da Silva had the following advice for girls who are interested in aggressive in-line skating: "Make sure you wear all of your pads. Don't look at it as a 'guy sport.' If you feel comfortable, go out there and have fun. Do what makes you happy. It doesn't matter what it is."

HOME AND FAMILY

Da Silva, who is not married, lives in a townhouse in a quiet neighborhood in Santa Rosa, California. She shares her home with her dog, a Yorkshire



Da Silva on the half-pipe, 2002.

terrier named Chaci. Da Silva indulges her feminine side by sleeping in a large, princess-canopy bed.

Da Silva remains close to her family, although she does not see them as often as she would like. Early in her career, her mother used to accompany her as she traveled to competitions around the world. She eventually used

some of her winnings as a professional in-line skater to buy her parents a beach house in Brazil. "My parents are real supportive in anything that I do," she said. "They love Rollerblading and they motivate me to do it more and more."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

In her spare time, Da Silva enjoys shopping, sleeping, and going to the beach. "I go to the beach a lot," she noted. "Mareias, in Brazil, is just

beautiful—clean water, lots of trees, nice sand. Not many people go there, only the ones who live in the little town. It's almost deserted."

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Da Silva had the following advice for girls who are interested in aggressive in-line skating:

"Make sure you wear all of your pads. Don't look at it as a 'guy sport.' If you feel comfortable, go out there and have fun. Do what makes you happy. It doesn't matter what it is."

Da Silva has signed endorsement deals with a number of companies, including Rollerblade, Mountain Dew, The Gap, Cornnuts, 50/50 Frames, Levis, and Harbinger pads. She has also allowed her likeness to be used in several video games. Overall, Da Silva earns about \$70,000 per year in sponsorship and prize money, which gives her a higher annual salary than her parents combined. "I could have never dreamed of being where I am today," she stated. "One day I was in Brazil skating and today I have this good, lucky life. It's like I won the lottery."

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HONORS AND AWARDS

ASA World Championships, Vert: 1996, first place; 1999, first place; 2000, first place; 2001, first place

ASA World Championships, Street: 1997, first place; 1999, third place; 2000, second place; 2001, second place

X Games, Vert: 1996, gold medal; 1997, gold medal; 1998, gold medal; 1999, silver medal; 2000, gold medal; 2001, gold medal

X Games, Park: 2000, gold medal

Gravity Games, Street: 1999, first place; 2000, second place; 2001, second place

Gravity Games, Vert: 1999, first place; 2000, first place; 2001, second place

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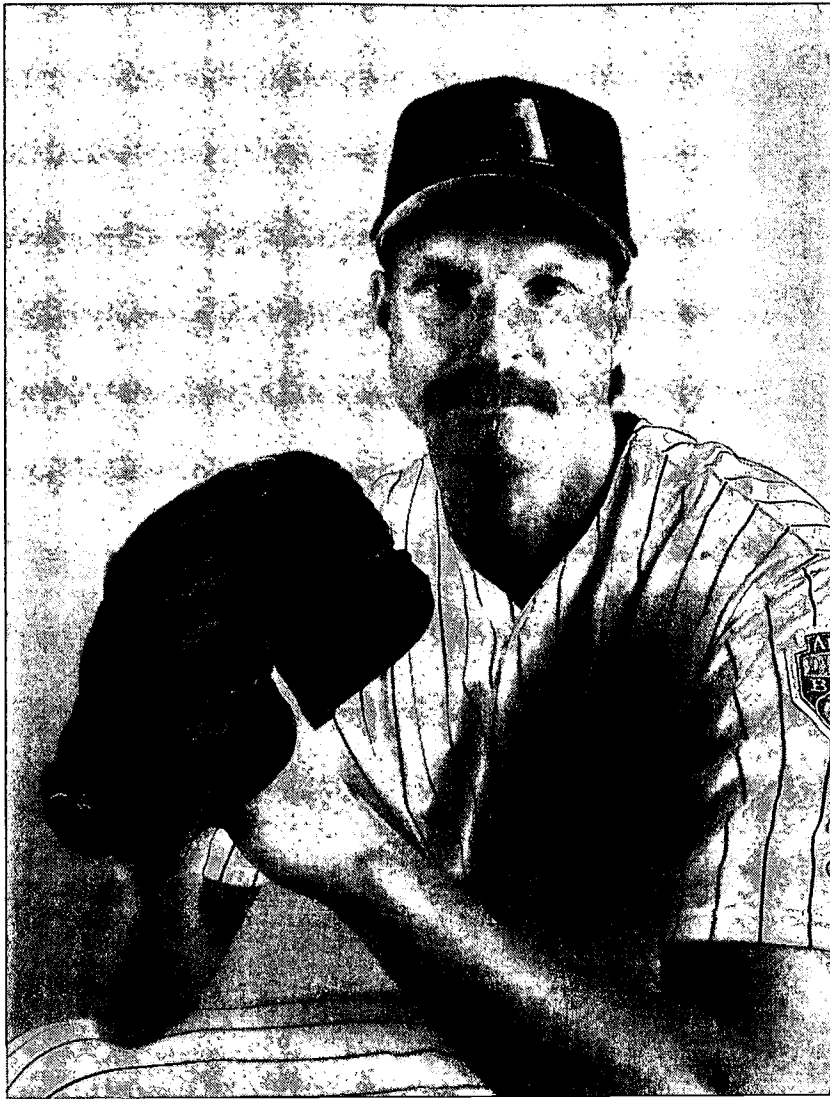
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ADDRESS

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WORLD WIDE WEB SITES

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Randy Johnson 1963-

American Professional Baseball Player with the
Arizona Diamondbacks
Five-Time Winner of the Cy Young Award
Co-MVP of the 2001 World Series

BIRTH

Randall David Johnson, known to his friends as Randy and to baseball fans as "The Big Unit," was born on September 10, 1963, in Walnut Creek, California. He was the youngest of six children born to Rollen "Bud" Johnson, a police officer, and Carol Johnson, a homemaker.

YOUTH

Johnson grew up in Livermore, California, southeast of San Francisco. He was an active boy who enjoyed playing basketball, baseball, and tennis, as well as skateboarding and riding motocross bikes. Always tall for his age, Johnson grew seven inches between the ages of seven and 12 and had reached six feet in height by the time he entered sixth grade. Being so much taller than other kids made him feel self-conscious, especially when he became the subject of teasing. "I used to be a real outgoing person when I was younger," he recalled. "But then I started getting noticed a lot for my height. I felt like I was in a three-ring circus and didn't know how to handle it."

One of Johnson's favorite activities as a boy was playing Little League baseball. As a left-handed pitcher, he tried to copy the style of Vida Blue, a famous left-handed pitcher for the Oakland A's. Johnson practiced pitching for hours at a time by throwing a tennis ball against the door of his family's garage. "I'd get in the street and do my windup, and after I threw the tennis ball at the garage door 70 to 80 times, the nails would start coming loose," he remembered. "My dad would have to hammer them back in." He also played catch with his father, who was an avid softball player.

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Johnson could always throw the ball very hard when he pitched in Little League, but he sometimes had trouble with his aim. This combination led some parents to complain that they did not want him to pitch because they were afraid their children might get hurt. Over time, as Johnson continued to improve, he began to think about making a career for himself in professional baseball. "I wanted to be a police officer because they help and protect people," he noted. "But the more I played baseball, the more I enjoyed it. That's when I started working really hard at baseball."

EDUCATION

Determined to be known for something other than his height, Johnson fooled around a lot in school and tried to be the class clown. His behavior sometimes affected his studies. "I was in the principal's office a lot because

I was kind of loud in the classroom," he admitted. "The teacher would say, 'You have to go to the principal's office because you're disrupting class.' Maybe I didn't learn as much as I would have liked in school, but that was my fault."

Johnson played baseball, basketball, and tennis at Livermore High School. As a senior, he led the league in scoring as a basketball player and pitched a perfect game (meaning that no opposing players reached base through either hits or walks) as a baseball player. By the time he graduated from high school in 1982, he had reached a height of six feet, nine inches. He

was selected in the third round of the Major League Baseball (MLB) draft by the Atlanta Braves that year, but he decided to attend college instead of signing a pro contract.

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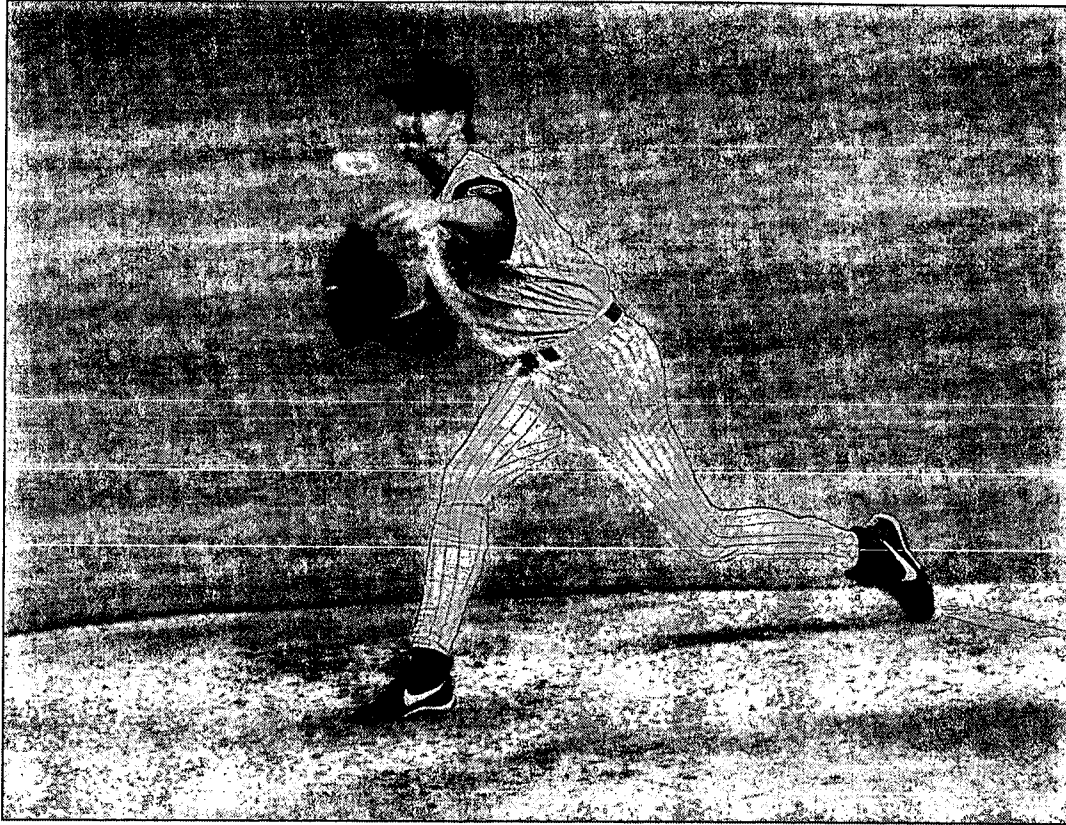
Johnson went to the University of Southern California (USC) on a dual scholarship for basketball and baseball, but he quit basketball after his sophomore year in order to concentrate on baseball. One of his teammates on the USC baseball squad was future MLB home run champion Mark McGwire. Johnson posted a record of 16-12 (16 wins and 12 losses) over three seasons as a college

pitcher as he continued to struggle with his control. "I was like six-foot-ten and 180 pounds," he remembered. "I threw hard, but I'd usually hit the backstop about every other pitch." In June 1985, at the end of his junior year, he was selected in the second round of the MLB draft by the Montreal Expos. This time, Johnson decided that he was ready to play pro baseball.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

The Majors — Montreal Expos

Like most young players, Johnson spent his first few years in the minor leagues. In baseball, some players start their professional careers in the major leagues. But many more start playing for a team in the minor leagues, also called the farm system. The teams in the minor leagues are affiliated with those in the major leagues. There are a variety of minor leagues, which are ranked according to the level of competition. The top or



best league is Class AAA (called Triple A), next is Class AA, then Class A, then below that are the rookie leagues. Players hope to move up through the system to a Class AAA team and then to the major leagues.

Johnson started out with the Expos' Class A team in Jamestown, New York, then moved to the AA team in Jacksonville, Florida, before moving up to the AAA team in Indianapolis, Indiana. Throughout these years, Johnson gained a reputation as a moody and emotional player who struggled to control both his fastball and his temper. Still self-conscious about his height, he became annoyed when public-address announcers would introduce him as the tallest player in baseball, or when photographers would ask him to pose for pictures with the shortest player on the opposing team. He was easily flustered on the mound, too, and had a tendency to turn small mistakes into bigger ones. "When I was younger and inexperienced, I was a very animated pitcher," he explained. "I pitched with a lot of adrenaline. I was my own worst enemy when things weren't going well."

In 1988, a group of Montreal scouts came to watch Johnson pitch in Indianapolis. They were looking for young players to promote to the big leagues. Unfortunately, Johnson was hit in the wrist of his pitching hand with a line drive and had to leave the game early. Frustrated at missing his

chance to impress the scouts, he smashed his right hand into the bat rack in the dugout. His left wrist turned out to be fine, but his right hand was broken. "Something had to give, and the bat rack was plywood three inches thick," he noted. This incident convinced the Expos to establish the Randy Johnson Rule, which allowed the team to fine players who hurt themselves in anger.

Despite the injury, Johnson posted a record of 8-7 with a 3.26 earned-run average (ERA—the average number of earned runs given up by a pitcher per nine innings) in 1988, which was good enough to earn him a promotion to the big leagues in the fall of that year. He thus became the tallest player in MLB history at six feet, ten inches. More importantly to Johnson, he went 3-2 with a 2.42 ERA with the Expos and earned a spot in the team's starting rotation for the following season. Unfortunately, Johnson did not last long as a starter for Montreal. He lost the first seven games he pitched and posted a dismal 6.67 ERA. He suffered from a lack of control that caused him to walk too many batters. As a result, he was sent back to the minor leagues for the remainder of the year.

Traded to the Seattle Mariners

In 1989, Johnson was traded to the Seattle Mariners. He played his first game for the Mariners in May of that year and defeated the New York Yankees by a score of 3-2. He went on to finish the season with a 7-9 record and a 4.40 ERA. Although his statistics were not particularly impressive, many people started to take notice of the velocity of the young lefty's pitches. During the 1990 season, Johnson improved to 14-11 and made the MLB All-Star team for the first time in his career. But the best moment of the season came in June, when Johnson pitched the first no-hitter ever by a Mariners hurler during a game against the Detroit Tigers. Johnson could not wait to call his parents afterward and tell them about his accomplishment. "I talked to my mom, she was crying," he remembered. "My dad, my biggest critic, wanted to know why I walked six."

Johnson became a solid performer for the Mariners, winning 13 games in 1991 and 12 games in 1992. He threw as hard as anyone in the majors and led the league in strikeouts during the 1992 season with 241. But he continued to have trouble controlling his pitches and also led the league in walks for the third consecutive year with 144.

Johnson also struggled to control his emotions, often showing fits of temper or sulking over bad calls. When he was not pitching, he acted as if he did not take the game seriously. He often clowning around on the bench and played practical jokes on teammates. He once wore a Conehead cos-

tume in the dugout, for example, and he once waved to the crowd with a fake arm that then fell out of his sleeve. Finally, Johnson continued to be sensitive about his height and the attention it brought him. "I'm known more for my height than my pitching," he stated. "It's like I'm a freak, a sideshow act. I suppose it's not rude to ask me how tall I am; people just want to know. But if you were 300 pounds and people kept asking how much you weighed, would you like it?"

Improving Consistency with the Help of a Legend

By the 1992 season, Johnson had become so frustrated with his lack of control that he considered quitting baseball. "I had a million dollar arm, but I wasn't thinking enough about how to be a pitcher," he remembered. In August of that year, however, he met with Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan and Ryan's former pitching coach Tom House. (For more information on Ryan, see *Biography Today*, Oct. 1992, and Update in the 1993 Annual Cumulation.) Ryan gave Johnson valuable advice about dealing with the pressures of being a big-league pitcher. "Nolan said he saw a lot of himself in me — an unproven pitcher who had shined sporadically," he recalled. "Nolan walked a lot of guys in his career, and he told me how he dealt with it. It was really beneficial."

In the meantime, House helped Johnson correct a tiny flaw in his pitching mechanics that was affecting his consistency. "Tom noticed I was landing on the heel of my foot and spinning off toward third base," Johnson explained. "As a result, my arm dropped, I was wide open, I became a sidearm pitcher and was inconsistent with my release point and location." Making small changes in his pitching style and his attitude on the mound made a huge difference in Johnson's performance. "I owe everything to Nolan and Tom," he stated. "Because of them, I now consistently throw the ball in the strike zone, I walk fewer guys, and I strike out more guys."

In December 1992, Johnson's father died of heart disease. "After he passed away, I seriously thought about giving up baseball," Johnson recalled. "Baseball meant so little. I enjoyed the thrill of telling my dad how good I

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Johnson warms up before pitching for the Seattle Mariners, April 1996.

was on a given night. When he passed away, I realized I had no one to call. Part of me had died too." Instead of quitting, however, Johnson decided to honor his father by becoming the best ballplayer he could possibly be. The loss of his father gave Johnson new perspective on what was important in

life. He became a born-again Christian and started donating ten percent of his salary to charity. He also inscribed a cross and the word "Dad" on the palm of his baseball glove for inspiration. From that time on, Johnson approached his job with new confidence and maturity. "My heart got bigger," he stated. "Determination can take you a long way. After my dad died I was convinced I could get through anything."

Emerging as One of the Best Pitchers in Baseball

When the 1993 season began, Mariners fans saw a new and improved Johnson. Up to that point in his career, his win-loss record was a mediocre 49-48 and he had led the American League in walks for three straight seasons. But over the next nine years he would post an amazing 151-53 record. In 1993, Johnson led the major leagues in strikeouts for a second time with 308 in 255 innings, while walking only 99. He posted a 19-8 record that year with a 3.24 ERA. He made his second All-Star team and pitched two scoreless innings. "My teammates now come up and ask when I'm pitching, instead of asking when I'm throwing," he noted. "I think there's a big difference between someone who tries to go in there and strike everybody out instead of being a pitcher and thinking about the entire game."

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"After [my dad] passed away, I seriously thought about giving up baseball. Baseball meant so little. I enjoyed the thrill of telling my dad how good I was on a given night. When he passed away, I realized I had no one to call. Part of me had died too."

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In 1994—with the season shortened due to a players' strike—Johnson became the Mariners' all-time leader in victories. He compiled a 13-5 record with a 3.19 ERA, led the league in strikeouts for the third straight year with 204 in 172 innings, and made his third appearance in the All-Star Game. Johnson was even more impressive in 1995. He went 18-2 for the year to set a new American League record for winning percentage, and he posted a 2.48 ERA. He also earned his fourth consecutive major-league strikeout title with 294 in 214 innings. His rate of 12.35 strikeouts per nine innings pitched broke the major-league record set by Nolan Ryan. Johnson was the starting pitcher for the All-Star Game, and he won the American League Cy Young Award—the award given annually to the top pitcher in each league.

"I can look you in the eye and tell you I have never enjoyed playing baseball more than I do now," Johnson said during his phenomenal 1995 season. "Not in Little League, not in high school, not in college. The word potential used to hang over me like a cloud. People would say, 'What kind of game are we going to get today?' Now I'm content. Right now I'm enjoying every aspect of my life."

More important than his individual accomplishments, Johnson led the Mariners to the playoffs for the first time in the team's history. Seattle had trailed the California Angels in the standings by 11 games in August, but they came roaring back to tie on the last day of the season. The two teams played a one-game playoff to determine which one would win the division. Johnson took the mound for this game and pitched a 3-hitter. The Mariners' 9-1 victory gave the team its first-ever division title.

Next, the Mariners faced the New York Yankees in a five-game wild-card playoff series. They lost the first two games, but then won game three with Johnson on the mound. After Seattle won game four to tie the series, Johnson came back on one day's rest to pitch three shutout innings in the deciding game, which the Mariners won 6-5 in extra innings. Seattle then moved on to the American League Championship Series, where they faced the powerful Cleveland Indians. Johnson won game three for the squad, then came back to pitch again in game six with the Mariners facing elimination. Although the left-handed ace performed well, he was clearly exhausted from the extra work of the playoffs. The Mariners lost 4-0 and were knocked out of the playoffs.

Struggling through Injuries and Trade Rumors

After a 5-0 start, Johnson went on the disabled list with a back injury during the 1996 season. He underwent surgery in August to correct a herniated disk in his back. "There was no guarantee I would be back," he recalled. "I was on an operating table, so weak I couldn't pick up a cup of coffee." Although Johnson missed the remainder of the season, he worked hard to return to his former level of play. He came back strong during the 1997 season, posting a 20-4 record to become the Mariners' first 20-game winner. He also led the American League in strikeouts per nine innings and was runner-up for the Cy Young Award behind Roger Clemens.

The 1998 season proved to be a difficult one for Johnson. He was scheduled to become a free agent in 1999, and Mariners' management decided that the team could not afford to sign their ace to a new contract. Negotiations between Johnson and the team broke down, and he became the center of a whirlwind of trade rumors. The uncertainty of the situation

affected Johnson's play, and he posted a disappointing 9-10 record with a 4.33 ERA through July. Then the Mariners traded the big left-hander to the Houston Astros, a National League team that was picking up veteran players before the trade deadline in hopes of making it to the World Series. The trade seemed to rejuvenate Johnson, who won his first six starts and ended up 10-1 with a 1.28 ERA. Unfortunately, Johnson could not continue his magic in the playoffs. He was the losing pitcher in game one and game four as Houston was eliminated from the divisional championship.

At the end of the 1998 season, some people suggested that Johnson had intentionally played poorly in Seattle because he was angry with team management. Johnson admitted that the conflict with management had affected his play, but he denied that it was intentional. "People are going to want to know how I could be 9-10 with Seattle and 10-1 with Houston last year," he said. "I'll tell you exactly how I did it. Because I was happy. It's a five-letter word. I was much happier in Houston. I was happy with the environment I was in. I was trying in Seattle. If anyone's ever seen me on the mound, I pitch with a lot of emotion. When you've got an employer screwing with your head, it's kind of tough."

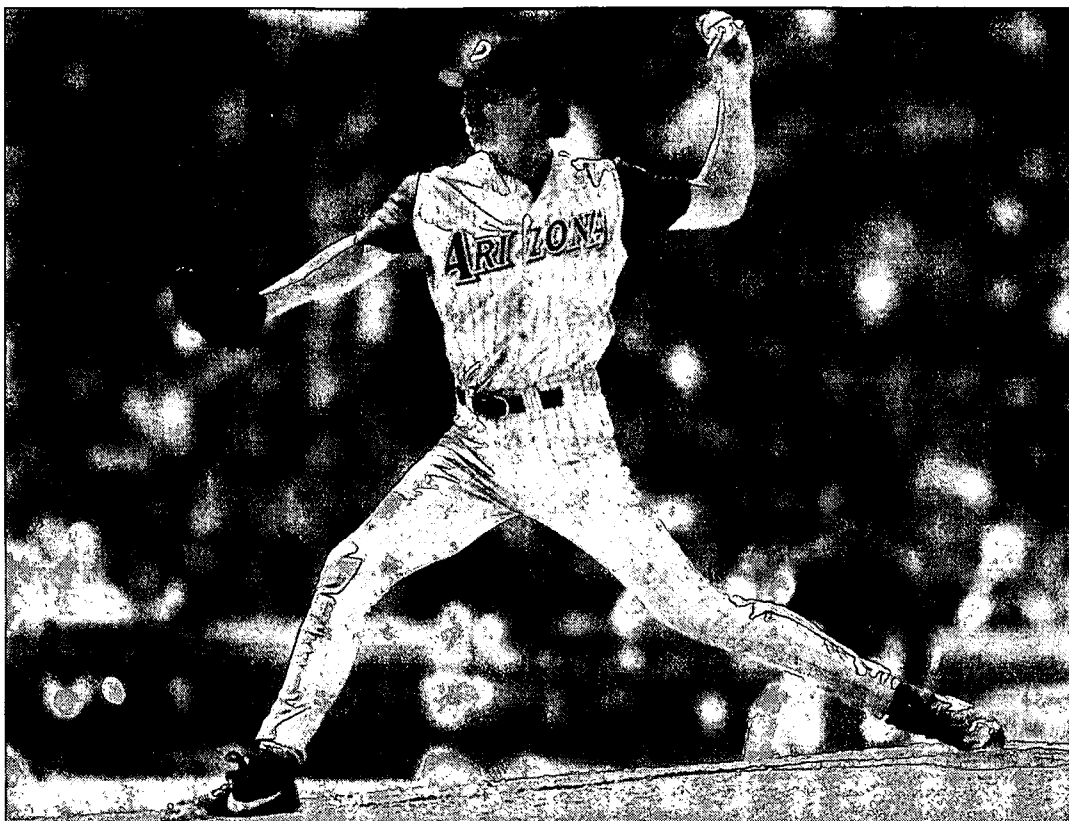
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Joining the Arizona Diamondbacks

Johnson became a free agent before the start of the 1999 season. Many teams were interested in acquiring him, so he had a choice of where to play out the remainder of his career. To the surprise of many baseball fans, he chose to join the Arizona Diamondbacks. The Diamondbacks were an expansion team that had lost 97 games in 1998, which was the team's first year in existence. But during the off-season Arizona acquired several proven veteran free agents, including a whole new starting pitching rotation. Johnson, who owned a home in Glendale, Arizona, signed a four-year contract worth \$53 million to play for the Diamondbacks. "This com-



Johnson pitches for the Arizona Diamondbacks, May 2001.

ing year I'm going to be extremely happy," he stated. "It's pretty special to be part of a community you actually live in as well. I'm excited about that. This is where my home is, it's where I want my family to be, and where I feel I can make the biggest impact of the teams that wanted me to pitch for them."

Johnson continued to dominate with his new team. He posted a 17-9 record during the 1999 season and led the National League with a 2.48 ERA and 364 strikeouts. He came close to reaching Nolan Ryan's record of 383 strikeouts set in 1973. In addition, his ratio of 5.2 strikeouts for every walk was the second-best ever. Johnson's strong performance earned him the National League Cy Young Award, making him only the third pitcher ever to win the coveted award in both leagues. He also led the Diamondbacks to the playoffs, but they were knocked out in the division championship series. Johnson pitched in game one and lost, which meant that he tied the record for most consecutive post-season losses by a pitcher with six.

During the 2000 season, Johnson went 19-7 with a 2.64 ERA. He led the majors in strikeouts yet again with 347, and he became the 12th player in history to reach 3,000 career strikeouts. He tied a record by striking out 20

batters in one game against the Cincinnati Reds in June, and he recorded his 200th career victory in October. To top off his excellent year, Johnson won the Cy Young Award for the second season in a row.

A Spectacular Season

The 2001 season turned out to be the most satisfying of Johnson's career. With the addition of right-handed pitching ace Curt Schilling, the Diamondbacks put together the toughest pitching combination in baseball and went all the way to the World Series. Johnson posted a 21-6 record for the year with a 2.49 ERA. He led the majors in strikeouts for the eighth time with 372. The main difference this time was that Johnson did not have to carry the pitching load alone. His teammate Schilling went 22-6 during the 2001 season with a 2.98 ERA and 293 strikeouts. Johnson and Schilling carried their team, which had a 43-56 record in games when the two stars did not pitch.

In addition to their impressive performances on the mound, Johnson and Schilling became close friends off the field. They played golf together every time the Mariners took a road trip. The loser had to buy a golf shirt at the pro shop, and the winner got to wear it into the clubhouse so their teammates would know who won. Johnson and Schilling pushed each other to perform at a new level all year, but also reduced the pressure of being the lone ace on the pitching staff. "What helped most with Curt was that he's one of the few pitchers who knows the expectations put upon the ace in a rotation of five pitchers. So I can share with him experiences and feelings I couldn't share with anybody," Johnson explained. "I didn't have the burden I'd been carrying for years. I didn't have to come to the ballpark knowing I'd have to win this

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"What helped most with Curt [Schilling] was that he's one of the few pitchers who knows the expectations put upon the ace in a rotation of five pitchers. So I can share with him experiences and feelings I couldn't share with anybody. I didn't have the burden I'd been carrying for years. I didn't have to come to the ballpark knowing I'd have to win this game. I felt like if we were pitching back-to-back games, if I didn't win, he would. And if he didn't, I would."

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game. I felt like if we were pitching back-to-back games, if I didn't win, he would. And if he didn't, I would."

The Diamondbacks rode their two star pitchers into the playoffs, where they defeated the St. Louis Cardinals to win their division. Unfortunately, Johnson lost the game he started, which gave him a seven-game losing streak in the postseason dating back to 1995. But he broke the streak during the National League Championship Series, winning two games to help Arizona eliminate the Atlanta Braves.

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"This is what every player in that clubhouse has waited for," Johnson said about making it to the World Series. "This is everybody's dream, to be here and to be playing the Yankees. It's the biggest stage in sports."

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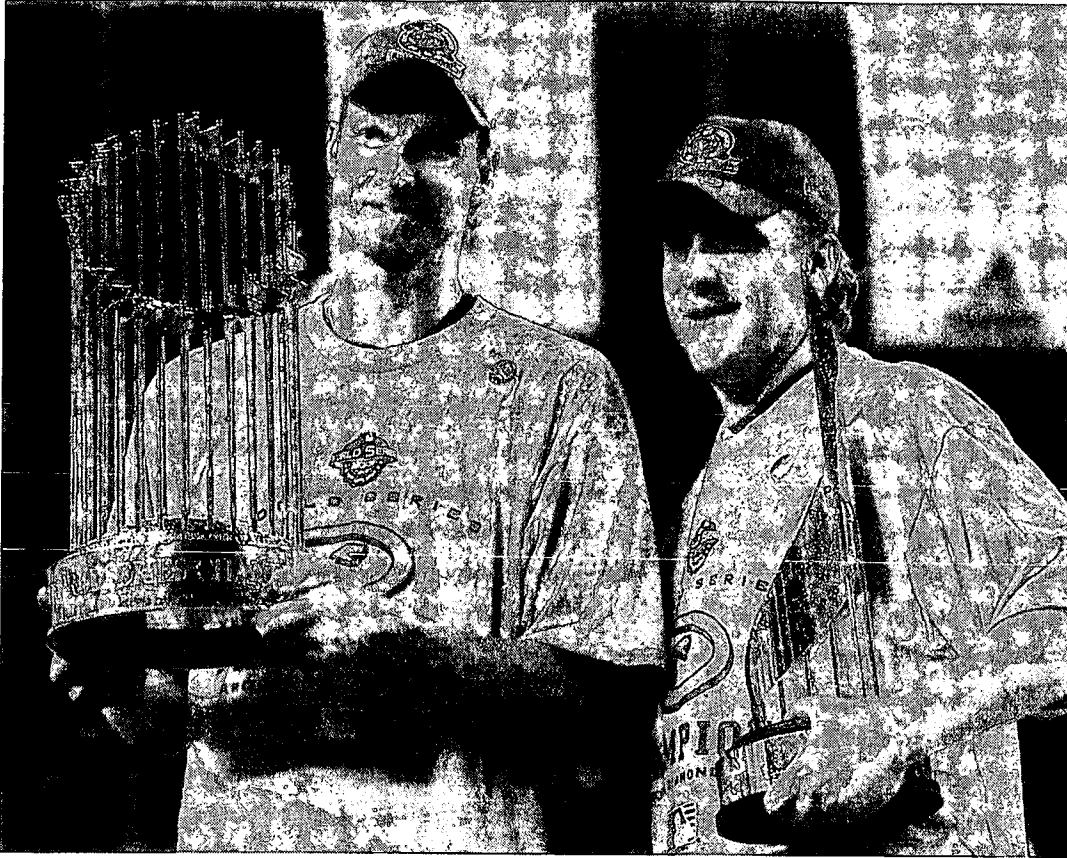
The 2001 World Series

Arizona made it to the World Series faster than any other expansion team. There they faced the three-time defending champions, the mighty New York Yankees. The Yankees were big favorites going into the series, although some experts gave Arizona a chance thanks to Schilling and Johnson. "This is what every player in that clubhouse has waited for," Johnson stated. "This is everybody's dream, to be here and to be playing the Yankees. It's the biggest stage in sports." The Diamondbacks won the first two games on the strength of their aces, with Johnson throwing a three-hit

shutout with 11 strikeouts in game two. But the Yankees came back to win the next three games by one run each. With his team down 3-2 in the series and facing elimination, Johnson won game six by a score of 15-2.

Schilling started the decisive game seven and performed well for seven innings. Then, in an unusual move, Diamondbacks Manager Bob Brenly brought in Johnson as a relief pitcher. "He said all along he's not going to play winter ball, so there's nothing to save it for," Brenly said. Johnson entered the final game with two outs in the eighth inning and his team behind 2-1. He got the next four outs to keep it a one-run game going into the bottom of the ninth. Then the Diamondbacks came back to win 3-2 on a bases-loaded single by Luis Gonzalez. Johnson received credit for the win, giving him three victories in the World Series.

Johnson and Schilling shared the honor of World Series Most Valuable Player. The duo went 4-0 in the World Series with a combined 1.40 ERA.



Johnson (left) and Curt Schilling (right) hold post-game trophies after the Diamondbacks won the World Series. Johnson is holding the World Series Championship team trophy, and Schilling is holding the Most Valuable Player award, which the two pitchers shared.

In fact, the two stars produced 224 of the 297 outs it takes a team to win a world championship through three rounds of playoffs. Afterward, Johnson won his third consecutive National League Cy Young Award. Schilling was the runner-up. "This has been a dream season. Not just because of the Cy Young Award but because another dream was fulfilled," Johnson said. "I know Curt's happy for me. I talked to him earlier today. He was calling me today to thank me for getting him to this next level where he's at. I thought that was the most flattering comment I've received to this point in my career."

Johnson noted that the World Championship meant more to him than a whole trophy case full of individual honors. "If you are not at the pinnacle of your profession, the Super Bowl, the NBA Championship, World Series, you kind of feel short on your career," he explained. "I felt that way last year when I received my Cy Young Award. I still felt like I was not a complete player because I had not been to the World Series. I had some indi-



Johnson's release.

vidual accomplishments, but this is a team game, and it takes 25 guys to get to the World Series.”

In the 2002 season, Johnson continued his string of fine regular-season performances. He posted a 24-5 record with 334 strikeouts and a 2.32 ERA, topping the National League in all three categories. At the end of the season, he claimed his fourth consecutive National League Cy Young Award. Johnson thus became only the second pitcher in major-league history to win four straight Cy Young Awards, and he tied the record of five career awards set by Roger Clemens. The Diamondbacks finished the 2002 season with a 98-64 record to win their division, but they were swept in the first round of the playoffs by the St. Louis Cardinals. Johnson pitched in game one and allowed five runs in six innings.

In March 2003, Johnson renegotiated his contract with the Arizona Diamondbacks. He signed a new two-year extension to his contract worth \$33 million. That brings the total value of the deal he originally signed to almost \$65 million. Johnson's contract is the most lucrative annual deal for a baseball pitcher. But since he has earned a World Series trophy and five Cy Young Awards, including consecutive awards in the last four years, many agree he's worth it.

The Most Intimidating Pitcher of His Era

The Big Unit is widely considered to be one of the most intimidating pitchers of his era. His career statistics through the 2002 season—224 wins, a 3.06 ERA, and five Cy Young Awards—speak for themselves. Johnson has also struck out 3,746 batters in his career, and his average of 11.21 strikeouts per nine innings is the best in major-league history. “I’m always trying to work on my control and get ahead of hitters,” he stated. “That’s pretty important for any pitcher, just being in control of the game more, dictating what’s happening. I think I have a firm grasp on the majority of that, but there’s always room for improvement.”

Aside from his statistics, however, Johnson’s sheer presence on the mound is enough to intimidate hitters. His size and his unusual windup make it seem as if he is releasing the ball closer to hitters than most other pitchers, plus his fastball has been clocked at up to 100 miles per hour. “I can be a little intimidating when I pitch because I’m so much taller than everybody and I throw hard,” he admitted. “Hitters say it looks like I’m releasing the ball right on top of them.” Johnson has proven to be nearly impossible for left-handed batters to hit. In fact, lefties have chalked up a dismal .197 batting average against him over the course of his career. Many top left-handed hitters schedule their days off when Johnson is pitching so they do not have to face him.

Ever since he turned his game around during the 1992 season, Johnson has gained a new appreciation for his sport and a new acceptance of his height. “Now I know it’s been a gift from God to be this tall and to be left-handed and to have a fastball,” he stated. “I really have a great life. I’m playing a sport I love and get grossly overpaid doing it. I’m not ashamed to say that.” Johnson has learned some important lessons along the way to becoming one of the best pitchers in baseball. “When things don’t go your way, don’t give up,” he tells young fans. “Things haven’t always gone my way. It took me a long time before I was able to throw the ball over the plate. There were times when I was really frustrated. You should always believe in yourself. If you do, your dreams can come true.”

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MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Johnson met his wife, Lisa, at a charity golf tournament. They were married in 1993. The Johnsons have four children: daughters Samantha (born in 1994), Willow (1998), and Alexandria (1999), and son Tanner (1996). They live in Glendale, Arizona, in a home with eight-foot doorways and high counters in order to accommodate Johnson's height.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Johnson has a number of hobbies. He is an accomplished amateur photographer whose work has been displayed in several art exhibitions. He also plays the drums and has had the opportunity to play with a few well-known bands, including Rush, Queensryche, and Soundgarden. Johnson also enjoys listening to music and maintains a collection of between 500 and 600 old records. "The reason I got into collecting vinyl is because there are a lot of bands I grew up listening to that only had one or two successful albums," he explained. "It's hard to find them in compact disc. So you have to get them on vinyl." Finally, Johnson is involved in charity work. He is active in the fight against homelessness and cystic fibrosis, and he also participates in the Make-a-Wish Foundation.

HONORS AND AWARDS

MLB All-Star Team: 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001
Cy Young Award (American League): 1995
Cy Young Award (National League): 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002
Warren Spahn Award as Most Outstanding Left-Handed Pitcher in
Baseball: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002
World Series Co-MVP: 2001 (with Curt Schilling)
Leroy "Satchel" Paige Award for Pitcher of the Year (Negro Leagues
Baseball Museum): 2000, 2001
Co-Sportsman of the Year (*Sports Illustrated*): 2001 (with Curt Schilling)

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Sporting News, July 11, 1994, p.13; Apr. 14, 1997, p.48; Dec. 8, 1997, p.86; Oct. 5, 1998, p.10; Dec. 14, 1998, p.80; May 22, 2000, p.33; Oct. 1, 2001, p.46
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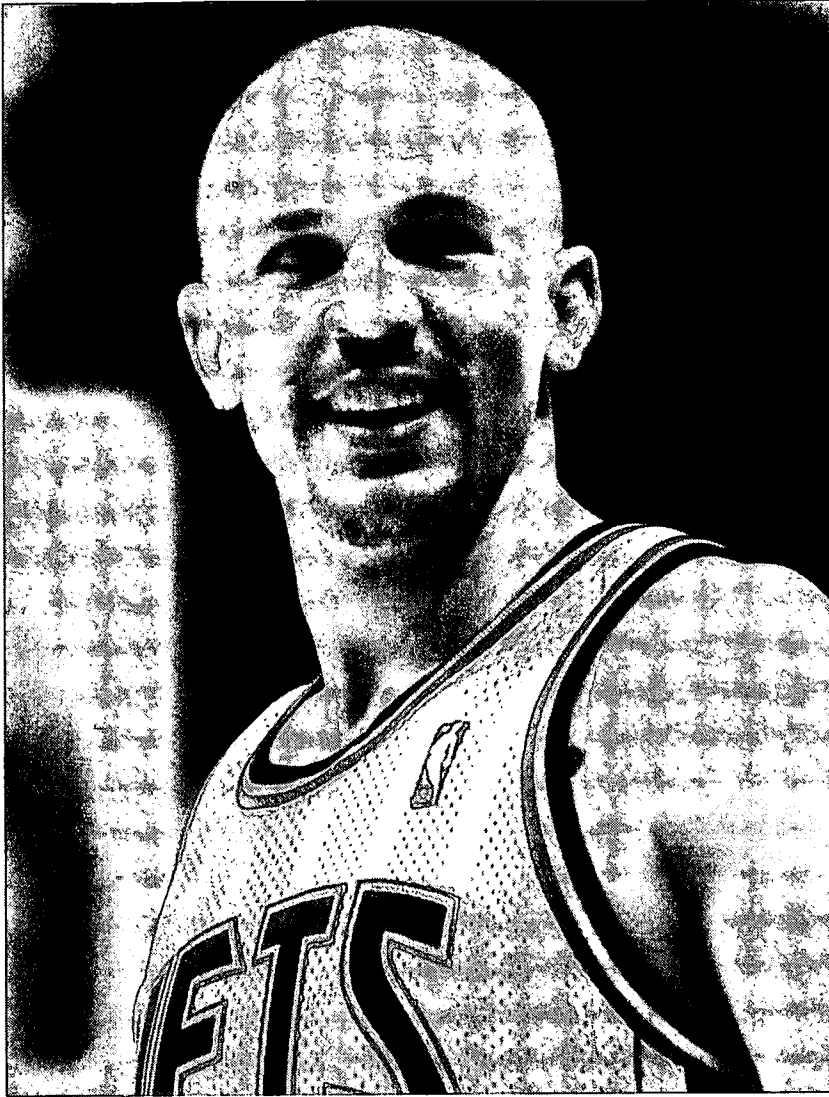
- Biography Resource Center Online*, 2003, article from *Sports Stars*, 2000

ADDRESS

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WORLD WIDE WEB SITES

- <http://diamondbacks.mlb.com>
<http://www.bigleaguers.com>
<http://www.baseball-reference.com/j/jonsra05.shtml>



Jason Kidd 1973-

American Professional Basketball Player with the
New Jersey Nets
Five-Time NBA All-Star
Perennial League Leader in Assists and Triple-Doubles

BIRTH

Jason Frederick Kidd was born on March 23, 1973, in San Francisco, California. His father, Steve, worked as an airline supervisor for TWA. His mother, Anne, worked as a book-keeper for a bank. He has two younger sisters, Denise and Kimberly.

Jason comes from a mixed racial background—his father is African-American, and his mother is white. “I was different from the day I was born,” he stated. “I had two different cultures and two different backgrounds to learn from.”

YOUTH

Kidd grew up as part of a wealthy, close-knit family on a ranch outside of Oakland, California. He was a competitive boy who loved playing sports. He started out playing soccer, which was his favorite sport until he began playing basketball in the fourth grade. He stood out immediately on the basketball court. During his first year, he led his Catholic league team to a major victory, scoring 21 of the team’s 30 points.

Kidd perfected his game on the asphalt courts in Oakland’s playgrounds. It was there that he was “schooled” by NBA All-Star Gary Payton. “I used to beat up on him to make him tough,” Payton recalled. “He used to go home and tell his mother. But he’d come back every day and do something different to stop me from what I was doing to him.”

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“I was different from the day I was born,” Kidd said about his mixed racial heritage. “I had two different cultures and two different backgrounds to learn from.”

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Kidd learned early on that the best way to be liked by the other players was to help them score baskets. Older boys often chose him to play on their teams because he passed the ball to them and made them look good. “Everybody wanted to score baskets,” he noted. “I would get picked [for teams] a lot because they knew I wouldn’t shoot.” He practiced aiming his passes by throwing the ball at flies on a wall beside his house.

Neighborhood players also appreciated Kidd’s fierce competitive spirit. In the sixth grade, for example, he charged right over a mailbox while playing in a neighborhood Thanksgiving football game. Such toughness is part of the reason he is often described as “a fullback with a basketball.” Kidd’s parents eventually convinced him to give up football. But he continued to play soccer and baseball, excelling at both.

Kidd’s athletic ability always shined the brightest on the basketball court, however. He was so talented, in fact, that he began receiving college recruiting letters before he even started high school. “Everybody started saying how great Jason was,” his father recalled. “We were flattered, but afraid

to accept it. I guess by high school we started believing he might be something special.”

EDUCATION

Kidd attended St. Joseph’s of Notre Dame, a small Catholic high school in Alameda, California. He won the starting point guard position on the Pilots’ varsity basketball team as a freshman. But when he posted poor grades in several of his classes, his parents threatened to pull him off the team. The threat convinced Kidd that he needed to pay more attention to his studies, and from that point on his grades improved.

At the beginning of his high school career, Kidd did not have a strong outside shot. He made up for this weakness with his masterful direction of the team’s offense and his incredible passing abilities. But he also worked with his coach, Frank Laporte, to develop a reliable outside jump shot. During his freshman year, Kidd tallied 376 points, 263 assists, 278 rebounds, and 157 steals. His impressive statistics helped him earn a number of regional honors as well as the California State Frosh Player of the Year award. Kidd also garnered praise from college coaches like Jerry Tarkanian of the University of Nevada-Los Vegas (UNLV), who called him “the next Magic Johnson,” referring to the legendary Los Angeles Lakers guard.

Kidd continued to excel on the court during his sophomore season, posting 645 points, 320 assists, 297 rebounds, and 168 steals. He was named player of the year for his league and region. By his junior season, Kidd was a renowned high school star. So many people came to watch him play that the Pilots often had to hold home basketball games at the Oakland Coliseum, where the NBA’s Golden State Warriors played. Colleges across the country sent recruiters to watch the young star, and he received numerous scholarship offers. St. Joseph’s took advantage of Kidd’s popularity by marketing a line of sportswear under his name and auctioning signed basketballs. He also had his own trading card.

Prior to Kidd’s junior season, Laporte chose to move the Pilots up a division in order to play against better competition, even though St. Joseph’s had only one-third the enrollment of most Division I schools. Kidd rewarded his coach’s confidence in him by leading the Pilots to the California Division I State Championships in both his junior and senior years. In his junior year, Kidd tallied 754 points, 237 assists, 309 rebounds, and 145 steals in leading his team to a 31-3 record. His performance helped him earn All-American honors from *Street and Smith* and *Parade*—two of the most respected rankings for high school basketball players.

Kidd continued to improve through his senior year, posting 886 points, 345 assists, 258 rebounds, and 249 steals to lead his team to a 32-3 record. He completed his high school career as the sixth all-time leading scorer in California prep history and the new state record holder for career assists with 1,155. His outstanding play earned him the 1992 Naismith Award as the nation's top high school basketball player, and he was also named national player of the year by *USA Today*. But while Kidd's amazing statistics and long list of awards received a great deal of media attention, it was his unselfish play and uncanny ability to feed passes to his teammates that gained the respect of his coaches and fellow players. Everyone agreed that Kidd's graduation from St. Joseph's of Notre Dame in 1992 marked the end of an era at the school.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

College—The University of California Golden Bears

Despite struggling with his college entrance exams, Kidd was recruited heavily by a number of top college basketball programs, including Arizona, Kentucky, Kansas, and Ohio State. Some experts even suggested that he was good enough to skip college and go straight to the NBA. His strong performance during a summer pro-am league in San Francisco—in which he was named most valuable player—proved that he could play at a professional level. "Jason Kidd is the only player I've seen in 32 years of coaching who could possibly skip college and go straight to the NBA," proclaimed University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) Coach Jim Harrick.

Although Kidd initially planned to attend an out-of-state college, he eventually decided to attend the University of California (commonly known as Cal) at the urging of his parents. Even though the university was not known as a basketball powerhouse, Kidd's parents had been impressed with Cal's head coach, Lou Campanelli, and his strong emphasis on academics. In addition, Cal was only a few miles away from Kidd's family

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Kidd learned early on that the best way to be liked by the other players was to help them score baskets.

Older boys often chose him to play on their teams because he passed the ball and made them look good.

"Everybody wanted to score baskets," Kidd noted.

"I would get picked [for teams] a lot because they knew I wouldn't shoot."

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Cal point guard Jason Kidd dribbles the ball up court on a break during the Golden Bears Pac 10 game against the Washington State Cougars, 1993.

home, so he could continue to receive support from his family and friends as he began this new stage in his life. In addition, Kidd had played pick-up games at Cal while in high school and he knew several of the players. As the beginning of the 1992-93 season approached, Kidd expressed confidence that he would be a star at the college level. "I think the transition

from high school to college is not that great for me as it might be for some players," he explained. "Playing with the pro players and college players in the summer, I have an idea of what it's going to take."

The year before Kidd joined the Golden Bears basketball squad, Cal posted a 10-18 record. Some experts predicted that Kidd could turn the team around within two seasons and lead them to the NCAA Final Four. Cal marketed their new star heavily. The team scheduled five home games at the Oakland Coliseum, which had more than twice as much seating capacity as the school's 6,578-seat Harmon Arena.

Despite these high expectations, the season got off to a rocky start. In the middle of Kidd's freshman year, Campanelli was fired amidst controversy. According to rumors, Campanelli had been pressuring his players in a negative and stressful way. But players and their parents denied these allegations. Todd Bozeman, the assistant coach who had recruited Kidd, took over the head coaching job.

As the season progressed, the Bears continued to improve. The squad finished the season with a 21-9 record, earning the Bears an invitation to the NCAA tournament for only the second time in 33 years. Kidd excelled in the 1993 tournament. He hit several game-winning shots, including one against the Duke Blue Devils in the second round of the Midwest Regional. Kidd single-handedly eliminated the two-time defending national champions from the NCAA tournament, and in the process earned himself a spot on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. Cal's surprising tournament run ended in the next round, however, when they lost to the University of Kansas Jayhawks.

Kidd ended his freshman season averaging 13 points, 7.7 assists, 4.9 rebounds per game. He also averaged 3.8 steals per game, which set an NCAA freshman record. Kidd became only the fifth freshman ever to be named to the All Pacific-10 Conference team. He was also named Freshman of the Year by *Sporting News* and *USA Today*. Impressive statistics were not Kidd's only contribution to his team's success, however. His court sense and hustle also helped motivate his teammates to play their best.

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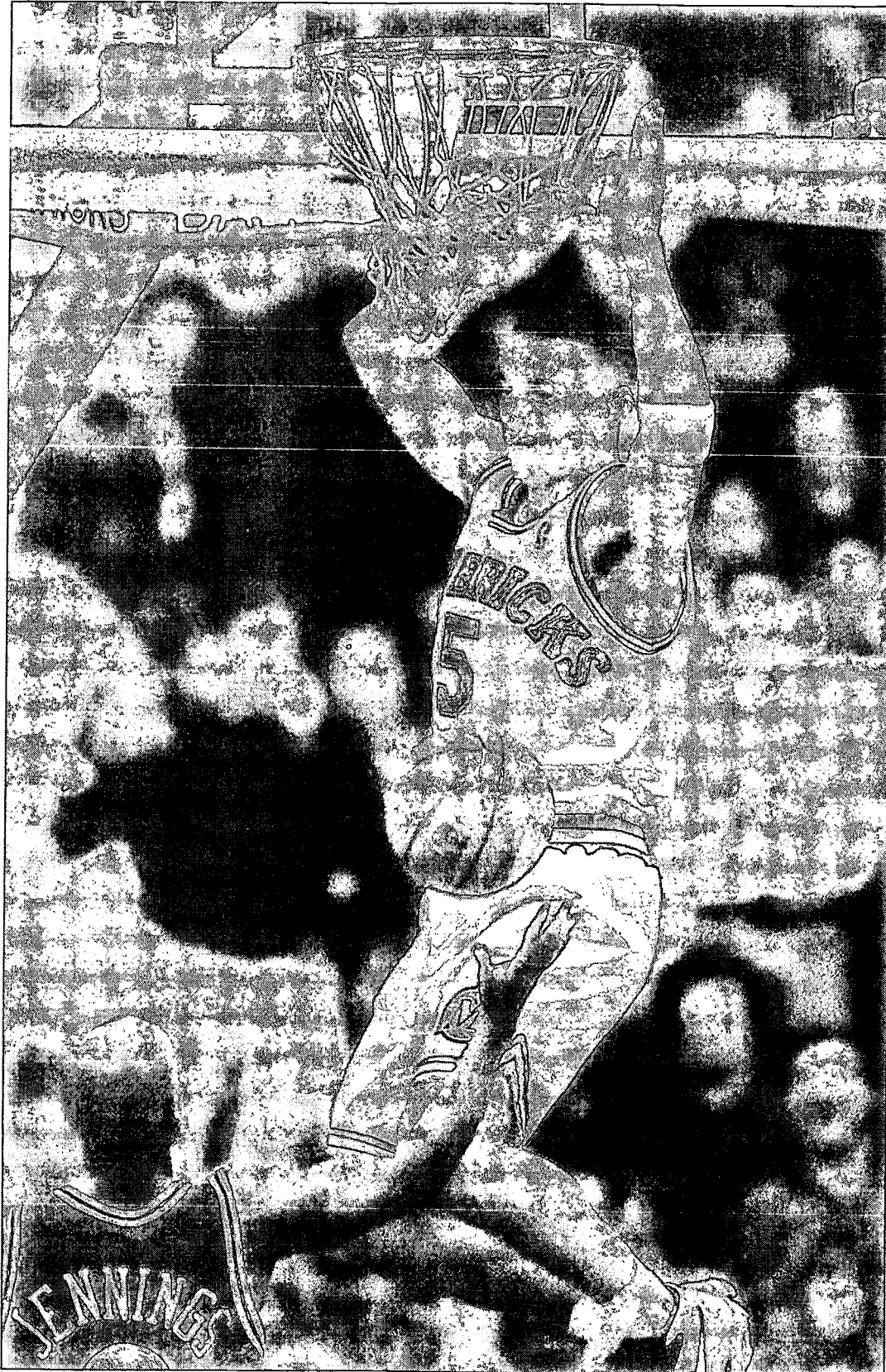
In his sophomore year of college (1993-94), Kidd led the nation in assists. He averaged 16.7 points and 9.1 assists per game, and also set a school record for career steals. Kidd was named a first-team All-American and the Pac-10 Conference Player of the Year — becoming the first sophomore and the first player from the University of California to earn that honor.

NBA — The Dallas Mavericks

Kidd did not return to Cal for his junior and senior years. Instead, he decided to make himself eligible for the 1994 NBA draft. He was selected as the second overall pick in the draft by the Dallas Mavericks—behind Glenn “Big Dog” Robinson of Purdue but ahead of Grant Hill of Duke. Kidd was thrilled to have the opportunity to play for the Mavericks. He had followed the team as a child and had even kept a Mavericks cap in his mother’s car, dreaming that he would someday play in Dallas. He signed a contract worth \$52.4 million over nine years.

Prior to starting his pro career with the Mavericks, though, Kidd had to deal with several legal problems. An airline clerk named Alexandria Brown claimed that Kidd was the father of her son, Jason Jr., born in 1993. Brown filed a paternity suit against Kidd, and he was ordered to pay child support. A young woman named Tameka Tate also sued Kidd for \$250,000 for allegedly hitting and verbally abusing her. Due to conflicting stories from witnesses, however, the judge decided to drop the charges. Then, a month before he started playing for the Mavericks, Kidd left the scene of an auto accident that he was involved in and that he may have caused. He was arrested for speeding and misdemeanor hit-and-run, fined \$1,000, and ordered to serve 100 hours of community service by coaching basketball at the Boys and Girls Clubs. Kidd later claimed that these experiences helped him mature. “When you do something bad, something good can come out of it,” he stated. He received a great deal of negative press during this time, but he helped improve his reception in the Dallas community by making major contributions to charities.

Kidd joined a struggling team in Dallas, just as he had at Cal. In fact, the Mavericks had only managed to win 13 of their 82 games during the 1993-94 season. Kidd provided the team with a badly needed dose of hustle and playmaking ability. In his rookie year he averaged 7.7 assists and 1.9 steals per game, which ranked him in the top 10 in the NBA in both categories. He also posted four triple-double games (games in which he achieved double digits in three statistical categories—usually points, rebounds, and assists), the most in the NBA. Kidd suffered a season-ending ankle injury in February, and his team failed to make the playoffs. The Mavericks still



Dallas Mavericks guard Jason Kidd hangs over Golden State's Keith Jennings after he scored in Dallas, April 1995.

improved significantly over the previous season to finish with a 36-46 record in 1994-95.

Kidd shared Rookie of the Year honors with Grant Hill of the Detroit Pistons, and he was the only unanimous choice to the NBA All-Rookie team. He earned these honors despite the fact that he made only 38 percent of his shots from the field, a low percentage that showed how highly voters regarded his ability to pass off to teammates and to make plays happen. Kidd's outstanding play during his rookie season led many people

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“I will probably always pattern my game after Magic Johnson,” Kidd said about his role model.

“He was a total player. He always had fun on the court but at the same time he took care of business and he made everybody better around him. He brought his team to another level.”

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to compare him to Magic Johnson. The great Los Angeles Lakers guard was Kidd's role model. “I will probably always pattern my game after Magic Johnson,” he stated. “He was a total player. He always had fun on the court but at the same time he took care of business and he made everybody better around him. He brought his team to another level.”

During his second NBA season, Kidd averaged 16.6 points per game and was named to the starting team for the annual All-Star game. But the Mavericks struggled that year and their record dropped to 26-56. Part of the reason for the team's decline could be traced to conflict between Kidd and another young star on the Mavericks, Jimmy Jackson. The two players had trouble getting along

both on and off the court. As a competitive but quiet player, Kidd sometimes had problems communicating with his teammates. In fact, he once went six weeks without speaking to Jackson. Mavericks Coach Jim Clemons tried to make peace between his two stars, but Kidd demanded to be traded.

The Phoenix Suns

In December 1996 the Mavericks traded Kidd to the Phoenix Suns for three other players. “This is for our future,” said Suns Coach Danny Ainge. “Jason Kidd is a franchise player. He's a perennial All-Star. I knew he was unhappy in Dallas, and I think he'll be excited with starting over fresh in a new city. If he can rekindle that fire he had in his first and second years,



Phoenix Suns guard Jason Kidd hits a half-court shot just before the buzzer as Atlanta Hawks guard Jason Terry defends, January 2001.

he'll be a superstar." Although Kidd was sorry to leave Dallas and many good friends, he was excited to join one of the strongest offenses in the NBA. He chose the jersey number 32, which represented the triple-double statistics he hoped would someday become his season averages. Unfortunately, Kidd hurt his shoulder in his very first game in Phoenix and was out for most of the 1996-97 season.

Kidd came back in the 1997-98 season to repeat his feat of posting four triple-doubles, tying Grant Hill for most in the NBA. Making full use of his ballhandling and defensive skills, Kidd led the Suns to the NBA playoffs

with a 56-25 record. Although they lost to the San Antonio Spurs in the first round, Kidd earned a spot as a reserve in the All-Star game that year.

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“I think that you cannot measure what's inside somebody's body, and what I mean by that [is] heart,” Kidd said about his Nets teammates. “These guys, my teammates, have been knocked down, been tortured in their short careers in New Jersey, and we surprised a lot of people.”

Kidd had an amazing season in 1998-99. He achieved seven triple-doubles (out of a total of 18 in the entire league) and averaged 16.9 points and an NBA-best 10.8 assists per game. He was also named the NBA Player of the Month in April. Unfortunately, the Suns again lost in the first round of the playoffs, this time to the Portland Trailblazers.

Kidd started out strong in the 1999-2000 season, but he fractured his left ankle in March. The injury forced him to sit out the last two months of the season and the first three games of the playoffs. He returned in time to

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help the Suns progress past the San Antonio Spurs to the second round of the playoffs, where they faced the Los Angeles Lakers. Although Kidd played well and achieved his first-ever triple-double in a playoff game, the Suns lost the series. His individual statistics remained impressive despite his injury. He led the NBA in triple-doubles with five and in assists with an average of 10.1 per game. He started in the All-Star game and was also honored for his defensive skills, making the All-Defensive Second Team.

In the fall of 2000, Kidd contributed his talents to the U.S. men's basketball team at the Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia. As the starting point guard and one of three captains, he helped Team USA bring home the gold medal.

The 2000-01 season marked the third consecutive year that Kidd led the NBA in assists (averaging 9.8 per game) and triple-doubles (with seven), and he was once again selected to play in the All-Star game. The Suns finished the season with a 51-31 record, but they were knocked out in the first round of the playoffs.

Kidd's off-court legal troubles also returned in 2001, when he was arrested for hitting his wife, Joumana, during an argument. He spent a night in jail, paid a fine, and underwent counseling with a sports psychologist. Kidd expressed remorse for his actions, sending a letter of apology to Suns season-ticket holders and making an apology to fans at mid-court after a home game. He blamed his behavior on career-related stress and the death of his father in 1999 from a heart attack. He also claimed that the arrest had a positive effect on him by helping him learn to communicate better and express his emotions in a more appropriate way. He said that the development of these skills not only improved his home life, but also helped make him a stronger team leader.

The New Jersey Nets

In July 2001, Kidd was traded to the New Jersey Nets. Many observers believed that the Suns decided to trade him because of the negative publicity his behavior had brought to the team. Despite such rumors, however, Kidd received a warm reception in New Jersey. In fact, he was named co-captain of the Nets—a team that had finished 26-56 the previous year and had not posted a winning season since 1997-98.

Kidd set a goal for his new team of winning 40 games in the 2001-02 season. He also promised to lead the Nets to the playoffs. New Jersey shocked many observers by winning seven of their first eight games under Kidd's dazzling on-court leadership, and the team continued to perform above expectations throughout the grueling NBA season. The Nets concluded the season with a 52-30 record, which marked the first time the team had won over 50 games in a season since its entry into the NBA in 1976. The Nets tallied the best record in the Eastern Conference, making them the top-seeded team heading into the 2002 playoffs.

New Jersey had only made it past the first round of the playoffs once before in its franchise history. But powered by Kidd's performance, the Nets progressed all the way to the NBA finals. He was the top scorer for his team in 11 of their 20 playoff games, and he even averaged a triple-double in the conference finals against the Boston Celtics—thus becoming the first player since Magic Johnson in 1983 to achieve triple-double stats in a confer-

ence championship. The Nets were swept in the finals by the defending champion Lakers, but they had come a long way in one season.

Kidd gave his teammates credit for the Nets' surprising run. "I think that you cannot measure what's inside somebody's body, and what I mean by that [is] heart," he stated. "These guys, my teammates, have been knocked down, been tortured in their short careers in New Jersey, and we surprised a lot of people." The 2001-02 campaign also marked Kidd's fifth appearance in the All-Star game of his eight-year career, and he finished second to Tim Duncan of the San Antonio Spurs in voting for the NBA's most valuable player.

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It is Kidd's remarkable passing ability that most distinguishes his play.

"I never talk to him about [his passing]," said Nets Coach Byron Scott.

"It's just like Picasso when he's doing a painting — you don't bother an artist, you let him do his work."

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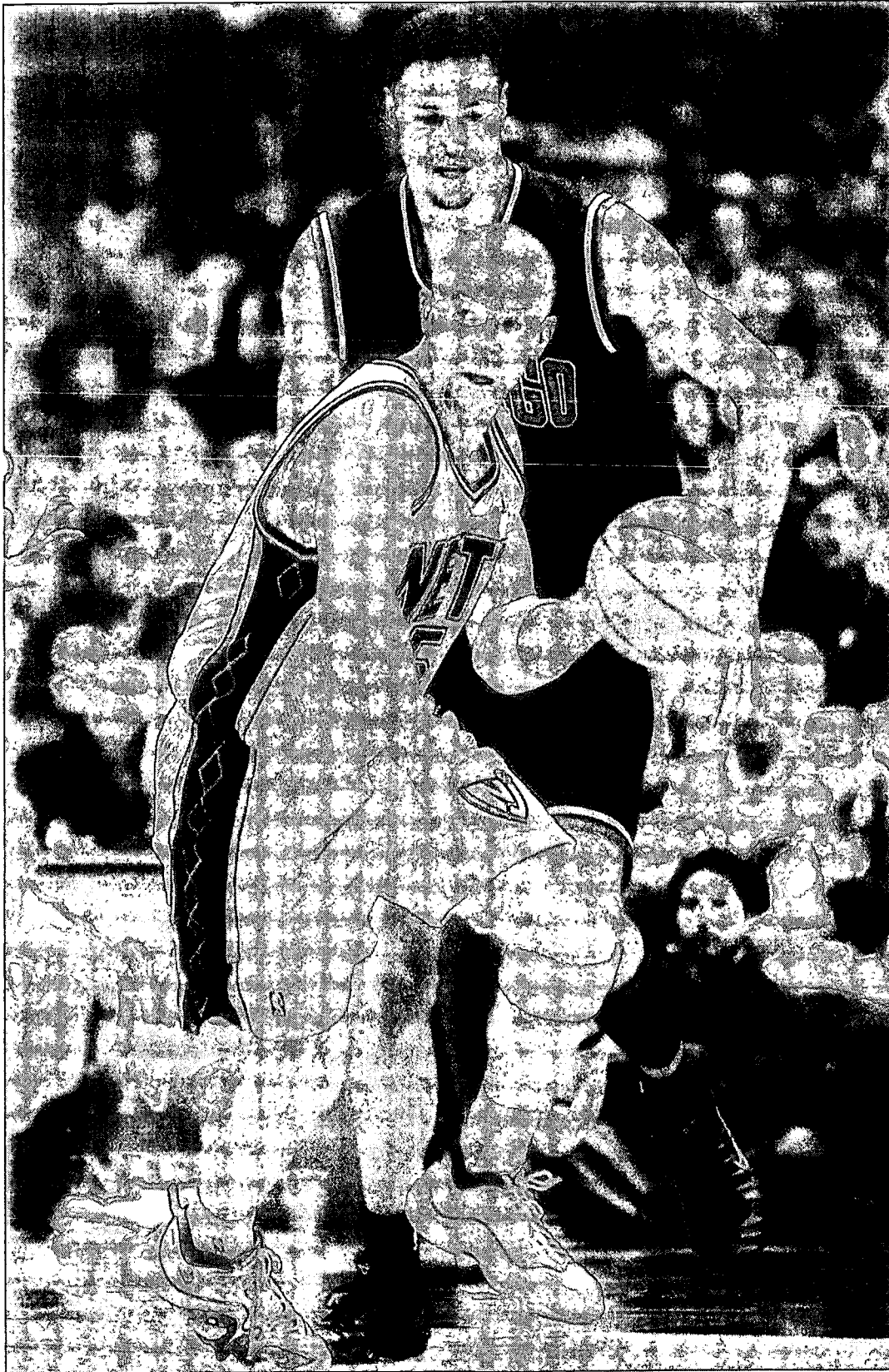
One of the League's Best Point Guards

Today, Kidd is widely considered to be among the best point guards in the NBA. He is acknowledged as a strong all-around player who contributes by scoring, rebounding, and making assists, as well as by blocking shots and making steals. But it is Kidd's remarkable passing ability that most distinguishes his play. "I never talk to him about [his passing]," said Nets Coach Byron Scott. "It's just like Picasso when he's doing a painting — you don't bother an artist, you let him do his work." Rudy Tomjanovich, the head coach of the Houston Rockets who had coached Kidd in the

2000 Olympics, added: "That Kidd's a special player. He gets lost in the game. He's like Magic [Johnson] or [Larry] Bird or the special few who see things that other guys just don't see. He has a knack for making the big plays, and if there's a way to win, Jason Kidd will find it."

Kidd has played for three NBA teams, and all of them have improved their records with him at point guard. He ranks fourth all-time among NBA players in career assist average, at 9.4 per game, and ninth all-time in career steal average, at 2.11 per game. Kidd celebrated his 5,000th career assist in January 2002, and he hopes to beat John Stockton's record of more than 15,000 assists before his career is over.

Kidd plans to opt out of his current contract with the Nets and become a free agent in the summer of 2003. He hopes to stay with the Nets, but he



New Jersey Nets guard Jason Kidd starts the fast break as Chicago Bulls Tyson Chandler looks on, December 2002.

has asked for a seven-year contract worth approximately \$120 million. This amount may not be feasible for the Nets—or any other NBA team—given salary cap restrictions. The Nets have said that they will do everything possible to keep Kidd in New Jersey. The team's best hope for keeping their star player may be to remain a contender for the NBA championship. Toward that end, the Nets acquired several promising players before the 2002-03 season, including seven-foot, two-inch center Dikembe Mutombo.

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“The Nets will be a blueprint for any team out there,” Kidd said about the 2003 team. “If you get a good group of guys who believe in each other and want one another to succeed and not be selfish, and nobody cares who scores the most or who has the winning basket, good things will happen. You’ll see a lot of teams play our style.”

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bo. “I’m not looking to go west,” Kidd noted. “I’m looking to win a championship, and if New Jersey is the window of opportunity, then I have to take full advantage of that.”

During the 2002-03 season Kidd began taking more shots per game, which raised his scoring average to 19.6 points per game but lowered his assists to 8.5 per game. By the beginning of March, the Nets had posted a 38-22 record and were leading their division. “The Nets will be a blueprint for any team out there,” Kidd stated. “If you get a good group of guys who believe in each other and want one another to succeed and not be selfish, and nobody cares who scores the most or who has the winning basket, good things will happen. You’ll see a lot of teams play our style.”

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Kidd met his wife, Joumana Samaha, while he was playing in Phoenix and she was working as a local television reporter. They have a son, Trey (known as T.J.), who was born in 1999, and twin daughters, Miah and Jazelle, born in 2001. Kidd also has another son, Jason Jr., from an earlier relationship, during his college years.

Kidd and his family have lived in Saddle River, New Jersey, since he joined the Nets in 2001. Regarding the well-publicized incident in which he hit his wife, Kidd says that his abusive behavior is a thing of the past and that his marriage is stronger than ever. As his wife Joumana explained, “The important thing is that Jason made a mistake, acknowledged it, and did

everything he could to make it better. We didn't sweep it under the carpet like a lot of people do. He's a role model and people saw him fall. And like one fan said to me, 'It's not how you fall, it's how you get up.'"

Kidd continues to attend counseling voluntarily to help him control his temper and avoid violent outbursts. He says that he no longer allows his career to interfere with his home life. "You can really get caught up in this job," he explained. "Family should always be number one, no matter what your job is. [The incident] helped me put things back in order and see them a lot clearer, not just at home but on the court, too. Any time [your] home is in order, you can do everything else well."

Kidd blows a kiss to his wife before every free throw. The tradition started when Joumana asked him to wave to her on camera when he was at an away game. He thought that would be embarrassing, but he blew her a kiss before shooting a free throw. The kiss has now become part of the ritual he uses to focus his concentration before he shoots.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

In his spare time, Kidd enjoys playing golf and listening to rhythm and blues music. He has also collected baseball cards since he was a child. His most prized possession is his Ken Griffey Jr. card. He also collects basketball memorabilia.

Kidd has been involved in charity work throughout his NBA career. While he played with the Mavericks, for example, he bought 30 season tickets so that underprivileged children could attend games. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Kidd donated 500 tickets for each of New Jersey's home playoff games to police, firefighters, and relatives of the World Trade Center victims. Kidd has also donated money to churches to build basketball courts. Some of his charity work is handled through the Jason Kidd Foundation, which hosts an annual charity golf event, and the Jason Kidd Basketball Scholarship Fund at the University of California.

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"You can really get caught up in this job," Kidd explained. "Family should always be number one, no matter what your job is. [The incident with my wife] helped me put things back in order and see them a lot clearer, not just at home but on the court, too. Any time [your] home is in order, you can do everything else well."

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Kidd is also active in product endorsements. He is the featured player in a new NBA Live video game, models Hugo Boss clothing, and appears in Pepsi and Nike commercials.

HONORS AND AWARDS

California High School Player of the Year: 1992
Naismith Award: 1992
National High School Player of the Year (*Parade*): 1992
National High School Player of the Year (*USA Today*): 1992
McDonald's High School All-American: 1992
NCAA Basketball National Freshman of the Year (*Sporting News*): 1992-93
NCAA Basketball National Freshman of the Year (*USA Today*): 1992-93
All Pacific-10 Conference Selection: 1992-93
Pacific-10 Conference Player of the Year: 1993-94
First Team Collegiate All-American: 1993-94
Schick NBA Rookie of the Year: 1994-95 (with Grant Hill)
NBA All-Rookie First Team: 1994-95
NBA All-Star: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002
First Team All-NBA: 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002
Olympic Men's Basketball: 2000, gold medal as member of Team USA

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Books

James, Brant. *Jason Kidd*, 1997 (juvenile)
Gray, Valerie A. *Jason Kidd: Star Guard*, 2000 (juvenile)
Moore, David. *The Jason Kidd Story*, 1997 (juvenile)
Sports Stars, Series 1-4, 1994-98
Stewart, Mark, and Mike Kennedy. *Kidd Rocks: Rolling with Jason Kidd and the New Jersey Nets*, 2002 (juvenile)
Torres, John Albert. *Sports Great Jason Kidd*, 1998 (juvenile)
Who's Who among African Americans, 2001
Who's Who in America, 2002

Periodicals

Basketball Digest, Feb. 2001, p.32
Bergen County (N.J.) Record, Oct. 25, 2002, p.S1
Current Biography Yearbook, 2002
New York Times, Dec. 26, 2001, p.S1; Feb. 8, 2002, p.D1; Sep. 25, 2002, p.D1;
Apr. 5, 2003, p.S4

San Francisco Chronicle, Mar. 21, 1992, p.D3; Nov. 5, 1992, p.C7; Aug. 15, 1994, p.A15; June 5, 2002, p.C1
Sport, Apr. 1994, p.54
Sporting News, Nov. 20, 1995, p.38; Jan. 6, 1997, p.29
Sports Illustrated, Nov. 22, 1992, p.68; Mar. 21, 1994, p.18; Oct. 3, 1994, p. 47; Nov. 11, 1996, p.94; Dec. 4, 2000, p.62; Jan. 28, 2002, p.58
Sports Illustrated for Kids, Feb. 1, 2000, p.30; Nov. 2002, p.27
Time, June 10, 2002, p.56
USA Today, Nov. 9, 1992, p.C9

Online Database

Biography Resource Center Online, 2003, article from *Sports Stars*, 1994-98

ADDRESS

Jason Kidd
New Jersey Nets
Nets Champion Center
390 Murray Hill Parkway
East Rutherford, NJ 07073

WORLD WIDE WEB SITES

http://www.nba.com/playerfile/jason_kidd
http://www.usabasketball.com/biosmen/jason_kidd_bio.html



Tony Stewart 1971-

American Professional Race Car Driver
2002 NASCAR Winston Cup Champion

BIRTH

Anthony Stewart—known as Tony—was born on May 20, 1971, in Rushville, Indiana. He was named after the legendary race-car driver A.J. (short for Anthony Joseph) Foyt, who won the Indianapolis 500 four times in his career. Tony's father, Nelson, was a traveling salesman, and his mother, Pam, was a receptionist in a doctor's office. Tony's parents divorced when

he was a teenager, though they remained good friends. His mother later married Mike Boas. Tony also has a younger sister, Natalie.

YOUTH

Tony Stewart grew up in Columbus, Indiana, a quiet, middle-class suburb located less than 50 miles from Indianapolis Motor Speedway — site of the annual Indianapolis 500 auto race. His family home had a large garage in the backyard where his father was always tinkering with cars. Nelson Stewart competed in some amateur races as a hobby, and he often took the family to watch short-track races on nearby tracks. From the time he was a baby, Tony shared this interest in cars and racing. For example, he always wanted to look at his father's car magazines instead of picture books.

Throughout his childhood, Tony was attracted to anything with wheels on it. A favorite family photograph shows him sitting on his mother's vacuum cleaner while wearing a mixing bowl on his head as a helmet. As a boy he raced Big Wheels and bicycles against other kids in the neighborhood. Tony also enjoyed staging make-believe races with his toy cars on an oval-shaped, braided rug. "To him, the different braids made lanes; that was his racetrack," his mother recalled. "We'd haul that rug wherever we went, because that thing kept Tony busy for hours."

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Starting to Race

When Tony was five years old, his father bought him a go-kart with an engine. He raced it around the backyard so often that he tore up all the grass. "Tony carved a definite oval into our backyard, and he would just go around and around on that go-kart," his mother remembered. "It wasn't long before we decided he needed to be out on a real track someplace." In 1978, when he was seven years old, Tony drove in his first organized go-kart race at a track in Westport, Indiana. He won his first championship in 1980 in the four-cycle engine rookie junior class at the Columbus Fairgrounds.

Before long, Tony and his father were traveling to races across the Midwest run by the International Karting Federation (IKF) and the World Karting Association (WKA). Although they could not afford the top-of-the-line karts and equipment used by some other teams, they were very successful—thanks to Tony’s driving skill and Nelson’s mechanical ability. Tony won the IKF Grand National Championship in 1983, and he claimed the WKA National Championship in 1987.

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When Tony was five years old, his father bought him a go-kart with an engine. He raced it around the backyard so often that he tore up all the grass. “Tony carved a definite oval into our backyard, and he would just go around and around on that go-kart,” his mother remembered. “It wasn’t long before we decided he needed to be out on a real track someplace.”

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Tony attributes much of his success as a young driver to his father. “He never let me settle for second,” he recalled. “He didn’t like it when we ran second, and he knew that I didn’t like it when we ran second. If he saw that I wasn’t giving 100 percent, then he was on me pretty hard about it. He pushed me to be better. He never pressured me to be the best race car driver in the world, but he did pressure me to be the best race car driver that I could be. . . . That’s probably why you see so much fire in me today, because he always wanted me to be the best that I could be.”

Of course, Tony admits that his relationship with his father was not without conflicts. During his teen years, Tony went through a lazy, goof-around phase where all he wanted to do was hang around with his friends. One day, his parents went to visit relatives and asked him to mow the

lawn while they were gone. When they returned, Nelson was furious to see that Tony had not mowed the lawn and instead spent the day playing baseball. That evening, a friend called to ask Nelson whether he knew of any good karts for sale. Nelson arranged to sell Tony’s kart in order to teach his son a lesson about hard work and responsibility. Tony saw the buyer pick up his kart while he was belatedly mowing the lawn. “Seeing that kart disappear down the street absolutely destroyed me,” he noted. “I finished mowing the yard, but I was literally crying my eyes out the whole time.”

Luckily for Stewart’s racing career, the situation turned out for the best. A few weeks later he was hired to race an enduro kart for a race team.

Enduro karts are also known as laydown karts because of the driver's position in the cockpit. They raced at large, well-known racetracks and went over 100 miles per hour. They provided an excellent training ground for young drivers who hoped to continue moving up through the ranks of auto racing.

Tony's parents divorced when he was in high school. Although he lived with his mother, he continued to go racing every weekend with his father. "Their divorce never stopped either of them from being a strong presence in my life," he noted. "Together or separately, they always provided the right amount of discipline for me." While his parents' divorce was difficult for him at the time, he later acknowledged that it was probably the best thing for everyone concerned.

EDUCATION

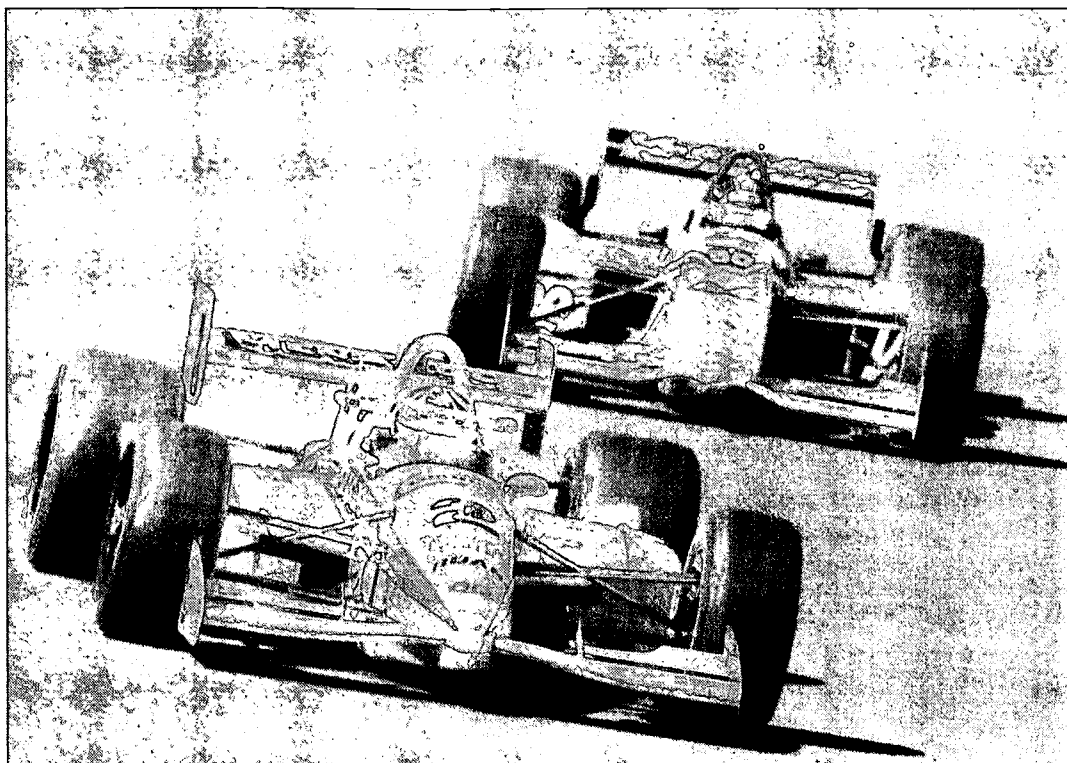
Stewart attended Columbus North High School. When he could make time in his racing schedule, he played trombone in the school's marching band. He graduated from Columbus North High School in 1989.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

After graduating from high school, Stewart moved up to race three-quarter (TQ) midget cars. These open-wheeled machines had more power than karts and usually raced on oval dirt tracks. In 1991 he was given an opportunity to drive sprint cars in a series organized by the United States Auto Club (USAC). He was so successful that he was honored as the USAC Sprint Car rookie of the year.

USAC sanctions races for three divisions of open-wheeled cars—midget, sprint, and Silver Crown. Over the next few years, Stewart was hired to drive cars in all three divisions. This experience helped him to become a more versatile all-around driver. "I [got] an education in racing that you couldn't have bought at any price," he stated. "All these rides took me to every sort of short track there is: dirt tracks, paved tracks, flat tracks, banked tracks, fast tracks, slow tracks. Because of that, I never fell into the common trap that snags so many young drivers: they develop a fixed style which helps them go fast at one type of track, but hurts them at another."

Although Stewart spent a lot of time racing in the early 1990s, he did not earn enough prize money to support himself. He worked at a series of odd jobs to help make ends meet. For example, he worked at McDonald's in Columbus, at a friend's brick plant, and as the go-kart track operator at a family fun center. "It wasn't an easy life in those short-track days," he re-



Stewart (foreground) battles with Robby Gordon (background) during the Indy Racing League Championship at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, September 1996.

called. "I slept in the backseat of my car more than once, too broke even to think about a motel room. I went to racetracks praying I'd win enough gas money to get back home."

In 1993 Stewart earned \$3,500 in prize money at a single race. It was then that he decided to give up his part-time jobs and become a full-time race-car driver. The following year he won the USAC National Midget Championship. In 1995 he made history by winning the national championship in all three USAC divisions. Stewart thus became the first driver ever to hold the midget, sprint, and Silver Crown titles in the same year. In fact, only one other driver — open-wheel legend Pancho Carter — had won all three championships in his career. Winning USAC's Triple Crown required Stewart to compete in 58 national events over a ten-month season, always juggling the schedules of the three classes of races.

Joining the Indy Racing League

Stewart's success in the USAC ranks attracted the attention of John Menard, the owner of a team in the Indy Racing League (IRL). The IRL was founded by Tony George, owner of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway

(home of the Indianapolis 500). George had become involved in a dispute with Championship Auto Racing Teams (CART), the organization that handled Indy Car racing in the United States. He felt that CART's rules had made Indy Car racing so expensive that it was impossible for young, talented American drivers to break into the sport. The popularity of Indy Car racing declined as more and more promising young drivers began racing stock cars in events organized by the National Association of Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR). Stock cars are like those sold in auto showrooms, but with souped-up engines, wide tires, and aerodynamic body work. Stock car racing provided a more affordable alternative to the sleek, high-performance, open-wheeled sports cars used in Indy Car racing. George blamed CART for the decline of Indy Car racing in the United States. He decided to form a new racing league for Indy Cars with the Indianapolis 500 as its centerpiece.

The IRL was created specifically to give young drivers like Stewart an opportunity to race Indy Cars. Stewart began competing for Team Menard during the 1996 IRL season and finished second in the first race he entered. For Stewart, the most exciting part of his rookie season was getting a chance to compete in the Indianapolis 500. "When you grow up an hour away from this place, it's just in your blood," he explained. "Growing up in Indiana, racing here is the biggest thing you can hope for." Stewart qualified second for the 1996 race with an average speed of 233.1 miles per hour. Another Menard driver, Scott Brayton, qualified on the pole (in the first position). Sadly, Brayton was killed in a crash during a practice session. Stewart started the race from the pole position and led 44 of the first 55 laps before falling back after a pit stop. Although he was forced to drop out of the race on lap 82 with engine trouble, he was still named Indianapolis 500 rookie of the year for 1996.

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"[I got] an education in racing that you couldn't have bought at any price,"

Stewart said about his experience driving race cars in all different divisions.

"All these rides took me to every sort of short track there is: dirt tracks, paved tracks, flat tracks, banked tracks, fast tracks, slow tracks. Because of that, I never fell into the common trap that snags so many young drivers: they develop a fixed style which helps them go fast at one type of track, but hurts them at another."

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Stewart went on to claim IRL rookie-of-the-year honors that season. In 1997 he won the IRL championship for Team Menard.

As Stewart continued to demonstrate his driving skills in different types of race cars, he began to attract the attention of NASCAR teams. At this point, Stewart was not certain whether he wanted to race stock cars. For one thing, they were much larger than anything he had ever raced before (midget cars weigh less than 1,000 pounds, for example, while stock cars weigh over 3,000 pounds). In addition, he knew that the NASCAR circuit was highly competitive and that new drivers often had trouble being successful. He ultimately decided to ease into stock-car racing slowly.

Stewart signed a contract with Joe Gibbs Racing, a successful NASCAR team owned by the former coach of the Washington Redskins professional football team. At first he competed in both NASCAR and IRL events. He appeared in five races in the Busch Grand National Series—the second-highest NASCAR division, after the Winston Cup—during the 1997 season while also racing in the IRL. The following year he competed in all 11 IRL events as well as 22 Busch series races. Although Stewart enjoyed racing in both leagues, he knew that he would have to make a choice eventually. “I knew in the back of my mind that sooner or later, there would come a day when something would push me toward one form of racing or the other,” he stated. “Maybe it would be a case of the two schedules having too many conflicts, or maybe I would simply discover that I wasn’t happy enough in one series or the other. But at that point in my life I was doing my best to put that day off as long as I could.”

Competing in the NASCAR Winston Cup Series

In 1999 Joe Gibbs decided that Stewart was ready to move up to the NASCAR Winston Cup series. Stewart left the IRL and committed himself to racing NASCAR, although he made sure that his contract still allowed him to race in the Indianapolis 500. The NASCAR Winston Cup racing season begins in February each year with stock car racing’s most prestigious event, the Daytona 500 in Daytona Beach, Florida. The teams race at tracks around the country almost every weekend through November, for a total of over 30 events.

Throughout the season, the drivers earn points based on their finishing position in races. They also earn bonus points for leading the most laps in a race and a variety of other criteria. At the end of each year, the driver with the most points for the season is named the NASCAR Winston Cup Champion. The Winston Cup championship is recognized as one of the most difficult titles to attain in all of sports. The series features numerous



Stewart works on his car during the Winston 500, part of the NASCAR Winston Cup Series, at Talladega Super Speedway in Alabama, November 1999.

high-caliber teams and drivers, as well as lots of media attention and fan pressure. In addition, Winston Cup drivers must be able to handle a variety of tracks and conditions. For example, some races are held on small, half-mile oval tracks, like Martinsville in Virginia and Bristol in Tennessee.

Other events are held on twisting, asphalt road courses, like Watkins Glen in New York and Sears Point in California. Finally, some races take place on giant super-speedways, like Daytona in Florida and Talladega in Alabama.

Stewart immediately proved that he could compete in the Winston Cup series. The rookie surprised many observers by qualifying in the front row for his first race, the season-opening Daytona 500. He claimed his first victory in September 1999 at Richmond, Virginia, in just his 25th start. He ended up winning two more races that year—in Phoenix, Arizona, and Homestead, Florida—to become the first rookie to win three races in the modern history of NASCAR. Stewart finished the season ranked fourth in the Winston Cup point standings, which was the best finish for a rookie in over 30 years.

Perhaps the most impressive feat of Stewart's 1999 season came on Memorial Day, when he did "double duty" by racing in both the IRL's Indianapolis 500 and NASCAR's Coca-Cola 600 on the same day. After finishing ninth in the Indianapolis 500, he flew to North Carolina by helicopter, jumped into a completely different type of race car, and finished fourth in the Coca-Cola 600. He drove 1,080 miles (he withdrew from the Winston Cup race with 20 miles to go due to handling problems) to become the first driver ever to complete both races in the same day. Afterward, he was taken from his car in an ambulance and treated for dehydration and exhaustion.

During the 2000 Winston Cup season, Stewart proved that his rookie year had not been a fluke by winning a series-high six races. He claimed two victories at Dover in Delaware, and he also won at Michigan, New Hampshire, Martinsville, and Homestead. Unfortunately, his performances the rest of the year were inconsistent, so he could only manage a sixth-place finish in the season point standings.

Stewart had an up-and-down year in 2001. The season began on a tragic note when NASCAR legend Dale Earnhardt was killed during the Daytona 500. "It was hard to come to grips with the fact that the next time we went racing, Dale wouldn't be there," Stewart said later. "I had never seen a Winston Cup race, on television or from the driver's seat, that didn't have Dale in it." Stewart was involved in the multiple-car accident that took Earnhardt's life. In fact, Stewart's crash was the most spectacular part of the wreck. His car flew high into the air and then rolled end-over-end down the track, eventually coming down on the hood of his teammate Bobby Labonte's car. Luckily, Stewart came away with only a concussion and a bruised shoulder. He went on to win three races that year—at

Richmond, Sears Point, and Bristol—and finish second in the Winston Cup point standings. The victory at Richmond in May was the tenth of his career; he achieved that milestone in only 79 starts.

Stewart did “double duty” once again on Memorial Day, 2001. This time, he used a special diet and workout regimen to help him prepare for the grueling day. He ended up finishing sixth in the Indianapolis 500 and third in the Coca-Cola 600. He not only completed all 1,100 miles, but said he was ready to drive a short-track race later that evening. A writer for *Auto Racing Digest* called Stewart’s performance “an almost unrivaled feat of skill, precision, and concentration.”

Earning a Reputation as NASCAR’s “Bad Boy”

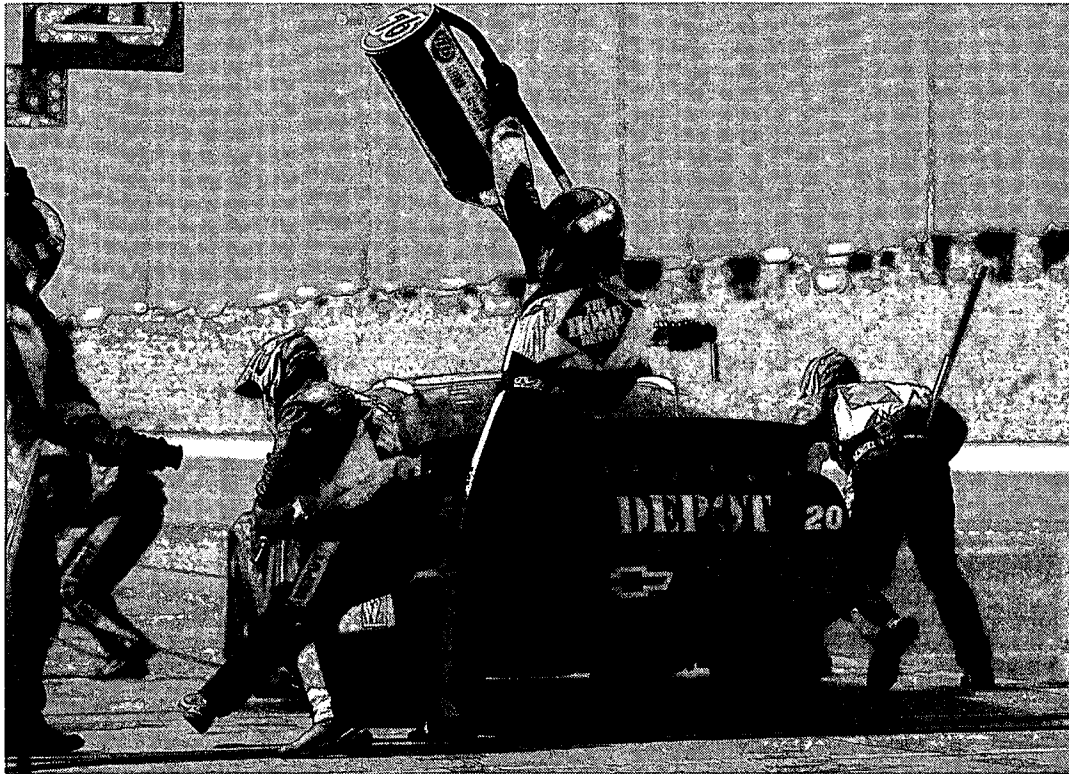
Over the course of his first three Winston Cup seasons, Stewart was involved in several incidents—both on the track and off—that helped him earn a reputation as NASCAR’s “bad boy.” He often had trouble controlling his temper, which he attributed to his passion and intensity about driving race cars. “I can’t help it; when it comes to my racing, I’m intense,” he stated. “Everybody likes to win, and I’m no different. But I guess I’d have to add this: I’m not a good loser. In fact, I’m a bad loser, plain and simple, and I’m not ashamed of that.”

One memorable incident took place during Stewart’s rookie season in 1999. He and fellow driver Kenny Irwin collided several times in the first 150 laps of a 500-lap race at Martinsville. The last collision knocked Stewart’s car into the wall and out of the race. As the remaining cars circled the track slowly under the yellow caution flag, Stewart got out of his car and waited for Irwin to come around. Then he removed the fireproof heel pads from the bottoms of his driving shoes and threw them at Irwin’s windshield. Still angry, Stewart ran over to Irwin’s car, leaned into the passenger-side window, and tried to grab his fellow driver. Stewart received a fine of \$5,000 from NASCAR, and footage of this incident was replayed often on television to demonstrate Stewart’s hot temper.

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Stewart's Chevrolet Monte Carlo (#20) during a pit stop at the NASCAR Winston Cup Series MBNA 500 at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

Another incident took place at Daytona in 2001, during the Winston Cup series' first stop at the track following Earnhardt's death. Track officials put a new safety rule in place that prohibited cars from dropping below the yellow line on the inside of the track in order to pass. Stewart was charging toward the front of the field when he felt he was forced to drop below the line to avoid a collision. NASCAR officials waved a black flag at Stewart, signaling that he was required to pull into the pits as a penalty for breaking the rules. Stewart chose to ignore the flag and finish the race, believing that officials would later review the television footage and see that he had only broken the rules in order to avoid causing an accident. He ended up finishing sixth, but NASCAR penalized him by dropping him to 26th position. After the race, Stewart engaged in a heated argument with NASCAR officials and received a fine of \$10,000. On his way back to his garage, he slapped the tape recorder out of the hand of a reporter who asked him about the incident.

Another high-profile incident occurred at Bristol in 2001. Stewart was running fourth when rival driver Jeff Gordon bumped into his car on the last lap of the race. Stewart spun out and ended up finishing 25th. After the

race ended, Stewart followed Gordon onto the pit road and bumped into his car, causing Gordon to spin out in the pits. This incident earned Stewart another \$10,000 fine and probation from NASCAR. Some members of the media started calling him "Tony the Temper" or "Tony Tantrum" because of his sometimes angry and aggressive behavior on the track.

Stewart added to his bad-boy reputation by making statements that some reporters or fans found insulting. For example, he once remarked that the fans at Talladega were the most obnoxious in all of NASCAR. He claimed that he never meant to offend people, but only tried to be honest in answering questions. "I'm not such a bad guy. Really. I don't enjoy being in the middle of controversy, and I don't like being 'NASCAR's bad boy,' which is a term I hear a lot," he noted. "I've been in hot water occasionally with the media, and with various officials. Sometimes it feels like I've gotten as much notoriety by misbehaving as I have by winning races and championships. I haven't ever looked for trouble, but it sure has seemed to find me."

The 2002 NASCAR Season

The 2002 season started out badly for Stewart. After winning a practice race and finishing second in a qualifying race, he was an early pick to win the Daytona 500. But his engine failed just two laps into the race and he ended up finishing last. This turn of events meant that he started the season ranked 43rd in the Winston Cup point standings. Stewart came back to log two consecutive top-five finishes in the next two events, however, and then recorded a win at Atlanta in March. He went on to claim another victory at Richmond in May.

In August, though, Stewart's temper threatened to ruin what was beginning to seem like a promising season. He was thrilled to qualify on the pole for the Brickyard 400, a NASCAR race held at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. He hoped to win on his home track in front of his family and

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friends. But his car faded as the race went on and he ended up finishing a disappointing 12th. Frustrated and angry, Stewart tried to return to his garage without talking to any reporters. One free-lance photographer began chasing him, and Stewart turned around and punched the man. He received a \$10,000 fine and was placed on probation by NASCAR. The incident embarrassed Stewart's sponsor, Home Depot, which fined him another \$50,000. At this point Stewart decided to seek anger-management counseling. "I need to do something to make it to where I can control my anger better," he stated. "It's obvious over three-and-a-half years, I can't do it on my own, so I'm going to seek professional help and get somebody that can help me learn how to control my emotions."

The week after he punched the photographer, Stewart came back to claim his third victory of the season at Watkins Glen. He turned in consistently strong performances week after week to end up with a total of 15 top-five finishes over the course of the season. By the time the series moved to Talladega in October, Stewart had taken over the lead in the Winston Cup point standings with only six races remaining.

Traditionally, the Winston Cup champion acts as a sort of ambassador for NASCAR during the year of his reign. He is expected to attend press conferences and promotional events, and he is often asked to comment on rule changes and other racing issues. When it became apparent that Stewart might claim the 2002 championship, some people complained that he would not be a good representative for NASCAR. Stewart only added to this impression when he rejected the whole idea of being an ambassador, saying that he was trying to win a points title, not a political office.

But other people believed that Stewart—who has often been called a "racer's racer" because he cares more about winning races than about winning over fans or sponsors—would be a fine representative for the sport. "In the broad sense, a champion is called on to represent NASCAR, and I am convinced he can meet that challenge," said NASCAR official Jim Hunter. "He is definitely not vanilla. He is Neapolitan, and you get a little bit of everything with Tony Stewart. We know he can charm Godzilla when he wants to. We also know that when he puts on his game face and gets ready to race, leave him alone, get out of the way."

Winston Cup Champion

On November 17, 2002, Stewart clinched the 2002 Winston Cup championship by 38 points over Mark Martin at the season-ending event at Homestead, Florida. When the race at Homestead concluded, Stewart



2002 NASCAR champion Tony Stewart celebrates after finishing the Winston Cup Ford 400 at Homestead-Miami Speedway in Florida, November 2002.

found himself surrounded by a mob of fellow drivers, team owners, and crew members. "To have your peers come out there and congratulate you like that, I don't care what check Winston writes, I don't care how many trophies they give me, the feeling and satisfaction of seeing those guys out there is more than money can buy," he said.

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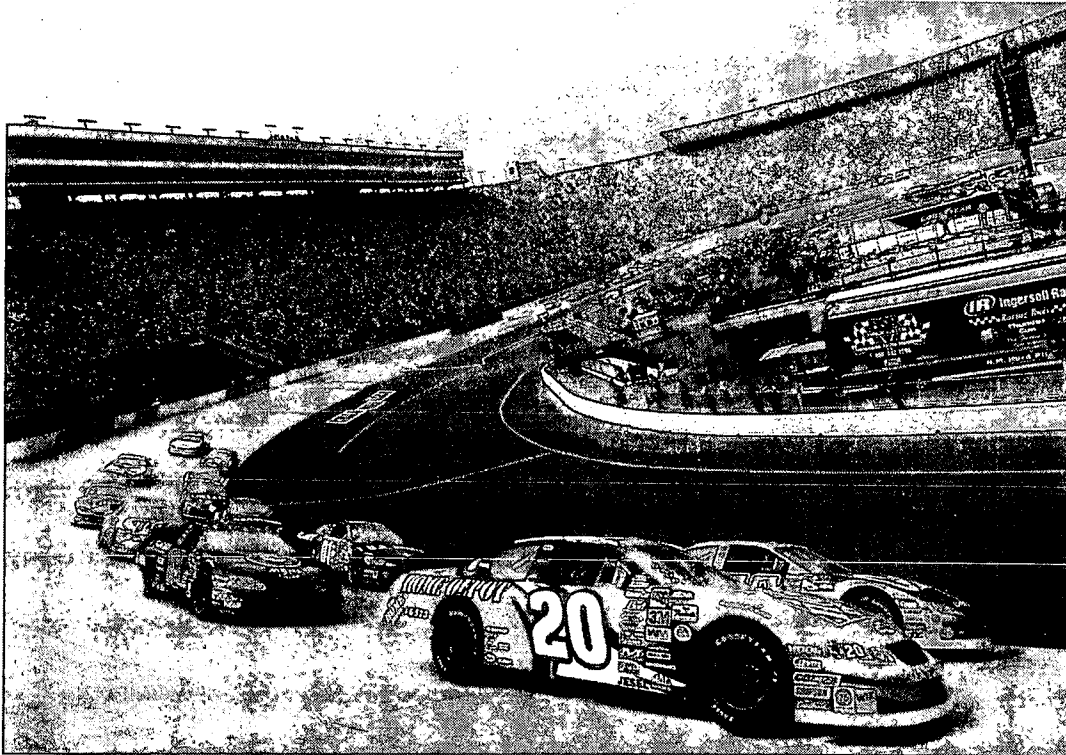
The prestigious Winston Cup Championship marked the ninth driving title of Stewart's amazing career. "If I had to retype my resume tomorrow, I'd put the Winston Cup championship at number one," he stated. "All of the championships I've been a part of were hard to acquire. None of them were easy. They had their unique set of circumstances, obstacles, and challenges to overcome. But my heart tells me that this championship—the Winston Cup championship—is my greatest accomplishment in racing."

The difficulties he had to overcome during the 2002 season made the championship even sweeter for Stewart. "To start the season off the way that we did—to be able to rebound from all that, along with all the other things we went through—and to have kept our focus to go out and get the most points week in and week out, I still have a tough time believing what we've accomplished," he noted.

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Stewart won \$9.16 million in prize money for the 2002 season, which ranked a close second behind Jeff Gordon's all-time earnings record. At the end of four seasons of NASCAR Winston Cup racing, Stewart had chalked up 15 victories, \$21 million in earnings, and \$85,000 in fines.

As it turned out, Stewart performed very well in his new role as Winston Cup champion. Officials, media, and fans alike found him to be warm, funny, and humble in interviews and public appearances. At the season-ending awards banquet, he drew laughs by presenting NASCAR officials with the certificate from his anger-management course. Stewart also amused reporters by pulling out a camera and snapping pictures of photographers at a press conference.



Stewart drives his #20 Chevrolet during the Winston Cup Food City 500 at the Bristol Motorspeedway in Tennessee, March 2003.

As the 2003 season approached, Stewart said that his plan was to relax, have fun, and keep things in perspective for the good of his race team. "I feel a little more relaxed going into this season, because I don't feel I have anything to prove. My goal this year is to have fun, strictly to have fun," he stated. "I'm just trying to be smart and look out for the team. Those guys went through a lot last year. We all went through a lot last year. I'm just trying to make things a little more efficient, a little easier to where those guys aren't worrying about, 'Well, what happens if he has a bad day?' It just makes life easier for all of us. I'm just trying to look outside my circle and say, there are more people involved here, and what can I do to help the race team?" At the same time, Stewart hoped to bring Joe Gibbs Racing another Winston Cup championship. "Winning one makes you want to win another, and we've done a lot of things to make ourselves better for this year," he explained.

Struggling with Fame

Stewart is widely recognized as one of the best and most versatile race-car drivers in the world. According to his namesake, the great A.J. Foyt: "In my lifetime, there's probably been only two or three guys I've known who

could drive just about anything they sat down in. And Tony Stewart is one of 'em." Many NASCAR fans appreciate Stewart's work ethic, driving skills, and passion for racing. "Nobody in this sport ever gave me anything," he explained. "I was not a rich kid. I didn't have a single door open up for me because I was a famous driver's son, or a famous driver's brother. Any opportunity that came my way, I earned. Every ride I was ever offered was based on my performance, my reputation, or both."

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"I'm well aware that you can lose your life doing what I do. But I believe this: I've got a better chance of dying of cancer than of getting killed in a race car. I've got a better chance of killing myself on some interstate highway than on some speedway. Sure, I have a risky job, but lots of folks do: firemen run into burning buildings, truck drivers crash, factory workers face all kinds of industrial hazards. There's danger in a hundred occupations. . . ."

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Some fans also enjoy Stewart's honesty and willingness to speak his mind. "There are so many people who give the cookie-cutter answers down here," Stewart once said. "The people that support me are tired of that. I'm not here for a popularity contest." Most of his fellow drivers like and respect him, and say that he sometimes expresses frustrations that they all feel. At the same time, Stewart has alienated some race fans with his angry outbursts and aggressive behavior. In fact, he is one of the drivers most likely to be booed on the Winston Cup circuit.

Stewart admits that he has struggled to deal with some aspects of his fame. Although he tries to be accessible to the people who support NASCAR, Stewart wants fans to understand that drivers need to be able to live a normal life. "People ask what it's like to be a Winston Cup driver," he said. "Well, it's great, as long as that's all you want to be. But if you want to be a living, functioning human being at the same time, it has its drawbacks.

I'll be the first to admit that I haven't always handled all this in the most graceful way. But, in my defense, when you grow up the way I did, you don't spend a lot of time preparing for how you'll react to being famous."

One of the aspects of the job that bothers Stewart most is the autograph-seekers that crowd into the team garages and pit areas where the cars are being prepared. "Sometimes they catch you at the wrong time, and you're intense," he explained. "You may be in a bad mood or maybe focused on

something and not paying attention to them and they'll think that you're a bad person because they didn't get the autograph they wanted right then. Not that you didn't want to sign it right then. When I get focused on racing, that's all I'm worked about. I don't let outside distractions distract me." While Stewart willingly signs autographs at promotional events, he reserves the right to refuse to sign while he is working. "I'm sorry, but I don't feel like I owe anybody an autograph," he stated. "I don't feel like I owe anybody anything more than my best effort in the race they bought tickets to. On that score, I've never cheated anybody out of a penny."

Though several of Stewart's close friends have lost their lives in auto races, he says that his love for racing makes it worth the risk. "I'm well aware that you can lose your life doing what I do," he said. "But I believe this: I've got a better chance of dying of cancer than of getting killed in a race car. I've got a better chance of killing myself on some interstate highway than on some speedway. Sure, I have a risky job, but lots of folks do: firemen run into burning buildings, truck drivers crash, factory workers face all kinds of industrial hazards. There's danger in a hundred occupations. The difference is, I'll bet I love my job more than most people in those occupations love theirs. . . . There are millions of people who spend literally their entire adult lives doing

work they can't stand. I am doing the only thing I've ever really wanted to do, the only thing that completely fulfills me. I'm a very lucky person. So if I don't make it out of the next race I run, don't cry for me. That's an order."

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HOME AND FAMILY

During the NASCAR season, Stewart—who is single—lives in Davidson, North Carolina, in a condominium on Lake Norman. He also used some of his Winston Cup earnings to purchase his boyhood home in Columbus, Indiana, and spends as much time there as possible. "The neighbors who

were there when I was growing up are still here," he noted. "When I think about growing up, that's my house. I always know that if I get homesick I can go home for a day."

Stewart remains close to his family. His father attends many of his races, and his mother and sister are both involved in running his fan club and souvenir business.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Stewart describes himself as a laid-back person off the racetrack. In his spare time he enjoys fishing, playing pool, and riding motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). He also likes to challenge his friends to races with remote-control cars or in simulated racing games.

Stewart is involved in charity work, though he tries to keep his good deeds private. He has used his own plane to fly sick children to races, for example, and he saved the life of an abused greyhound he heard about while racing in Florida. "I hate to say this because it will ruin my bad-boy image," he noted, "but deep down inside I am a caring person."

WRITINGS

True Speed: My Racing Life, 2002 (with Bones Bourcier)

HONORS AND AWARDS

International Karting Foundation Grand National Champion: 1983

World Karting Association National Champion: 1987

USAC Sprint Rookie of the Year: 1991

USAC Midget National Champion: 1994, 1995

USAC Sprint National Champion: 1995

USAC Silver Crown National Champion: 1995

Indianapolis 500 Rookie of the Year: 1996

Indy Racing League Rookie of the Year: 1996

Indy Racing League Champion: 1997

NASCAR Winston Cup Rookie of the Year: 1999

NASCAR Winston Cup Points Champion: 2002

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Mello, Tara Baukus. *Tony Stewart*, 2000 (juvenile)

Mitchell, Jason. *Driver Series: Tony Stewart*, 2002 (juvenile)

Stewart, Tony, with Bones Bourcier. *True Speed: My Racing Life*, 2002
Teitelbaum, Michael. *Tony Stewart: Instant Superstar*, 2002 (juvenile)
Utter, Jim. *Tony Stewart: Hottest Thing on Wheels*, 2000 (juvenile)
Who's Who in America, 2002

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AutoWeek, July 6, 1998, p.44
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Houston Chronicle, May 26, 1996, p.18
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Kansas City (Mo.) Star, Feb. 15, 1996, p.D1
New York Times, May 29, 2001, p.D4; Dec. 5, 2002, p.D4
Palm Beach Post, Nov. 15, 2002, p.H3
Sporting News, July 30, 2001, p.50; Dec. 24, 2001, p.53
St. Petersburg Times, May 24, 1998, p.C15
Sports Illustrated, Dec. 22, 1999, p.118; Nov. 18, 2002, p.107; Dec. 1, 2002, p.18
Sports Illustrated for Kids, July 1, 2002, p.37
USA Today, May 28, 1999, p.F8
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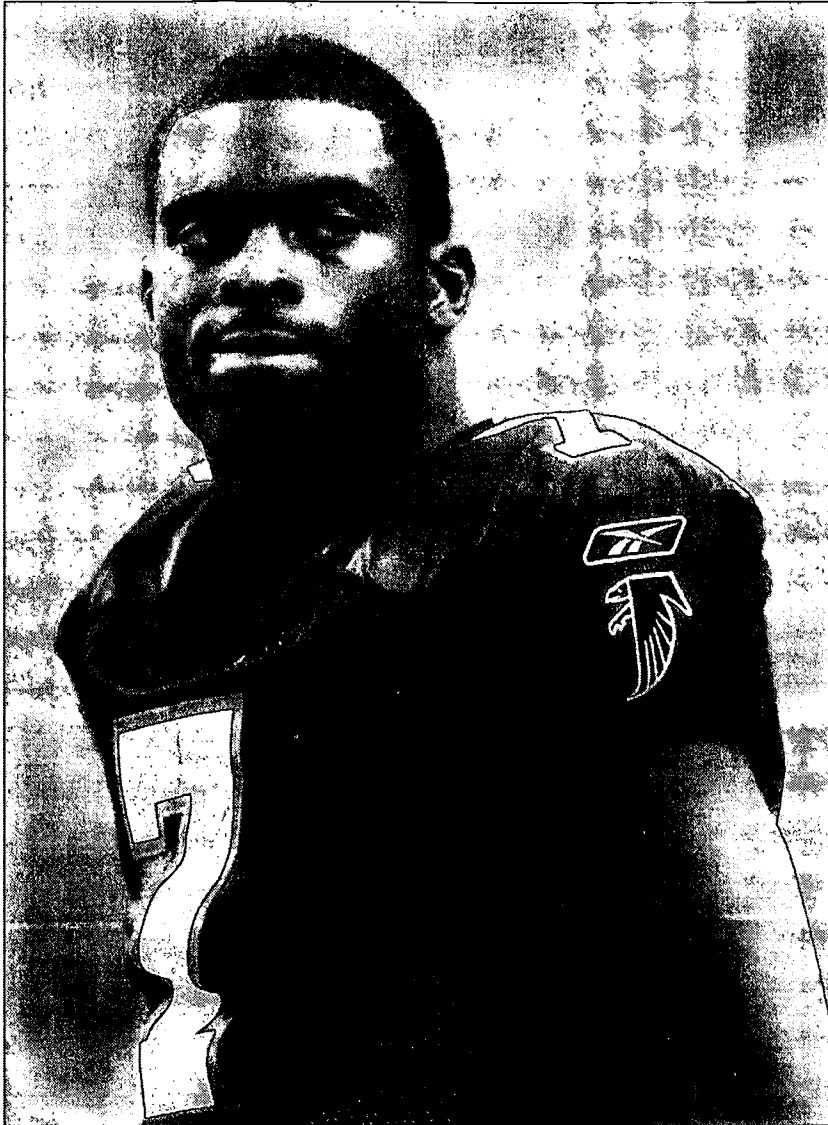
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("Stranger at the Track," *ESPN The Magazine*, July 3, 2002)
<http://espnmagazine.com/2002/1516/althomy.html>
("Trouble Seems to Stalk Stewart," *ESPN Magazine*, Nov. 27-Dec. 3, 2002)

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WORLD WIDE WEB SITES

<http://www.tonystewart.com>
<http://www.nascar.com/drivers/dps/tstewart00/wc/index.html>



Michael Vick 1980-

American Professional Football Player with the Atlanta Falcons

First Overall Pick in the 2001 NFL Draft

BIRTH

Michael Dwayne Vick was born on June 26, 1980, in Newport News, Virginia. His mother, Brenda Vick, was 16 years old and unmarried at the time of his birth. His father, Michael Boddie, decided that he was too young to handle the responsibility of raising children and left the family to join the military in 1984.

Boddie returned after a few years, however, and married Brenda Vick when Michael was nine. After rejoining the family, he took a job as a painter and sand-blaster in the Newport News shipyards. Michael has an older sister, Christina (born in 1979), a younger brother, Marcus (born in 1984), and a younger sister, Courtney (born in 1991).

YOUTH

Vick was raised in a three-room apartment in a public housing project in Ridley Circle, Virginia. Despite her young age, Brenda Vick taught her son valuable lessons about hard work and determination while he was growing up. While her mother watched the children, Brenda finished high school and worked at Kmart to provide food and clothing for her family. She eventually got a job driving a school bus. Throughout Vick's childhood, she often warned him and his siblings against repeating her mistakes, telling them, "Don't have children when you're young."

Vick first learned to throw a football at the age of three. He often played catch with his father, who was a very athletic man, in the courtyard of their apartment complex. As Vick grew older, he played in pick-up football games with his older cousin Aaron Brooks, who went on to play in the NFL with the New Orleans Saints.

Vick was a happy youngster whose curiosity often got him into trouble. When he was six years old, for example, he glued his eyelids together with Super-glue and had to wait a week before his eyelashes grew long enough for the glue to be cut out. After his father left the family, Vick started getting into trouble at school for being disruptive in class. His mother worried that he might get involved with a bad crowd if she didn't find something for him to do after school. She pushed him to join the neighborhood Boys and Girls Club, where he played a variety of sports with other children—including future NBA star Allen Iverson—and received coaching and guidance from volunteers. When he was not at the Boys and Girls Club, Vick could be found fishing and crabbing in the James River.

EDUCATION

Vick entered Ferguson High School in Newport News as a freshman in 1994. He started the year as the quarterback of the junior varsity football team, but he was promoted to the varsity team after throwing for 20 touchdowns in the first six games of the season. Ferguson High School closed during his sophomore year, so Vick transferred to Warwick High, also in Newport. He immediately earned the starting quarterback position

on Warwick's varsity football team. In only his second game at Warwick, Vick set a district record by passing for 433 yards on only 13 completions.

Vick's coach at both of his high schools was Tommy Reamon, who had played professional football for the Kansas City Chiefs in 1976. Reamon paid special attention to Vick, enrolling him in summer camps and conducting private practice sessions to help him improve his passing and running skills. Reamon also put Vick through a tough conditioning program, which included lifting weights and throwing 100 passes a day. Finally, the coach helped Vick develop into a leader by emphasizing the importance of off-field behavior and communication skills. Vick formed a close relationship with Reamon and credits his high school coach for his later success.

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“I lived in his shadow,” Vick recalled about rival quarterback Ronald Curry, a four-time all-state selection from nearby Hampton High School. “At the end of my senior year I ended up second-team everything. The papers would have a huge picture of Ronald Curry, with poor little Mike Vick down in the corner about the size of a stamp. I never held it against Curry — just the opposite, I was happy for him. But being second was something I had to deal with, and deal with a lot.”

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During his senior year, Vick passed for 1,668 yards and 10 touchdowns, and added another 10 rushing touchdowns. Over the course of his high school career, Vick racked up 4,846 yards passing for 43 touchdowns, and 1,048 yards rushing for 18 touchdowns. Unfortunately, his terrific individual performances were not enough to turn the team into a championship-caliber squad. The team posted a 20-13 record over four seasons and never reached the playoffs with Vick as quarterback.

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Despite the mediocre performance of his team, Vick received a great deal of national attention as a senior. He was rated the fifth-best quarterback prospect in the nation by *SuperPrep*, a college recruiting publication. He was also named to *Parade* magazine's high-school all-American team. Closer to home, though, Vick never even received first-team district honors. That award went to rival quarterback Ronald Curry — a four-time all-state selection from nearby Hampton High School. “I lived in his shadow,” Vick recalled. “At the end of my senior year I ended up second-team

everything. The papers would have a huge picture of Ronald Curry, with poor little Mike Vick down in the corner about the size of a stamp. I never held it against Curry—just the opposite, I was happy for him. But being second was something I had to deal with, and deal with a lot.”

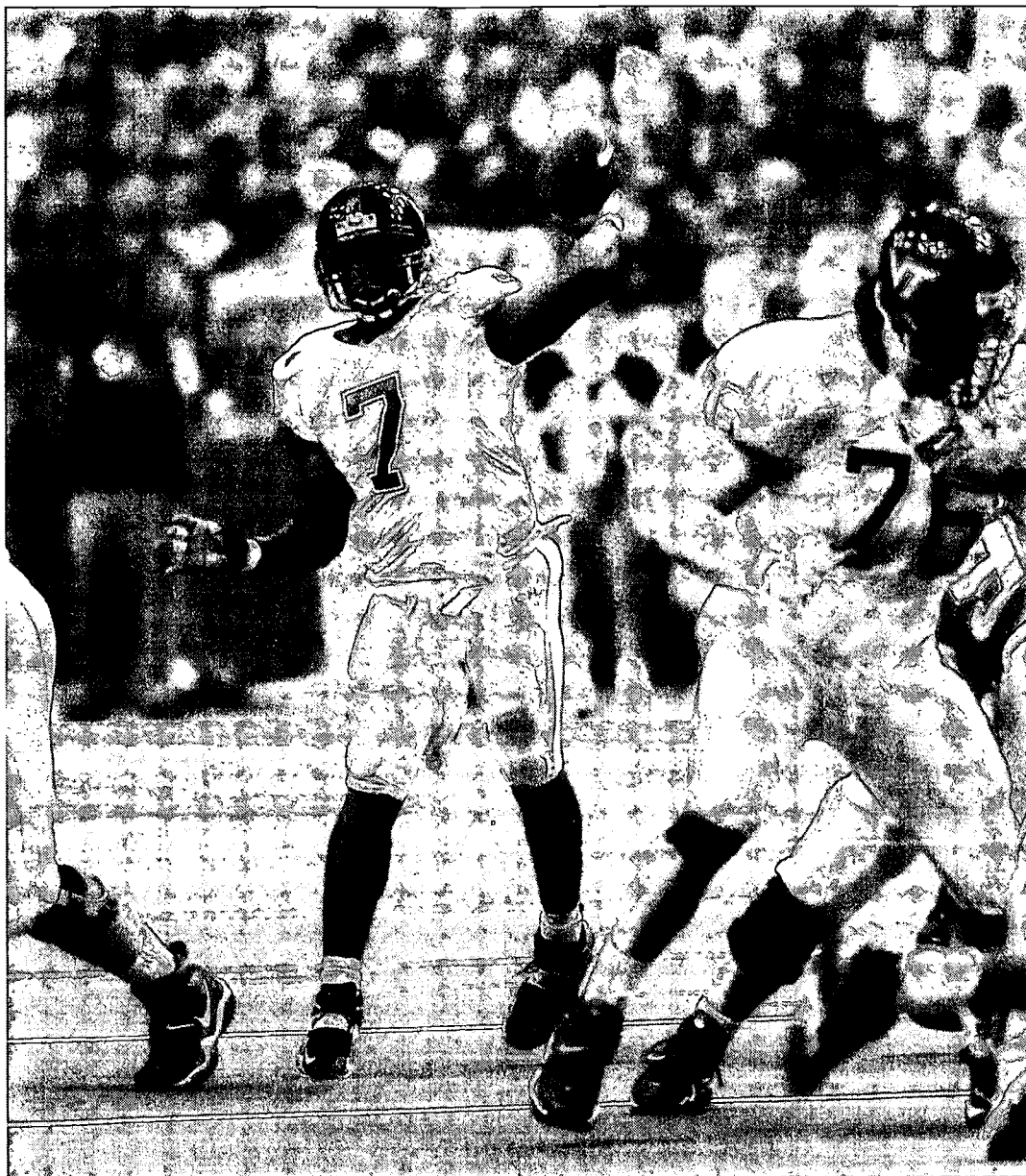
Upon graduating from Warwick High in 1998, Vick was heavily recruited by a number of strong college football programs, including Syracuse, Clemson, and Georgia Tech. On a recruiting visit to Syracuse, Vick went out for the evening with Donovan McNabb, the school’s star quarterback. (For more information on McNabb, see *Biography Today*, April 2003.) McNabb was a senior at that time and wanted Vick to take his place after he graduated. Though the two African-American quarterbacks stayed in touch and eventually competed against each other in the NFL, Vick chose a different college. “I didn’t want to walk in the same footsteps as [McNabb],” he explained. “I wanted to go to a place where I could start my own legacy.” Vick ultimately decided to attend Virginia Tech because it would allow him to stay closer to his family. His younger brother, Marcus, followed in his footsteps and is expected to be the starting quarterback at Virginia Tech in 2003.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

College—The Virginia Tech Hokies

During his freshman year at Virginia Tech in 1998, Vick was red-shirted, meaning that he practiced with the team but did not appear in any games. According to college athletic rules, athletes are eligible to play a sport for up to four years. Major college football programs often red-shirt promising athletes during their freshman year to give them time to adjust to the college game while retaining their full four years of eligibility. Red-shirting allowed Vick to gain experience while keeping his four full years of college eligibility. His high school coach, Tommy Reamon, was the one who suggested that the Virginia Tech coaching staff give Vick a year to mature and prepare for college-level football. The Hokies posted a 9-3 record that year, including a victory over Alabama in the Music City Bowl.

The time Vick spent watching from the sidelines paid off during his second (or red-shirt freshman) year with the Hokies. As Virginia Tech’s starting quarterback, Vick led the nation in passing efficiency with a rating of 180.4—the second-highest total ever and the highest for a college freshman in NCAA history. He also set a new school record by moving the ball for an average of 9.3 yards per play. Vick led his team to a perfect 11-0 season and a number two national ranking. The Hokies earned a spot in the



Michael Vick (#7) of the Virginia Tech Hokies.

2000 Sugar Bowl against the powerful Florida State Seminoles in a contest to decide the NCAA championship.

The Hokies got off to a poor start and found themselves down by a score of 28-7 early in the game. At this point, Vick gathered the team around him and said, "Yo, it ain't going down like this. Somebody's gotta step up. I guess it's going to be me." Led by Vick, the Hokies mounted a tremendous 22-point comeback effort to take the lead late in the third quarter. Florida State recovered, though, and ended up winning the game and the national championship by a score of 46-29. But Virginia Tech earned the respect of

its opponents and football fans across the country with its gutsy performance.

Coaches and sportswriters reserved special praise for Vick's spectacular play against Florida State. Displaying both his rifle arm and dazzling footwork, he had ripped the Seminoles defense for 225 yards passing and 97 yards rushing by the final whistle. "I'm proud of my performance," Vick said after the game. "If I could change anything about this season, I wouldn't change anything. Even tonight. I wouldn't change a thing. We went out there and played as hard as we could. We showed everyone we are champions. There is no way we don't have the respect of this nation right now. I think everyone knows we are one of the top teams in the nation."

Vick received a number of prestigious awards at the conclusion of his stellar 1999 season. He was named Rookie of the Year and Offensive Player of the Year for the Big East Conference — making him the first Division I football player ever to win both awards in a single year. He also tied a record for highest finish by a freshman by ending up third in the voting for the Heisman Trophy, which honors the top player in college football each year. Vick's honors also included the inaugural Archie Griffin Award as the season's Most Valuable Player, as well as an ESPY Award as the nation's top college player.

Vick turned in another strong performance during 2000, his second year of eligibility. He passed for 1,234 yards and ran for another 607 while leading the Hokies to another great season. The team finished with a 10-1 record, with the only loss coming against Miami while Vick was sidelined with an ankle injury. Virginia Tech earned a spot in the Gator Bowl, where they faced the Clemson Tigers. Vick passed for 205 yards and one touchdown and rushed for 19 yards and another touchdown against Clemson, leading

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his team to an impressive 41-20 victory. He was named the Gator Bowl Most Valuable Player afterward.

During his two seasons as Virginia Tech's quarterback, Vick attracted a great deal of media attention with his strong arm and quick release, as well as his speed and elusiveness as a runner. He was widely regarded as

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Vick's positive attitude and solid work ethic made him a well-liked and respected leader on his team. "People ask me all the time what his greatest attribute is, and I always say it's his personality," said Hokies quarterback coach Rickey Bustle. "He's the most levelheaded young athlete I've ever been around. He doesn't get frustrated, he doesn't get too excited. He has fun out there. He has a fun personality, a mature personality."

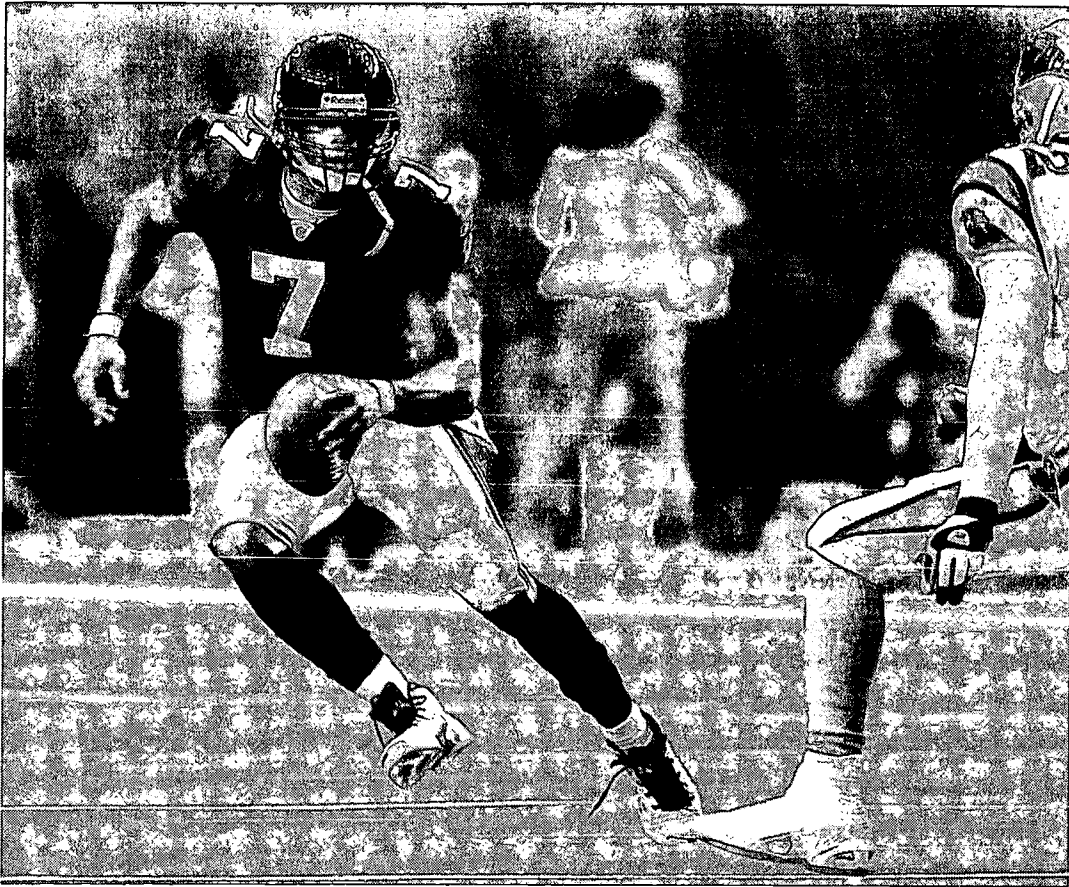
one of the best all-around athletes and most exciting players in college football. At the same time, his positive attitude and solid work ethic made him a well-liked and respected leader on his team. "People ask me all the time what his greatest attribute is, and I always say it's his personality," said Hokies quarterback coach Rickey Bustle. "He's the most levelheaded young athlete I've ever been around. He doesn't get frustrated, he doesn't get too excited. He has fun out there. He has a fun personality, a mature personality." One of Vick's teammates, senior guard Matt Lehr, added that "Considering all the attention he gets, the guy could be a problem. But Mike doesn't seem affected by it at all. He's still just one of the guys in the locker room. He's still quiet, considerate of others, a gentleman. Truth is, Michael Vick is almost too good to be true."

NFL — The Atlanta Falcons

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A few weeks after the 2001 Gator Bowl, Vick announced that he had decided to leave college early and make himself eligible for the NFL draft. Some people criticized his decision, claiming that he was not ready to play in the NFL. They said that he did not have enough experience after only two college seasons, that he was too dependent on his running ability, and that he was too small (at six feet) to be an effective pro quarterback.

But the Atlanta Falcons disagreed with such assessments. They traded three draft choices and receiver Tim Dwight to the San Diego Chargers in exchange for the first overall pick in the 2001 draft, which they used to se-



Vick (#7) of the Atlanta Falcons runs for yardage against the Carolina Panthers, October 2002.

lect Vick. Vick thus became the first African-American quarterback and the youngest player ever taken at number one. The Falcons signed Vick to a six-year, \$62 million contract. Vick used \$1.5 million of his signing bonus to buy his family a new home. "I'm proud of what he has done as an athlete," his father stated. "But I'm also proud of the man he has become."

When Vick joined Atlanta, the Falcons were in the midst of a rebuilding phase. The team had only made the playoffs six times in its 35-year history. After battling their way to a Super Bowl appearance in 1998, the Falcons had posted a dismal 9-23 record over the next two seasons. Nevertheless, the Falcons decided to bring Vick along slowly during his rookie season. He appeared in eight games in 2001, usually when the outcome was no longer in doubt. He started two games when Atlanta's regular starting quarterback, Chris Chandler, went down with injuries.

Although Vick struggled at times and made some rookie mistakes, he impressed his coaches and teammates with his unflappable calm on the field.

In his first-ever NFL appearance—against San Francisco in the 49ers’ home opener—Vick came into the game with the Falcons stuck deep in 49er territory. The San Francisco crowd was screaming, trying to rattle the highly publicized rookie. Amidst all of the noise, Vick walked into the Falcons’ huddle, calmly pulled a ChapStick out of his helmet, moistened his lips, and popped it back into his helmet. “Are you kidding me?” Atlanta

running back Jamal Anderson remembered thinking. “He just started laughing, and then everyone else did too. And I’m thinking, ‘This is the coolest guy on the planet.’”

Vick’s rookie statistics were not overly impressive. He admitted that he had a hard time familiarizing himself with the more complex professional game. Vick completed 50 passes out of 113 attempts for 758 yards and two touchdowns. His completion rate of 44.2 percent would have placed him squarely at the bottom of the National Football Conference (NFC) rankings if he had thrown enough passes to qualify. But his biggest problem was committing turnovers. In fact, he once gave up three fumbles in a single game. On the plus side, Vick rushed 29 times for 300 yards, which gave him a solid average of over 10 yards per carry. The Falcons finished the season below .500 and failed to make the playoffs.

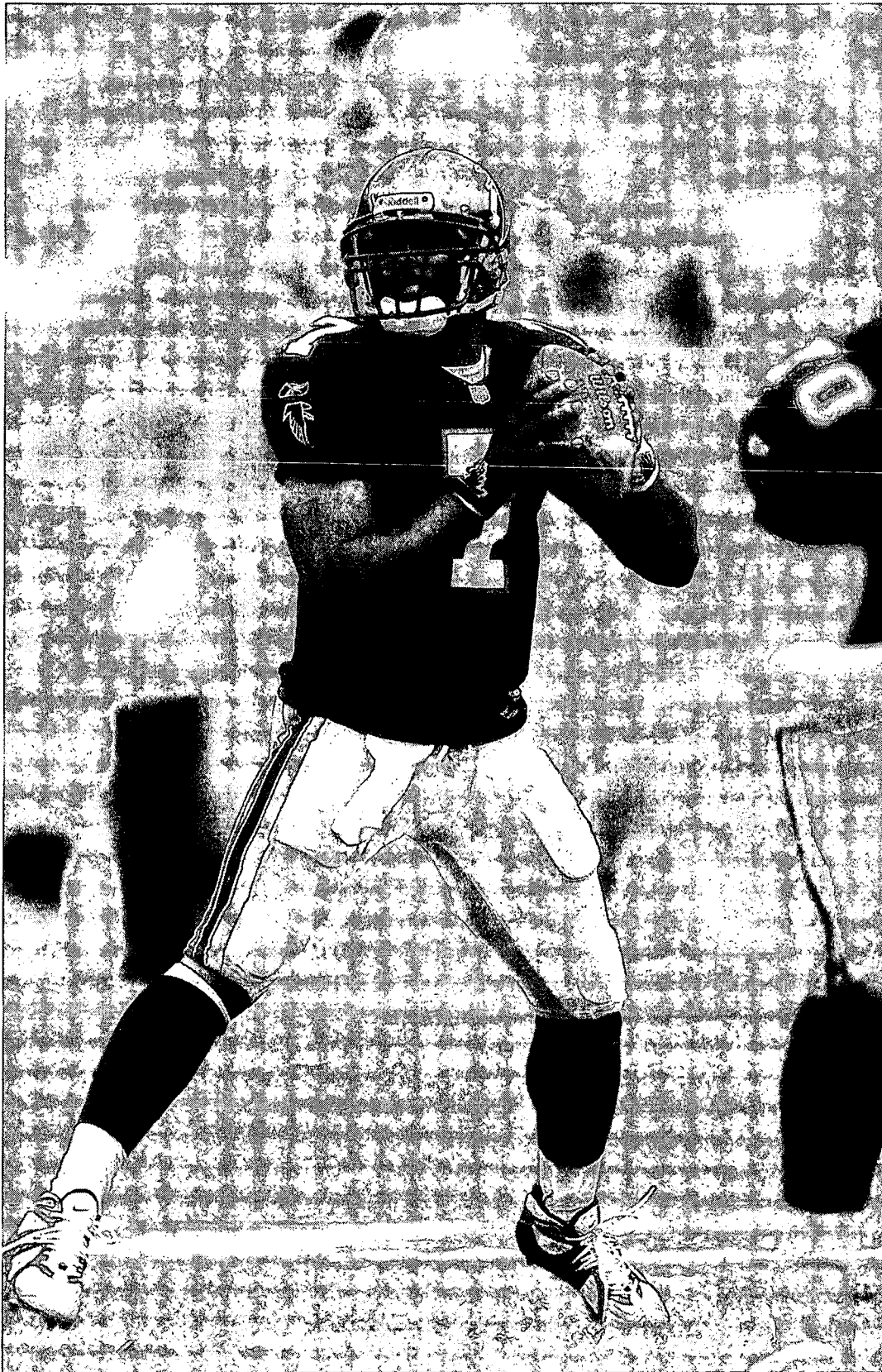
Things began to look up for Vick and the Falcons in 2002, though. Vick became Atlanta’s starting quarterback

and greatly improved his all-around game over the course of the season. He gave a hint of things to come in the season opener, when he completed his first 10 pass attempts. In the eighth game of the season, against the division-leading New Orleans Saints, Vick posted nearly 300 yards in total offense and scored two rushing touchdowns. He was voted NFL Player of the Week in recognition of his performance. A few weeks later, Vick set a single-game record for a quarterback with 173 yards rushing against the

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Quarterback Michael Vick (#7) drops back to throw a pass during the game against the Miami Dolphins.

Minnesota Vikings. His total included a 46-yard touchdown run that allowed the Falcons to win the game in overtime. Although Vick missed six games at the end of the season due to a broken ankle, he still finished the

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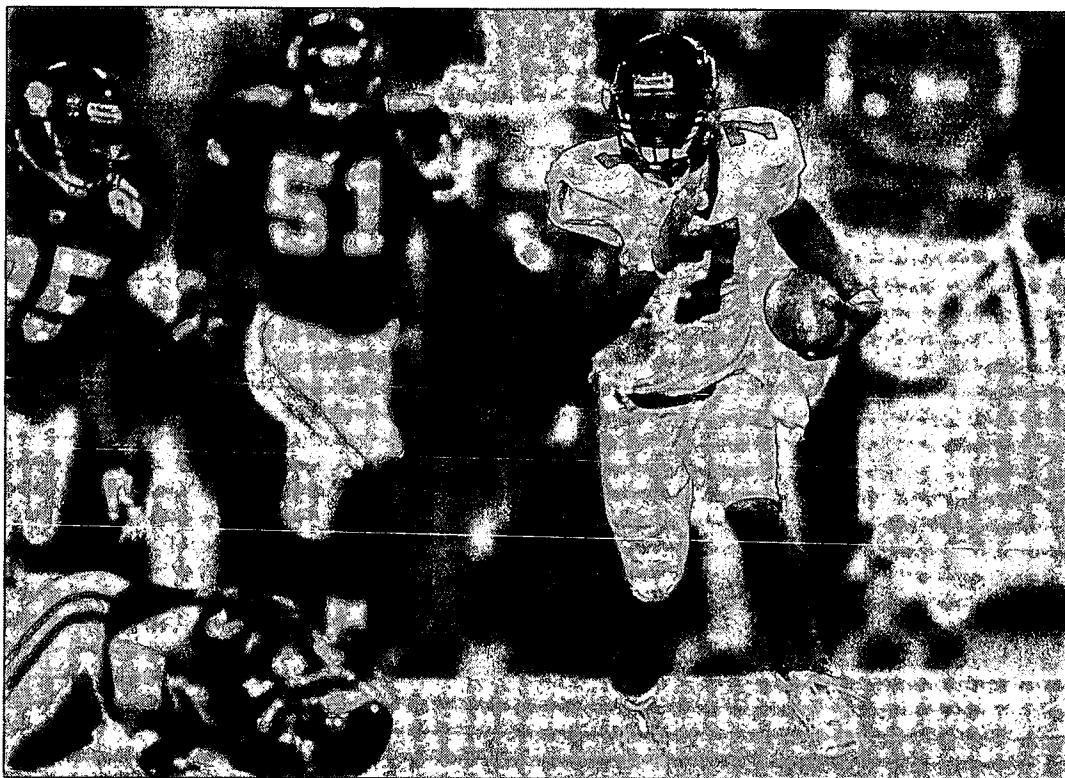
When asked to name the most important factor in an NFL quarterback's success, Vick responded, "Self-confidence. That's everything, man. If you don't believe in yourself, you won't succeed. Intelligence is important. A never-say-die attitude. Obviously, ability is, too. A quarterback has to be able to elude fast guys and make incredibly athletic plays. . . . I had the chance to meet with [former NFL quarterback] Steve Young last July. I really looked up to him when I was younger. He told me that when things break down, it's up to me to make things happen. That's when good quarterbacks are at their best."

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season with nearly 3,000 yards passing and 777 yards rushing (top among NFL quarterbacks) for a total of 24 touchdowns. He was named to the NFL Pro Bowl team in honor of his performance.

The Falcons overcame an up-and-down season to make the playoffs for the fourth time in team history. In the first round, they registered a shocking upset of the Green Bay Packers in the notoriously chilly conditions of Lambeau Field. Vick impressed many observers with his poise during the game. In the second round of the playoffs, Atlanta faced off against the Philadelphia Eagles—a team that boasted its own athletic young African-American quarterback, Vick's old friend Donovan McNabb. The two stars had similar styles of play and were often compared in the media. "It's great to be compared to Donovan," Vick noted. "The things that he accomplished over the last three years of his career are the things I want to accomplish as my career goes on. We both bring a lot to the table. We're both the new breed of quarterback. It's the first time we both are going head to head. The whole world will be watching. I'm pretty sure you can expect a lot of excitement."

Unfortunately for Vick, he and his teammates failed to generate much excitement after the opening kickoff. Philadelphia successfully employed a defensive strategy that focused on limiting Vick's running opportunities. The Falcons lost the game 27-7 and were eliminated from the playoffs.



Quarterback Michael Vick (#7) scrambles with the ball during this game against the Minnesota Vikings, December 2002.

A New Breed of NFL Quarterback

Vick's athletic abilities far exceed those of a traditional quarterback. He can run 40 yards in 4.25 seconds, for example, which makes him one of the fastest players in the NFL. He also possesses a 40-inch vertical jump and can throw a football 80 yards. Like traditional passing quarterbacks, Vick has a laser arm and the ability to think quickly and strategically. But he also has the running speed and open-field moves of a traditional option quarterback. In fact, ESPN analyst Joe Theismann called Vick "the best running person in football." Steve Sabol, president of NFL Films, added that "He's hard to compare to another quarterback. I'd compare him to maybe Gale Sayers [one of the NFL's great running backs]. He's capable of creating a moment of pure wonder. I remember that was the same feeling I'd get when I'd watch Gale Sayers. [Vick is] one of the guys that widens the boundaries and extends the parameters."

Some of the strongest compliments about Vick's talents come from his fellow NFL players. "It's unbelievable, man," said Falcons cornerback Ashley Ambrose. "He makes it look so easy. It's ridiculous. I've never seen anybody like that in my life." Norman Hand, defensive tackle for the New

Orleans Saints, claimed that "He's the best I've ever played against. We've never seen the likes of him in the NFL." "He's the hardest guy in the league to tackle—harder than any running back I've faced," added Chicago Bears linebacker Brian Urlacher. "He's going to be really good for a long time."

As he begins his third year in the NFL, Vick plans to continue to get better. His goals include winning the Super Bowl and being elected into the Pro

Football Hall of Fame. "I feel like I'm a special person and a special talent, and that in time and with the grace of God I can be one of the best in the game," he stated. "I don't think the NFL has ever seen the likes of me, a quarterback who moves the way I do and throws the way I do. I'm not saying that with arrogance or anything. That is just the way I feel."

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When asked to name the most important factor in an NFL quarterback's success, Vick responded, "Self-confidence. That's everything, man. If you don't believe in yourself, you won't succeed. Intelligence is important. A never-say-die attitude. Obviously, ability is, too. A quarterback has to be able to elude fast guys and make incredibly athletic plays. The pass-rushers in the league—Julius Peppers, Jevon Kearse—are all so quick. I had

the chance to meet with [former NFL quarterback] Steve Young last July. I really looked up to him when I was younger. He told me that when things break down, it's up to me to make things happen. That's when good quarterbacks are at their best."

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HOME AND FAMILY

Vick, who has never been married, lives in Atlanta. He has a son, Michael Jr., who was born in July 2002. "I love this little man so much," Vick stated. "He's the person I pick up all those first downs on third [down] and 25 [yards to go] for, the one I take all those hits for." Michael Jr. lives with his mother in Vick's hometown of Newport News, Virginia. Vick remains close to his own mother and speaks to her every day.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

In his spare time, Vick enjoys fishing, playing video games, and breeding pit bulls. He is also the national spokesperson for Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

HONORS AND AWARDS

High School All-American (*Parade*): 1998
Archie Griffin Award: 2000
ESPY Award: 2000
Big East Conference Offensive Player of the Year: 2000
Big East Conference Rookie of the Year: 2000
Collegiate All-American (*Sporting News*): 2000
Top NFL Draft Pick (Atlanta Falcons): 2001
NFL Player of the Week: 2002 (Week 8)
NFL Pro Bowl: 2002

FURTHER READING

Periodicals

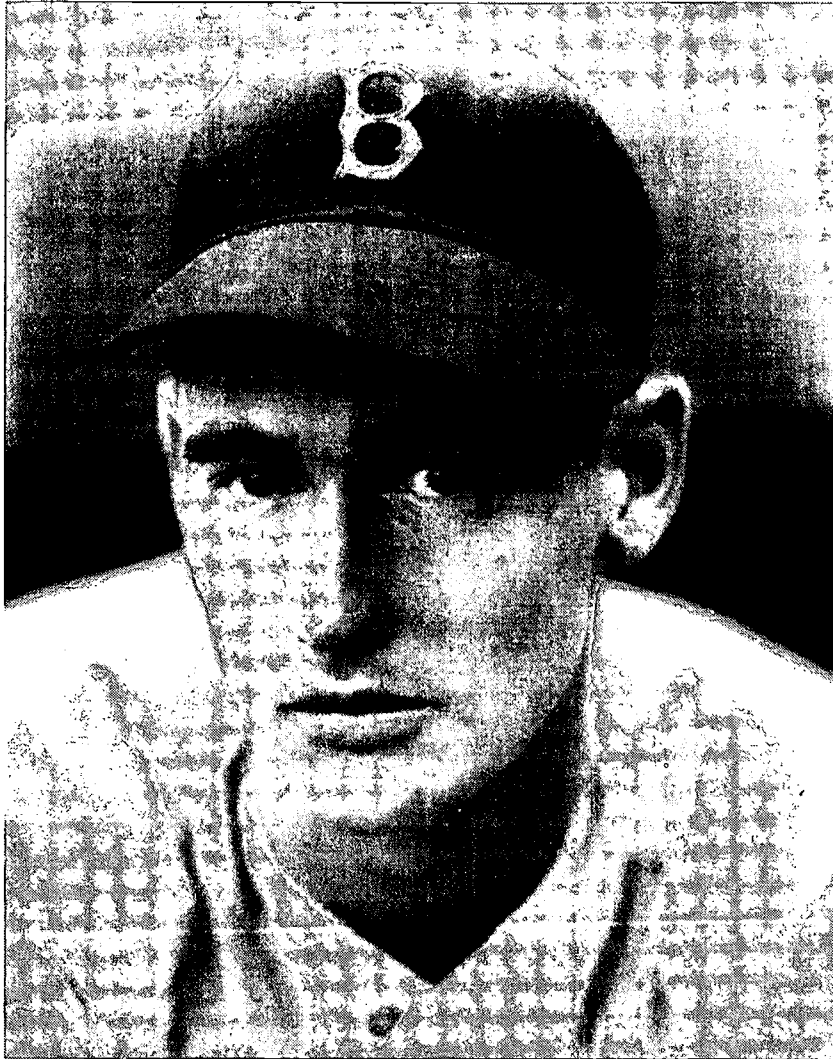
Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Apr. 29, 2001, p.D1
New York Times, Apr. 20, 2001, p.C18; Jan. 9, 2003, p.D1; Jan. 11, 2003, p.D1
Richmond (Va.) Times Dispatch, May 10, 1998, p.D7
Sports Illustrated, Jan. 13, 2000, p.68; Aug. 4, 2000, p.92; Sep. 23, 2002, p.52
Sports Illustrated for Kids, Winter 2002, p.32
Sporting News, June 5, 2000, p.61; Oct. 30, 2000, p.48; Mar. 5, 2001, p.29;
Apr. 9, 2001, p.38

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Flowery Branch, GA 30542

WORLD WIDE WEB SITES

<http://www.atlantafalcons.com>
<http://www.nflplayers.com>
http://www.jockbio.com/Bios/Vick/Vick_bio.html



RETROSPECTIVE

Ted Williams 1918-2002

American Professional Baseball Player with the
Boston Red Sox

Six-Time Major League Batting Champion

BIRTH

Theodore Samuel Williams was born on August 30, 1918, in San Diego, California. This is the date that Williams provided, but there is some controversy surrounding the date because his birth certificate originally read August 20. His mother, May Venzler, was a lieutenant in the Salvation Army—a charitable

religious group—when she met his father, Sam Williams, who was then a soldier and later became a photographer. Williams had one brother, Danny, who was born two years after him.

YOUTH

May and Sam Williams raised their family in a modest home in San Diego that was purchased with the help of a friend. Although the Williamses were expected to repay the benefactor, May habitually poured her earnings back into the Salvation Army, and Sam earned little income as an occasional photographer. May worked long hours, and her commitment to the Salvation Army often required nighttime service. Sam's schedule was unpredictable also. In fact, May's and Sam's schedules were so erratic that the Williams boys were often locked out of the house awaiting a parent's return. Ted spent much of his time on those evenings swinging a bat in the backyard.

As a young boy, Williams developed a strong interest in hunting and fishing. This was fostered in part by an older neighbor who served as a sort of surrogate father to him during his father's frequent absences from the Williams household.

Williams's love affair with baseball began when he was 12 years old. "I can tell you exactly when it started," he recalled. "It wasn't when I was 10 or 11. It happened when I was 12. I had never followed major-league baseball. The only players I had ever heard of were [Babe] Ruth and [Lou] Gehrig. And then I read that Bill Terry had hit .400, and that really excited me. Four hundred! I don't think I even knew what you had to do to hit .400, but I could tell that it was something wonderful. I knew I wanted to

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Williams’s baseball swing was a constant preoccupation for him. Even during those early days in his backyard, he dreamed of playing on a major league field. With that goal in mind, the youngster studied how to be the best hitter he could be. By the time he was 14 years old, Williams was including himself in baseball games at a local park, forsaking Sunday school and other activities to play games with both adults and other kids. His mother was supportive of her oldest son’s enthusiasm for the sport, even though she was discouraged by his lack of interest in the Salvation Army. She bought Williams a baseball glove and helped him make a baseball uniform. Still, when he had the opportunity to play baseball for money with a local team, she forbade it on the grounds that the team was sponsored by an establishment that sold liquor.

Williams’s early skills on the baseball diamond helped him gain self-confidence. But like many other teenagers, he remained insecure about other things. He was particularly self-conscious about his physical appearance. He was taller than most of his peers — he eventually reached a height of six feet, four inches — and he had trouble gaining weight. He drank countless malted milk shakes in an attempt to add bulk to his frame, sometimes drinking four or five in a single day.

EDUCATION

After completing elementary school in the San Diego area, Williams moved on to Hoover High School. He quickly emerged as one of the top pitchers on the school’s baseball team. But for all of his skills on the mound, he earned even more recognition for his hitting. Teammates and opponents alike marveled at his skill with the bat. His offensive prowess was so feared that teams occasionally walked him intentionally with the bases loaded.

Williams’s exploits on various San Diego baseball diamonds soon attracted the attention of major league scouts. His father suddenly realized that his oldest son might be able to make a living playing baseball, and he subsequently became much more involved in the boy’s baseball activities. Before long, Sam Williams was acting as his son’s agent. He turned down modest contract offers from the New York Yankees and St. Louis Cardinals, convinced that a better deal would come along.

In the meantime, a new Pacific Coast League baseball franchise opened in San Diego. The Padres, as the team was called, immediately contacted

Williams to see if he wanted to play for them. Thrilled with the opportunity to stay at home and yet play professional baseball, Williams signed a contract to play for the team for only \$150 per month, far less than he would have made with the Yankees or Cardinals. But the agreement also stipulated that Williams, who was only 17 years old at the time, could not be traded until he was at least 21. The contract also said that upon being dealt to a major-league team, his mother would receive ten percent of the money earned from the sale of her son's services.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

The San Diego Padres of the Pacific Coast League

Williams made no attempt to hide the fact that he was awestruck to be a member of the Padres. "Everything was new," he remembered. "Seeing all the players and seeing them up close and getting that experience to be a professional ballplayer. . . . I thought I was in a fairyland. It was all like a dream for a year and a half."

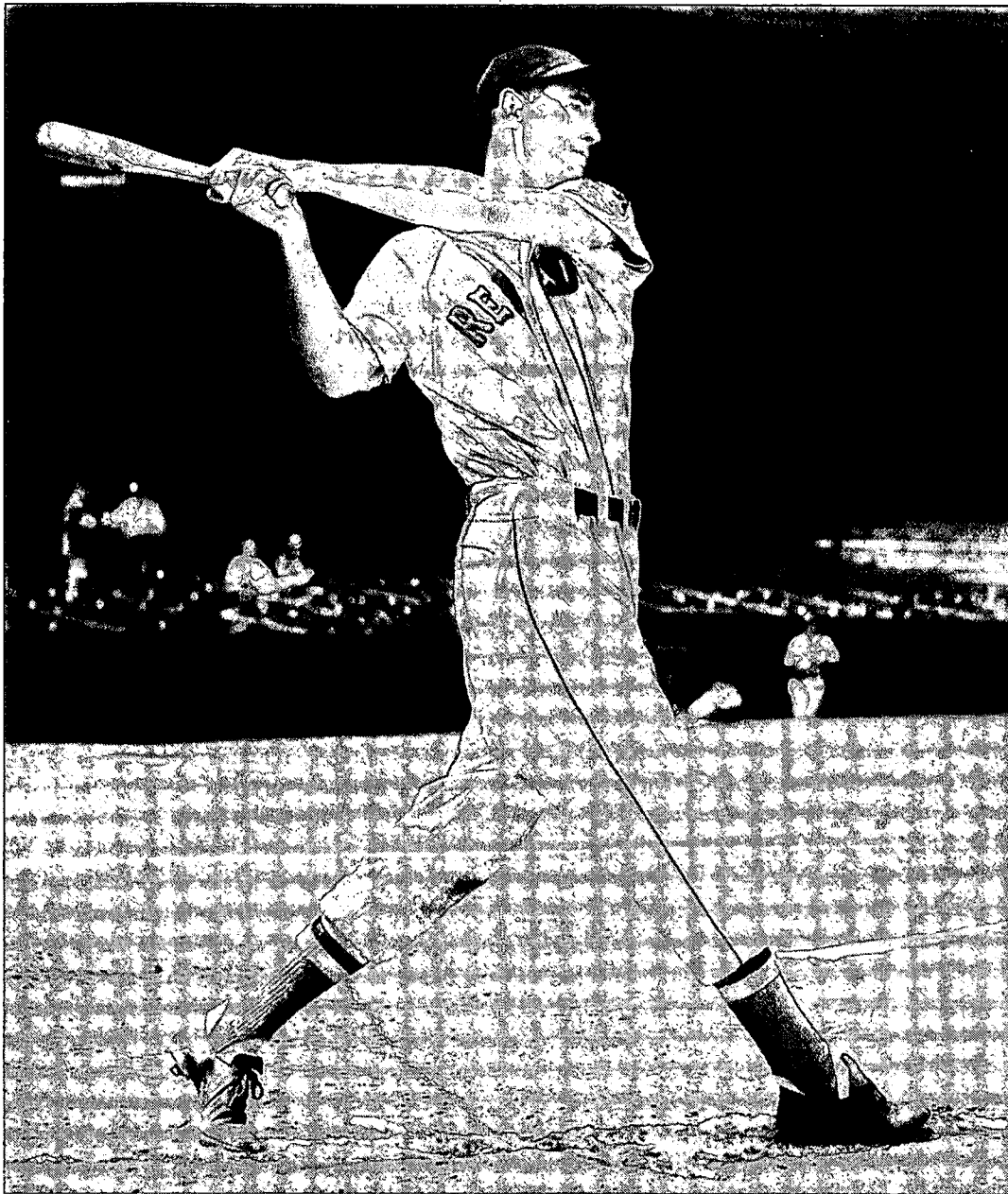
The Padres moved Williams off of the pitcher's mound and into the outfield, where he did not particularly distinguish himself. At the plate, however, he showed signs of being a big league hitter. He posted some notable hitting streaks during his one and a half seasons with the club, and during his second season he rang up 98 runs batted in (RBIs) and 23 home runs.

People affiliated with the Boston Braves and the New York Giants recognized that the young slugger had plenty of potential, and both clubs made offers to purchase Williams's services. Ultimately, though, the Boston Red Sox out-hustled the other teams to add Williams to its roster in 1938. The acquisition was controversial, though. In striking the deal with the Red Sox, the Padres had broken their promise to keep Ted Williams until the age of 21. To make matters worse, they refused to pay May Williams a percentage of the asking price even though her son's contract with San Diego explicitly called for it. Many believe that the Red Sox ended up paying May Williams the money she had been promised by the Padres in order to buy

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Williams at bat in 1939 at Fenway Park in Boston.

her son's contract. After leaving San Diego, Williams continued to support his family financially, but he rarely visited home.

Life in the Minors

Soon after Williams arrived at the Red Sox training camp in 1938, Coach Joe Cronin recognized that the 20-year-old player needed more seasoning before he could play in a Red Sox uniform. His fielding was weak and he had some trouble with the higher-caliber pitching of the major leagues.

But he nonetheless attracted a fair amount of attention, in part because the town's sportswriters saw that the young slugger had a somewhat cocky attitude. Indeed, Williams's self-confidence was evident within days of his arrival in Boston, and stories about him soon began to circulate. One well-known story held that at one of the team's first batting practices, veteran star Jimmie Foxx stepped to the plate to take his swings. Another player turned to Williams and told him, "Wait until you see Foxx hit." Williams responded, "Wait until he sees me hit." Although Williams later claimed that the exchange never took place, he admitted that such a quote was not out of character for him.

At the end of spring training, Williams was transferred to Minneapolis, a minor league team for the Boston Red Sox. In baseball, some players start their professional careers in the major leagues. But many more start out playing for a team in the minor leagues, also called the farm system. The teams in the minor leagues are affiliated with those in the major leagues. There are a variety of minor leagues, which are ranked according to the level of competition. The top or best league is Class AAA (called Triple A); next is Class AA; then Class A; then below that are the rookie leagues. Players hope to move up through the system to a Class AAA team and then to the major leagues.

After moving to the Minneapolis farm team, Williams received instruction from Hall of Famer Rogers Hornsby. Williams paid close attention to Hornsby's tips, because he was determined to make it to the major leagues. "I want to become such a great hitter that when I walk down the street people will say, 'There goes Ted Williams, the greatest hitter in baseball,'" he once said. "Then I'll be happy. That's all that interests me in this world — to be the greatest hitter in all baseball."

Williams quickly emerged as the most controversial player on the Minneapolis roster. He was the club's biggest home run threat and showed a flair for producing a hit when it was most needed. But even though he impressed people at the plate, he worried his coach in the field. He constantly argued with the fans, and on one occasion he simply sat down in the

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middle of the field during play. He also threw tantrums when his performance was not up to his standards or when teams intentionally walked him. On several occasions he threatened to quit the game altogether. He nearly destroyed his career when he punched a glass water cooler and shattered it, cutting his hand severely.

Playing for the Red Sox

Despite his immaturity, Williams moved up to join the Red Sox roster in 1939 and immediately made a name for himself. During his rookie year he led the league with 145 RBIs, beating out Yankee Joe DiMaggio—who would be compared to Williams throughout their careers—and teammate Jimmie Foxx for baseball's RBI title. His tremendous home runs made him a fan favorite, and within months it seemed that he had befriended countless police officers, fire fighters, restaurant employees, cab drivers, and children throughout the city. But Williams also attracted a fair amount of negative publicity. On one occasion he brought a gun to Fenway Park, where the Red Sox played, and shot several pigeons and a number of scoreboard lights. Many people expressed disgust about Williams's juvenile behavior, but the slugger ignored them.

After a while, the Boston sportswriters decided that Williams should have a nickname. Williams told them to call him "The Kid," a name that had been given to him by clubhouse assistant Johnny Orlando during his first day of training camp. Williams began to refer to himself in the third person as "The Kid," a nickname that everybody seemed to think was pretty appropriate. The name reflected not only his youthful exuberance, but also his sometimes childish mood swings and tantrums.

After posting such an amazing rookie year, Williams raised expectations for himself among the fans and the press. But during his second year in the league pitchers began to serve him more difficult breaking balls to hit, and he struggled at times. As his productivity at the plate dropped, his fielding began to suffer as well. Harold Kaese of the *Boston Transcript* subsequently wrote a critical column in which he claimed that Williams possessed "extreme selfishness, egoism, and lack of courage." Kaese went on to blame the young player's immaturity on "his upbringing. Can you imagine a kid, a nice kid with a nimble brain, not visiting his mother and father all of last winter?"

The personal attack stunned Williams. Writing in his autobiography, *My Turn at Bat*, he stated that prior to the clash with Kaese, "I was willing to believe a writer was my friend until he proved otherwise. Now my guard's up all the time, always watching for critical stuff. If I saw something, I'd

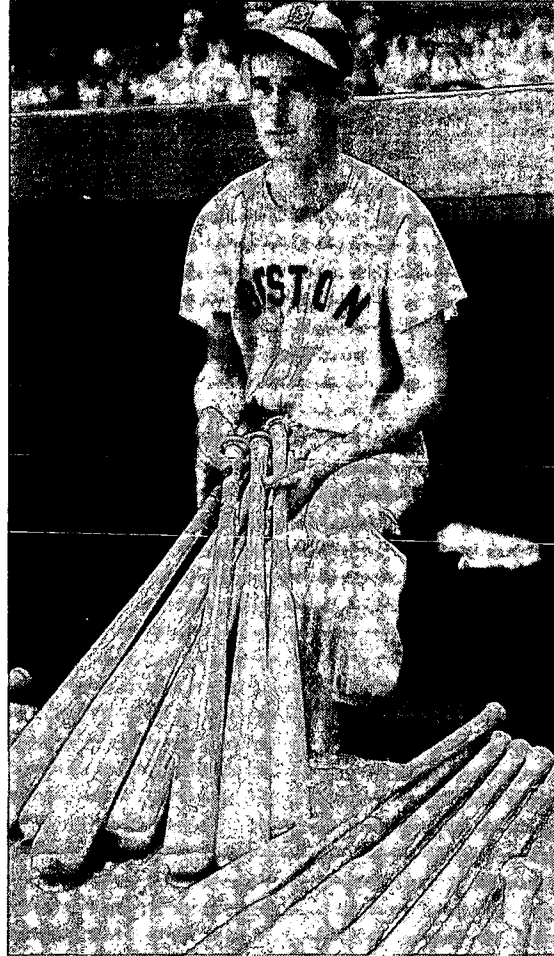
read it 20 times, and I'd burn without knowing how to fight it. How could I fight it? . . . I was moody a lot. I'd go in spells. Jimmie Foxx was always in my corner, but he called me a 'spoiled boy' that year, and I guess I acted like one. If I got mad and didn't run out a ground ball, Cronin would chew me out, which was right, and I'd be sorry and full of remorse, so the next couple times I'd sprint like mad to first base even when I was a sure out. That was also the year I got booed for making an error and then for striking out, and the unfairness of it hit me. I vowed that day I'd never tip my hat again."

1941 — A Year to Remember

Williams started the 1941 season with a bang. By May 15 he was hitting .339, with several impressive home runs under his belt. On that day Joe DiMaggio began a record-setting, 56-game hitting streak that played a part in his being named the Most Valuable Player for the year. But Williams began to make headlines of his own, as his batting average continued to spiral upward.

At one point in the season, Williams's batting average had climbed up to an incredible .427, and fans around the country debated whether the slugger would be able to keep a .400 average for the entire year. Williams was up to the challenge. For the remainder of the season, he not only kept his average above the .400 mark, but also contended for the "Triple Crown" — awarded to a player who leads the league in batting average, number of home runs, and number of RBIs (he ended up leading the league in average and home runs, but not in RBIs).

As Williams entered the last day of the season, he was batting .3995, which rounded to the .400 mark. Coach Cronin gave Williams the oppor-



Williams at Yankee Stadium, selecting bats in the dugout before the game on July 1, 1941. At that point in the season he was batting .402.

tunity to sit out the final day and preserve the mark, but the Red Sox star decided to play in both games of the doubleheader that was scheduled. "If I couldn't hit .400 all the way I didn't deserve it," he later said. "When I got the first hit I felt a little more confident, then I hit a home run over the right field fence and from there on, *wrrroofff*." By the time the doubleheader was complete, he had hit six for eight, earning a final average of .406. A

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military training, he displayed amazing math skills for someone with only a high school education. His hunting background also made him one of the camp's top rifle marksmen. Instead of entering combat, though, he was made an instructor. He was transferred to a combat squadron shortly before the war ended, but as he prepared to leave San Francisco for battle, the war ended and Williams was discharged.

year later Williams carved out another amazing season, winning baseball's Triple Crown with a .356 batting average, 36 home runs, and 137 RBIs. Once again, though, he was passed over as the league's Most Valuable Player, losing to New York Yankee Joe Gordon.

Called into the Service in World War II

But Williams's focus soon changed. In December 1941, the Japanese bombed the naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. That marked the beginning of direct U.S. involvement in World War II. After the bombing, Williams's military draft status changed. Although he had been classified as III-A, signifying that his mother was dependent upon his income for her well-being, he was reclassified as I-A, making him immediately eligible for the draft. When he requested that the draft board review his reclassification, his patriotism was questioned in the press.

Williams subsequently enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1942 as a second lieutenant in naval aviation. During his



Williams enlisting in the U.S. Navy, 1942.

The Red Sox Win the Pennant

Williams returned to the Red Sox in 1946—the only year that he won the pennant (league championship) with the ball club. During Williams's career the powerful Yankees often beat out the Red Sox for the privilege of playing in the World Series, but in 1946 Boston would not be denied. Led by Williams, the Red Sox built an early lead in the division standings. By the halfway point in the season, he was leading the league in most offensive categories.

On July 14 of that year, in the first game of a doubleheader against Cleveland, Williams stroked three home runs. In the second game, Cleveland shortstop and manager Lou Boudreau tried a strategy that came to be known as the "Boudreau shift." He positioned all of the infielders on the right side of the field, where Williams usually pulled the ball. Instead of pushing the ball to the vast open area on the left side of the diamond, Williams tried to drive the ball through the crowded side of the field. As the strategy gained publicity, he felt continually challenged by other teams to defeat variations of the shift by hitting the ball through it instead of around it.

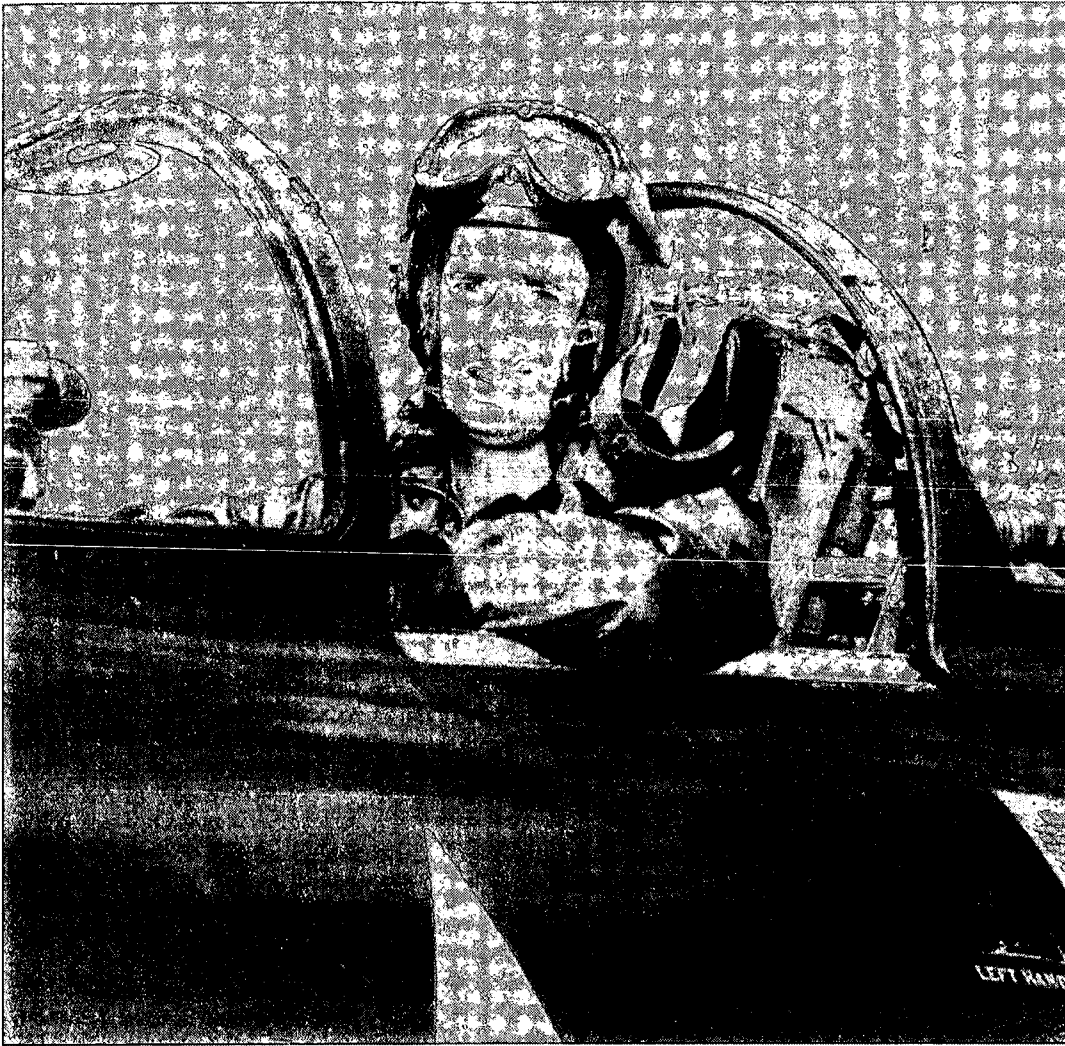
Williams's average dropped and—when it appeared that he would lose the Triple Crown because of opponents' shifts—he became frustrated. Still, the team rolled on and won the American League pennant. The owner of the Red Sox arranged a victory celebration, but Williams did not show up. Rumors of his lack of team spirit clouded the newspapers the next day.

Because the National League pennant race had not yet concluded, the Boston management set up an exhibition series to keep the team fresh. Williams got hit in the elbow by a pitch during the first game of the series, though, and he also struggled with a virus. He used neither of these factors as an excuse when he performed poorly in the World Series against the St. Louis Cardinals. Against a version of the Boudreau shift, he hit five singles and walked five times. He had no extra base hits and did not make a strong impact in the series, which the Cardinals won in seven games. Williams's critics seized on his mediocre performance. They claimed that he was not a clutch hitter and that he was more concerned with individual statistics than team victories.

The following season, Williams's stormy relationship with the press continued. In fact, the feud caused him to miss out on winning the Most Valuable Player award once again. He had rolled to a great year in 1947, hitting for a .343 average with 32 home runs and 114 RBIs. But he lost in the MVP balloting by one vote, as one of Boston's writers failed to place him among the league's top ten players. As a result, the award went to DiMaggio. Had that writer voted for Williams as even the ninth best player of the year, Williams would have won the honor outright.

Between 1948 and 1950, the Red Sox fell into a pattern under new Coach Joe McCarthy. They started out each season slowly, then began to close ground on the frontrunner, occasionally overtaking them, and then lost in the end. In 1949 Williams's team lost the pennant on the last day of the season, and Williams himself lost the batting championship during his last at-bat by walking instead of getting a hit. A hit would have made him the only player ever to win three Triple Crowns.

In the 1950 season Williams's image with fans declined when he spat and made obscene gestures toward them and members of the press during several games. One spitting incident even prompted the Boston management to issue an apology on behalf of Williams. Rumors began to circulate that Williams might be traded, but in the All-Star game that year he injured his elbow, limiting his trade value. An ensuing operation resulted in the removal of 15 bone chips. He lost some of his extension and power and had to tolerate stiffness in the elbow through the remainder of his career.



Williams in the cockpit of a Marine F9F-5 Panther jet fighter plane in 1952, training for service in the Korean War.

Called into the Service in Korea

In 1952 Williams was called into the Marines to fight in the Korean War. Although he had been relegated to the role of a pinch hitter for most of that season because of a leg injury, Williams was forced into the spotlight for what many thought would be his last day in the majors—April 30, 1952. He was presented with gifts, one of which was a book containing the signatures of more than 400,000 well wishers from across the country. In an uncharacteristic gesture of gratitude he tipped his hat to the crowd. On what many anticipated would be his last at-bat, he hit a home run against the Detroit Tigers.

During the Korean War, Williams entered into combat as a pilot. He flew in 39 missions, many of them as the wing man (partner aircraft) of one of

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“The funny thing was I didn’t feel anything,” Williams recalled about the time in Korea when his plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire during an air attack.

“I knew I was hit when the stick started shaking like mad in my hands. Then everything went out, my radio, landing gear, everything. The red warning lights were on all over the place.”

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America’s most famous pilots—the war hero, astronaut, and U.S. Senator John Glenn. Williams came close to losing his life on at least one occasion in Korea. His closest call occurred when his plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire during an air attack. “The funny thing was I didn’t feel anything,” he recalled. “I knew I was hit when the stick started shaking like mad in my hands. Then everything went out, my radio, landing gear, everything. The red warning lights were on all over the place.” Members of his squadron tried to communicate with him, but the radio was out and Williams did not hear their command to eject. He flew over the ocean with the intention of landing in the water. Much of the area was iced over, however, and Williams pressed on for land. He finally located an airstrip and landed the plane, which by now was largely engulfed in flames. “He was coming in at 200 miles per hour,”

said one observer. “He skidded about two or three thousand feet in a burning plane on one of those old Marsden mattings that looked like a waffle. He didn’t blow, and he got out of it. It was a miracle thing.”

Williams was discharged from the service on July 10, 1953, due to a virus that often plagued him during the latter part of his baseball career. After returning home to the United States, Williams originally intended to relax and spend some time fishing, but his business manager convinced him to return to the Red Sox.

Williams did well throughout the remainder of the 1953 season, but broke his collarbone in spring training the following year. He finished the 1954 season with a .345 average, but missed out on the batting title because he had not taken the necessary minimum number of at bats. In 1955 Williams retired in order to avoid high alimony payments as part of a divorce settlement. He came out of retirement in mid-May and quickly showed that he was still among the league’s best hitters. But once again, his limited number of plate appearances disqualified him from consideration for the league batting title.

End of a Career

In 1957 Williams had a year that many consider to be as noteworthy as the magical 1941 season in which he hit .406. At the age of 39 he hit .388, a remarkable average for any player. He began to use a heavier bat—35 ounces as opposed to 31 ounces—and began to concentrate less on pulling the ball. As he peppered the entire field with hits, teams realized that defensive shifts aimed at stopping him had lost much of their effectiveness. In September, however, Williams was victimized by the recurring virus that had been plagued him for the past several seasons. The slugger was kept out of the lineup for more than two weeks. When he returned, he set a record by getting on base in 16 consecutive plate appearances. He started the string with two home runs and hit two more over the course of setting the record. As the season entered its final days, it appeared that Williams had a chance to reach .400 again. Despite their sometimes ugly spats with the slugger, most fans and reporters rooted him on. But he fell just short in his bid for a second .400 season.

Bouts with food poisoning, a gimpy ankle, and pulled muscles kept Williams from getting off to a great start in 1958, and he was kept out of the starting line-up for the All-Star game for the first time since his rookie year. But Williams grew stronger as the season progressed and went on to claim his sixth batting championship with a .326 average.

The injury bug visited Williams once again in 1959. A pinched nerve in his neck forced him to change his batting stance, and his hitting suffered as a result. He hit .254 and was asked to retire at the end of the season. Instead, Williams demanded the opportunity to redeem himself in 1960. After the Red Sox agreed to sign him at the \$125,000 salary he had made the previous year, Williams cut his own pay to \$95,000.

In 1960 Williams hit for a .316 average and stroked 29 home runs, none more memorable than the last, which occurred on the final at-bat of his ca-

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“He was coming in at 200 miles per hour,” one observer said about the time Williams attempting to land his plane while engulfed in flames.

“He skidded about two or three thousand feet in a burning plane on one of those old Marsden mattings that looked like a waffle. He didn’t blow, and he got out of it. It was a miracle thing.”

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reer. Recalling that homer, award-winning novelist John Updike wrote that the pitcher, Jack Fisher, "was low with the first pitch. He put the second one over, and Williams swung mightily and missed. The crowd grunted, seeing that swing, so long and smooth and quick, exposed. Fisher threw the third time, Williams swung again, and there it was. The ball climbed on a diagonal line into the vast volume of air over center field. . . . It was in the

books while it was still in the sky. . . . Like a feather caught in a vortex, Williams ran around the square of bases at the center of our beseeching screaming. He ran as he always ran out home runs—hurriedly, unsmiling, head down, as if our praise were a storm or rain to get out of. He didn't tip his cap. Though we thumped, wept, chanted 'We want Ted' for minutes after he hid in the dugout, he did not come back."

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Williams's remarkable feat of maintaining a batting average of .406 over an entire season, which he achieved in 1941, has not been duplicated since.

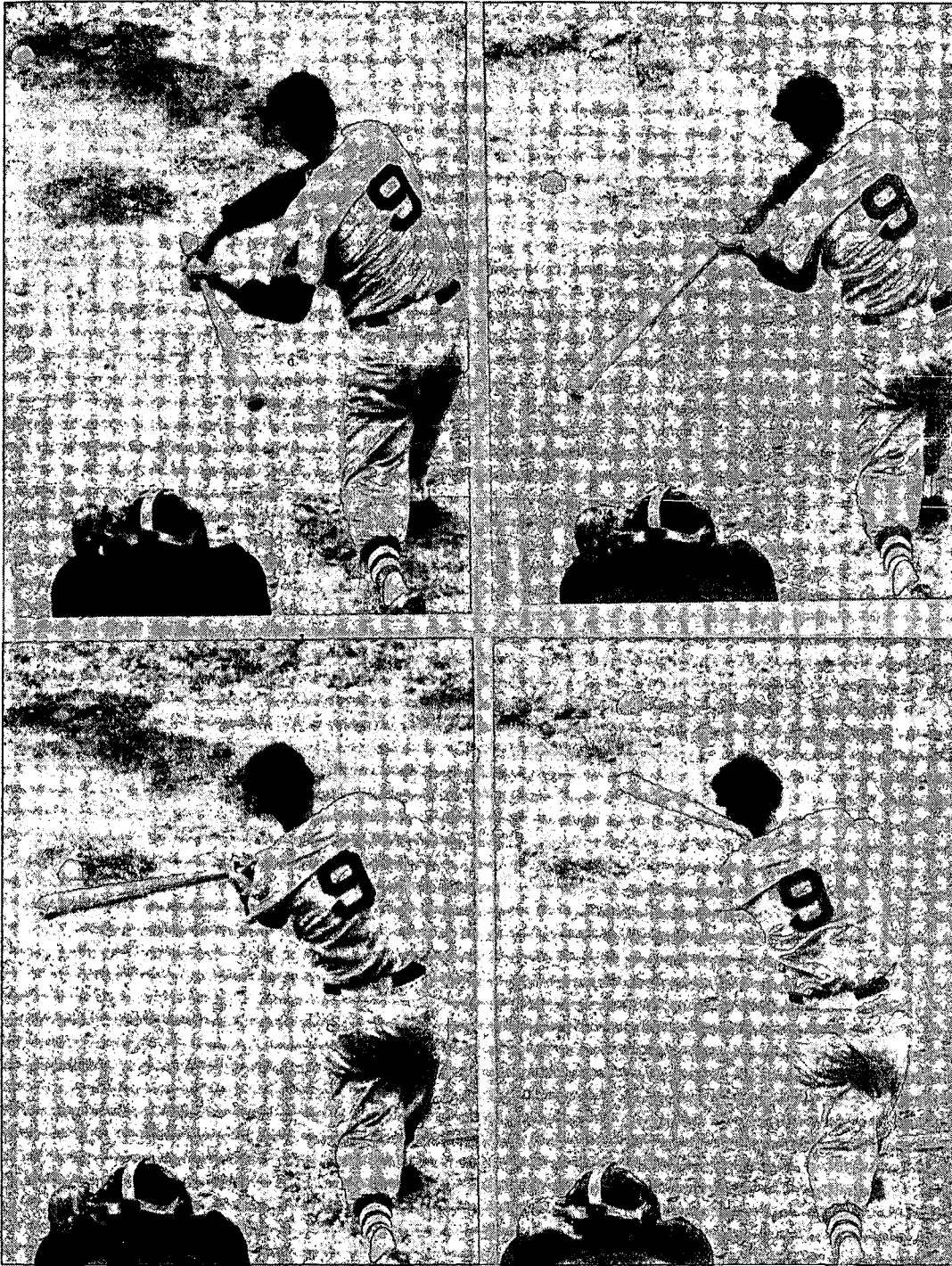
"I didn't realize how much .400 would mean to my life," he acknowledged.

"I mean it had happened only 11 years before I did it, and I thought someone else would do it pretty soon. I felt there certainly would be other .400 hitters. I said that. I always said that. Now here it is, 50, 60 years later."

The Kid's Legacy

Williams ended his career among the all-time leaders in nearly every offensive category. He finished with a lifetime .344 batting average, 521 home runs, and 2,019 walks. His .483 on-base percentage is still the highest in major-league history. His remarkable feat of maintaining a batting average of .406 over an entire season, which he achieved in 1941, has not been duplicated since. "I didn't realize how much .400 would mean to my life," Williams acknowledged. "I mean it had happened only 11 years before I

did it, and I thought someone else would do it pretty soon. I felt there certainly would be other .400 hitters. I said that. I always said that. Now here it is, 50, 60 years later." Williams also led the league in walks eight times, in runs scored six times, in RBIs and home runs four times, and won two most valuable player awards. From the time that he retired, people have wondered about how much more spectacular his career could have been if he had not lost so many games to military service and injury.



Here is the powerful batting swing of Ted Williams, taken in 1957.

After retiring from baseball as a player, Williams was named to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1966. He called his induction "the greatest thrill of my life. I received 280-some votes from the writers. I know I didn't have 280-odd close friends among the writers. I know they voted for me because they felt in their minds and some in their hearts that I rated it, and I want

to say to them: Thank you from the bottom of my heart." Williams impressed many people by using his Hall of Fame induction speech to recognize some of the great African-American baseball players who were denied an opportunity to play in the majors during segregation (a time in American history when people were separated by race, which had the effect of putting black people in an inferior position in society). "I hope that Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson somehow will be inducted here as symbols

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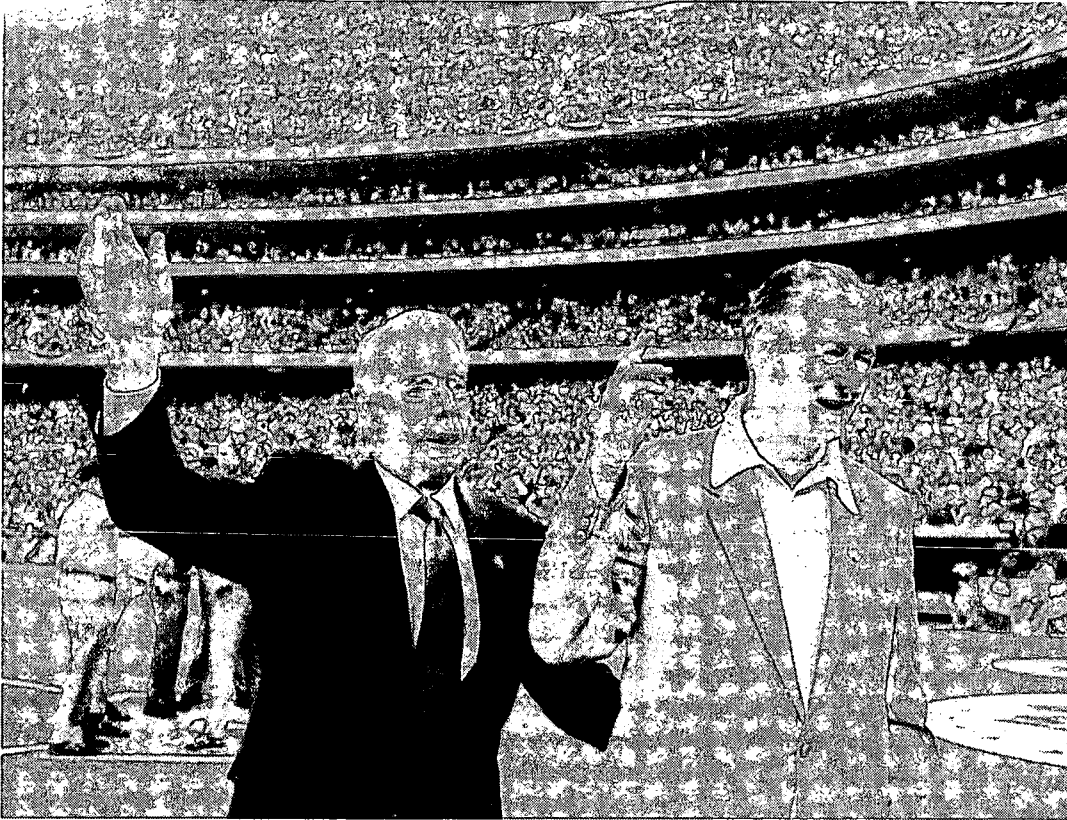
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of the great Negro players who are not here because they were not given a chance," Williams said in 1966. Thanks in part to his efforts, a special committee honoring players from the Negro Leagues elected Paige and Gibson to the Hall of Fame in the 1970s.

Williams remained involved in baseball following his retirement. He managed the Washington Senators for four years, from 1969 to 1973. He also served as a batting instructor from time to time with the Red Sox. Williams played in several nostalgic reunion games in the 1980s and was honored at Fenway Park on May 12, 1991, on the 50th anniversary of his accomplishment of batting .406. In a speech before the game, Williams alluded to his famous refusals to tip his hat to fans during his playing career, then said that "today, I tip my cap to a-a-a-l-l the people in New England, without question the greatest sports fans on earth." And he took a baseball hat out of his pocket and waved it in the air.

As the years passed, Williams became a beloved public figure in Boston and across the country. He seemed to mellow with age and became more open in interviews. Most people forgot about the controversies that had surrounded his career and focused instead on his legendary accomplishments. "I'm just a loveable old guy, now," he explained. Williams gradually gained a reputation as an avid fisherman, a spokesman for worthy charitable causes, and a promoter of the U.S. Marine Corps. In 1991, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the highest honor awarded to civil-



Former Red Sox player Ted Williams (right) and former Yankee player Joe DiMaggio (left) wave to the crowd before the start of the 1991 All Star Game. Both Williams and DiMaggio played in the 1941 All Star Game, 50 years earlier.

ians in the United States. In a statement accompanying the award, President George Bush called him "an American legend, a remarkable figure in American sports, and a twice-tested war hero."

Williams always remained an enthusiastic fan and supporter of the game of baseball. "I think the ballplayers today, overall, are better than they've ever been," he once said. "I watch them on TV and they fly through the air. They make spectacular plays." Nevertheless, he added, "I wouldn't trade one day from the years I played. I just feel that I truly played in the greatest era."

The Passing of a Legend

In late 1991, Williams suffered the first of a series of strokes that left him partially blind and caused numbness on one side of his body. One positive outcome of his failing health was that it helped him to establish a closer relationship with his grown children. His son, John Henry Williams, moved to Florida to care for him and assumed responsibility for his business deal-

ings. A few years earlier, Williams had fallen victim to a scam artist who convinced him to donate money and memorabilia to a joint business venture. The scam artist was eventually sent to prison for his actions, but Williams was unable to recover his money or legal expenses. John Henry was determined to see that no one would take advantage of his father

again. He visited sports memorabilia shops across the country to uncover forgeries of his father's signature, then started his own, legitimate memorabilia business to provide his father with income.

In 1994 Williams participated in the opening of the Ted Williams Museum and Hitters Hall of Fame in Hernando, Florida. The following year, a tunnel under Boston Harbor was named after him. Williams made his final appearance in Boston in 1999, when he went to the All-Star Game at Fenway Park to take part in a celebration for the Team of the Century. When the former slugger came onto the field in a golf cart, he received a standing ovation from the crowd and was quickly surrounded by admiring current All-Stars as well as baseball heroes from years past.

In 2000 Williams had a pacemaker implanted in his chest to regulate his heartbeat, and the following year he underwent open-heart surgery. He died of cardiac arrest on July 5, 2002, in Inverness, Florida. As word spread of the legend's passing, tributes poured in from baseball fans, celebrities, and

politicians across the country. "No one knows what kind of career numbers he would have had, and what records he would have broken, if he hadn't spent those five years as a pilot and member of the 'greatest generation,'" said John Kerry, the U.S. Senator from Massachusetts. "This guy was courageous, bigger than life, tough as nails, and he had that rare ability to sum up perfectly in his very character so many things—a generation, a game, a country. I'd say we won't see another like him."

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"No one knows what kind of career numbers he would have had, and what records he would have broken, if he hadn't spent those five years as a pilot and member of the 'greatest generation,'" said John Kerry, the U.S. Senator from Massachusetts. "This guy was courageous, bigger than life, tough as nails, and he had that rare ability to sum up perfectly in his very character so many things—a generation, a game, a country. I'd say we won't see another like him."

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Williams is greeted at home plate by Joe DiMaggio (#5) and coach Marv Shea after hitting a dramatic ninth-inning home run in the All Star Game, July 1941.

The Red Sox honored Williams's memory the following day before a home game at Fenway Park. In a solemn ceremony, they mowed his number 9 into the leftfield grass where he once played, placed a single red rose in the bleacher seat where his longest home run had landed in 1946, and posted a message on the scoreboard that read, "At bat, number 9, batting .406." A U.S. Marine Corps honor guard raised the American flag to half mast and played taps. "There goes the greatest hitter that ever lived," the announcer said, as fans and players observed a moment of silence.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Williams married and divorced three times. He had a daughter, Barbara Joyce (known as Bobby Jo), with his first wife, Doris Soule, to whom he was married from 1944 to 1955. He married Lee Howard in 1961, but their union was short-lived. In 1968 he married Delores Wettach, with whom he had a son, John Henry, and a daughter, Claudia. He lived in Crystal River, Florida, until his death in 2002.

Unfortunately, an ugly legal battle developed among Williams's children after his death. A few hours after he died, his two younger children—John Henry and Claudia—sent his body to a cryonics chamber in Arizona to be frozen. Cryonics is an unproven technology that is used to preserve bodies in hopes that they can be regenerated, or brought back to life, at some time in the future. But Williams's older daughter, Bobby Jo, and many of his friends were outraged by this action. They remembered that Williams had expressed a desire to be cremated, and his 1996

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Williams paid visits to children in hospitals throughout his playing career and for many years afterward, though he insisted that he receive no publicity for his efforts. "Look, it embarrasses me to be praised for anything like this. The embarrassing thing is that I don't feel I've done anything compared to the people at the hospital who are really doing the important work. It makes me happy to think I've done a little good. I suppose that's what I get out of it. Anyway, it's only a freak of fate, isn't it, that one of those kids isn't going to grow up to be an athlete and I wasn't the one who had the cancer?"

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will supported their statements. Some people accused John Henry of trying to profit from his father's death by freezing his body and selling his DNA. But John Henry claimed that Williams had changed his mind about cremation, and he produced a note his father had signed in 2000 to prove it. "We believe in the potential for regenerative science to advance substantially in the next 100 years," John Henry Williams stated. "[My father's] attitude was, 'If there's a chance that we can be reunited in the future, let's take it.'" Bobby Jo filed a lawsuit against her half-siblings, demanding that Williams's body be returned to Florida to be cremated. But she eventually ran out of money to continue the lawsuit, so the legendary slugger's body remains frozen.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Williams was an expert fisherman who enjoyed fishing in the coastal waters of Florida until a few years before his death. He even co-authored a book about fishing. In 2000 he was inducted into the Fishing Hall of Fame.

Williams was also an active solicitor, spokesperson, and patron of the Jimmy Fund, a charitable organization de-

voted to working with children and developing a cure for cancer. Indeed, Williams paid visits to children in hospitals throughout his playing career and for many years afterward, though he insisted that he receive no publicity for his efforts. "Look, it embarrasses me to be praised for anything like this," he explained. "The embarrassing thing is that I don't feel I've done anything compared to the people at the hospital who are really doing the important work. It makes me happy to think I've done a little good. I suppose that's what I get out of it. Anyway, it's only a freak of fate, isn't it, that one of those kids isn't going to grow up to be an athlete and I wasn't the one who had the cancer?"

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Jay Yelas 1965-

American Professional Fisherman
2002 Bassmasters Classic World Champion and
FLW Angler of the Year

BIRTH

Joel Andrew Yelas was born on September 2, 1965, in Honolulu, Hawaii. He has been known by the nickname Jay (taken from his initials) since his childhood. His father, Joe Yelas, was a high school teacher and administrator. His mother, Kim (Griffiths) Yelas, was a kindergarten teacher. He has one younger sister, Lisa.

YOUTH

Yelas lived in a suburb of Honolulu until he was 12 years old. He loved being on the ocean and spent a great deal of time waterskiing and fishing for perch or crabs. Every summer Yelas and his family would visit relatives on the U.S. mainland. His maternal grandparents lived in Oregon, where the young boy learned to enjoy hiking, camping, and fishing for trout or salmon. "These times we spent together as a family gave me a love of

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"One morning when I was eight or nine years old, standing alone down on the dock of my grandfather's cabin, I threw out a black jitterbug and began reeling it in, working it slowly on the surface. When a 13-inch bass took the bait, I thought I would bust with excitement! That was the first bass I caught on my own."

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sports and the outdoors," he stated. "This love is the foundation for all the decisions that brought me to the place I am today."

Yelas's paternal grandparents had a cabin on a lake in upstate New York. This lake was where he caught his first bass. "One morning when I was eight or nine years old, standing alone down on the dock of my grandfather's cabin, I threw out a black jitterbug and began reeling it in, working it slowly on the surface," he recalled. "When a 13-inch bass took the bait, I thought I would bust with excitement! That was the first bass I caught on my own."

The Yelas family moved to the mainland permanently when Jay was in eighth grade. They lived in Phoenix, Arizona, for two years before moving to Santa Barbara, California. Yelas still

enjoyed fishing and began to pursue the sport competitively during this time. "I transformed overnight from a happy-go-lucky kid out for a good time with Dad to a fierce competitor," he noted. "I began to live to out-fish everyone on the lake."

At first Yelas poured his energy into trout fishing. It was not until his junior year of high school that he discovered bass fishing. Yelas was trout fishing with a buddy at Lake Cachuma in California when "suddenly the hum of an outboard motor shattered our peaceful morning as a shiny, sleek bass boat slid into our sleepy little cove," he remembered. "Our new guests had my full attention. I watched in awe as the two anglers in their flashy bass rig jumped up, ran to the bow, and threw their trolling motor in the water. Without a sound, they picked up their crankbaits and stood side by side, as

they quietly eased down the bank, casting and retrieving, casting and retrieving." After watching the bass fishermen pull out a couple of nice-sized bass, the two teens decided that bass fishing looked like fun. When they tried it the following weekend, Yelas caught his second bass and became hooked on the sport. "It was on a crawdad Hellbender crankbait at Lake Cachuma," he remembered. "It was at this time, at 16 years of age, that I really got into bass fishing."

From this time on, Yelas went bass fishing every chance he got. He entered his first team bass fishing tournament in 1983, during his senior year in high school. Even though he snapped his rod during the competition, he decided to become a professional bass fisherman. "I remember the day I told my dad I was going to be a pro fisherman," Yelas laughed. "His exact words were, 'Oh no you're not.' [But] he is my biggest fan these days."

EARLY INFLUENCES

Yelas met Bill Sedar — a 68-year-old local bass-fishing expert — around the time that he decided to try to make a career for himself in fishing. Sedar became a close friend and mentor to the young man. "He was a barrel full of fishing knowledge, and I was quite the sponge," Yelas recalled. "He taught me more about bass fishing than anyone, and I credit him with laying the solid foundation for my career as a pro bass fisherman." Yelas continues to make a special trip to Lake Cachuma each year to fish with Sedar.

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"I remember the day I told my dad I was going to be a pro fisherman," Yelas laughed. "His exact words were, 'Oh no you're not.' [But] he is my biggest fan these days."

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EDUCATION

Yelas attended Iolani, the private school where his parents taught in Honolulu, through the seventh grade. When the family moved to Phoenix, he completed eighth grade at All Saints Episcopal Day School, then transferred to Sunnyslope High School in ninth grade. His family moved to California when he was in tenth grade, and he graduated from San Marcos High School in Santa Barbara in 1983. "I know moving to new schools and starting over is difficult for many kids," he noted, "but I learned to roll with the punches, making new friends and scouting out what new sports teams these schools had to offer."



Yelas caught his first seven pound bass on December 24, 1982, in California.

Yelas went on to attend Oregon State University, where he studied fisheries management. In order to prevent him from being distracted from his studies, his father made him sell his fishing boat before he started college. But Yelas buckled down and got such good grades during his freshman year that his father let him buy another boat. "Jay arranged his classes at Oregon State so he could fish Friday through Monday," his father noted.

Yelas started competing in team fishing tournaments during his sophomore year of college. Working with two different partners, he fished in every contest in Oregon over the next three years. In 1986 he and one of his partners, Jerry Harris, won the U.S. Bass Team Championship for the state of Oregon. In the meantime, Yelas stuck with his studies. He earned a bachelor's degree in Resource Recreation Management from Oregon State in 1987.

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CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Working His Way Up through the Pro Ranks

Once Yelas graduated from college, he was ready to begin his career as a full-time professional bass fisherman. His parents loaned him \$30,000 to buy a new, 18-foot bass boat and to pay for fishing equipment and tournament entry fees. “Our deal was that if he got his degree, we’d support a try as a pro,” his father explained. Yelas decided to focus his attention on several pro bass-fishing circuits in the West that were sponsored by various organizations. He moved to Phoenix, Arizona, in order to be at the center of these circuits.

Yelas started off his career with a bang by finishing sixth in the first professional bass-fishing tournament he entered—the 1987 U.S. Open at Lake Mead in Arizona—and collecting \$8,000 in prize money. Thanks to his hard work and success, he was able to pay back his parents within a short time. Yelas spent the next three years fishing in every Western tournament he could find. He competed up to 40 weekends per year, and he spent the time between tournaments traveling and living out of his van. “I always looked at that period of time as being similar to a minor-league experience in baseball,” Yelas explained. “I played every day, got lots of experience, had plenty of success, and after three years felt like I was ready for the big leagues. In bass fishing, that means the Bassmaster Tournament Trail.”

When he was just getting started, Yelas competed up to 40 weekends per year and spent the time between tournaments traveling and living out of his van. “I always looked at that period of time as being similar to a minor-league experience in baseball. I played every day, got lots of experience, had plenty of success, and after three years felt like I was ready for the big leagues. In bass fishing, that means the Bassmaster Tournament Trail.”

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Bassmasters tournaments are sponsored by the Bass Angler Sportsman Society (BASS), an international fishing organization with 600,000 members. The Bassmasters Tournament Trail is a series of 10 high-profile tournaments that culminate in the season-ending Citgo Bassmasters Classic

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"I became a Christian on February 28, 1993, and I still thank God every day for revealing Himself to me. He filled a spiritual void in my life, making my life complete. I was amazed at how God changed my heart once I humbly prayed to receive Christ as my Savior. He doesn't demand that we conform to some list of good and bad things we must or must not do, but rather changes our hearts. He makes us want to do the right thing. He changes us from the inside out. This inner transformation is what many Christians refer to as being 'born again.'"

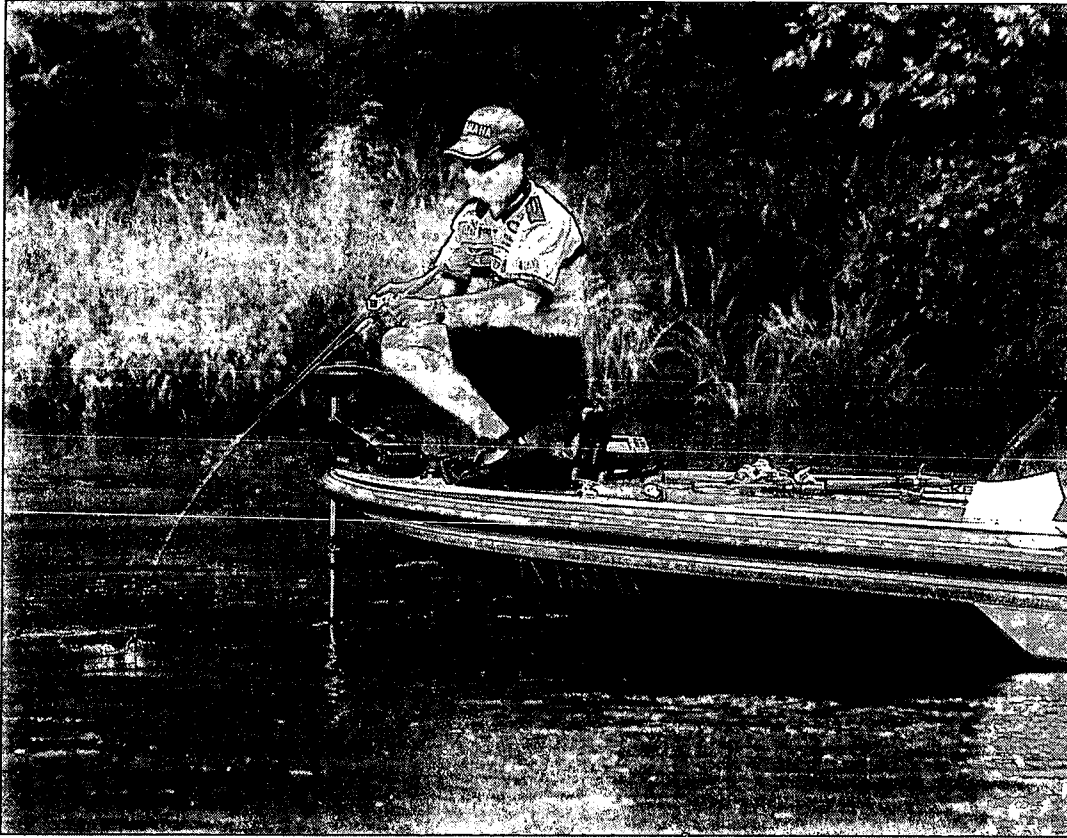
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World Championship. Most bass-fishing tournaments take place over several days. The competitors have a limit, or maximum number, of fish that they can count toward their catch each day. At the end of the tournament, the angler whose total catch has the highest weight is declared the winner. Yelas entered his first Bassmasters tournament in April 1989 on Lake Mead. He placed 12th and caught the biggest fish of the entire event, a five pound, 12 ounce bass (5-12 in fishing shorthand). The following year he moved to Jasper in East Texas, near the Sam Rayburn Reservoir, to be closer to Bassmasters tournaments in the South and East.

Becoming a Born-Again Christian

Throughout the early years of his pro career, Yelas's entire life centered around bass fishing. "I had turned into a selfish individual who traveled around the country doing something I loved without giving a rip about anyone or anything else," he admitted. "My world revolved around two things: me, and how many bass I caught." In his drive to be the best in his sport, Yelas was willing to try anything to get an edge over his fellow anglers. In the late 1980s, he began

searching for a spiritual foundation that would help him reach his potential as a fisherman. He read many books about philosophy and religion during this time. He eventually became involved with the New Age movement, which encourages individuals to tap into the unlimited power within themselves. But Yelas continued to feel empty spiritually, and both his



The final day of the Bassmaster Classic Tournament, 2002.

fishing career and his family life suffered as a result. "When I look back now, I can see what a dangerous time this was for me," he recalled. "I set off on a spiritual journey without the Bible, the Truth, as my guide. It was like trying to boat across the ocean with the wrong map. I got lost."

Yelas had attended an Episcopal church regularly as a child, and he had learned many Bible stories and basic facts about the Christian faith. But it was not until 1993 that Christianity made a real difference in his life. While he was driving home from a fishing tournament in which he had performed particularly poorly, he prayed to God for guidance. It was at this time that he became a born-again Christian. "I became a Christian on February 28, 1993, and I still thank God every day for revealing Himself to me. He filled a spiritual void in my life, making my life complete," Yelas stated. "I was amazed at how God changed my heart once I humbly prayed to receive Christ as my Savior. He doesn't demand that we conform to some list of good and bad things we must or must not do, but rather changes our hearts. He makes us want to do the right thing. He changes us from the inside out. This inner transformation is what many Christians refer to as being 'born again.'"

A short time after he became a born-again Christian, Yelas experienced a string of successes in Bassmasters tournaments. In fact, he finished in the top 10 in half of his tournaments over the next two years. Yelas believes that God transformed his fishing career from this time on, helping him to become successful so that he would gain a platform to share God's message with others. "My conclusion is that it was a period of time in which

God said, 'OK, now that you have given your life to Me, I am going to firmly establish you as a top pro so that I can use you in the future to share My gospel and tell other fishermen of My love for them,'" he noted.

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During the three-day tournament, Yelas ended up catching 14 fish totaling 45 pounds, 13 ounces to become the 2002 Bassmasters Classic World Champion. "This is just the thrill of a lifetime for me. Winning the Classic makes your career as a professional fisherman," he said afterward. "What an unbelievably humbling experience it was. . . . The hand of God was on my fishing in a way that I have never experienced before in my entire career."

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Establishing Himself on the Bassmasters Tour

Yelas won his first tournament on the Bassmasters tour—the Maryland Top 100 on the Potomac River—during the summer of 1993. He caught a total of 20 bass that weighed 54 pounds, 11 ounces and earned \$46,000 in prize money, which he used to buy a house. In 1995 he won the second-biggest event of the year, the Bassmasters Superstars tournament on the Illinois River near Peoria. He claimed \$50,000 in prize money and attracted the attention of several sponsors.

All the top professional fishermen are sponsored by companies that make fishing-related products. The sponsors pay the fishermen a salary in exchange for using their products, displaying their logos on boats and clothing, and making promotional appearances. Sponsorship money helps the top fishermen bridge the gaps in their earnings between tournament victories.

Yelas claimed the third Bassmasters tournament victory of his career in 1997 at the Missouri Invitational at Lake of the Ozarks. The following year he moved to Tyler, Texas. Over the next few years he posted a string of solid performances but failed to win any tournaments. He broke a four-

year winless streak to capture his fourth career victory in 2001 at the Missouri Invitational on Table Rock.

By this time, Yelas had firmly established his reputation as a talented and consistent angler. He had qualified for the annual Bassmasters Classic—known as the Super Bowl of bass fishing—in 11 consecutive seasons by earning points for strong finishes in different BASS tournaments. Yet he had never done particularly well in the Classic. His best finish was third place in 1993, but he was never a threat to win that tournament. In fact, his total catch weighed eight pounds less than the winner's.

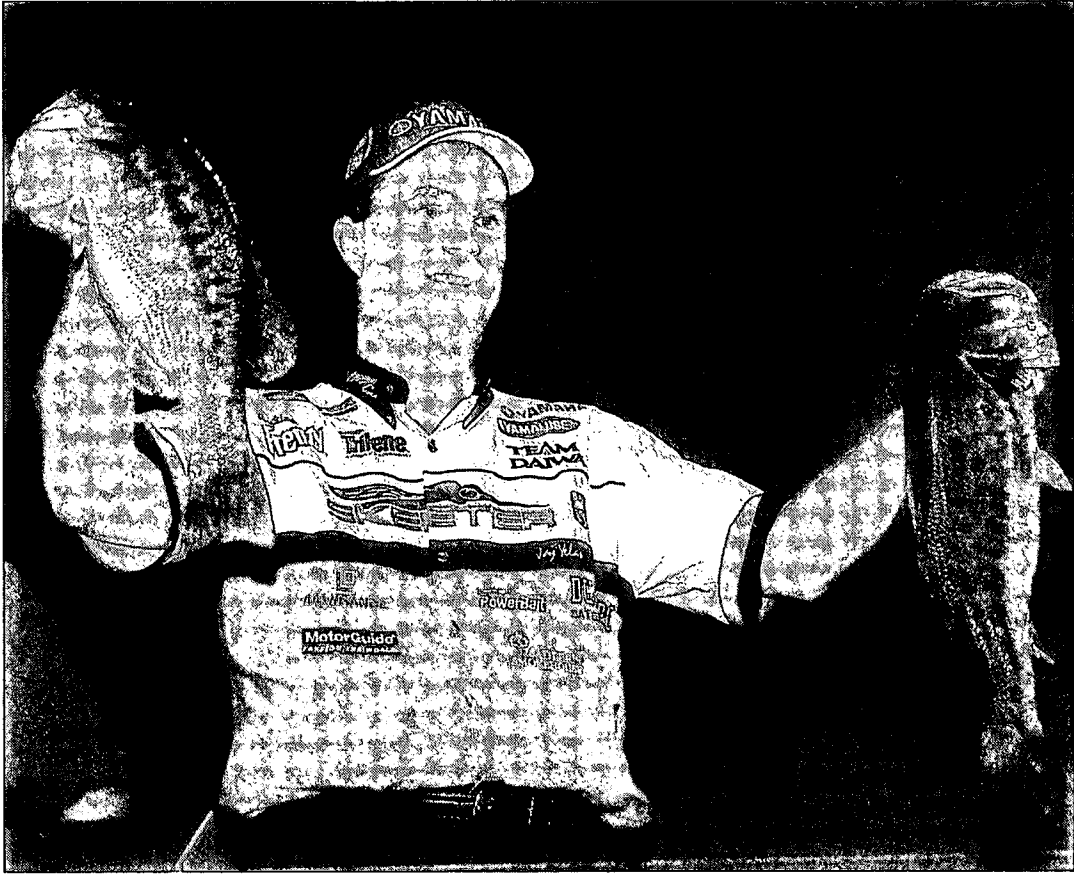
Winning the 2002 Bassmasters Classic Championship

Yelas struggled through the 2002 BASS events he entered. He won only \$15,000 in prize money over the course of the season and barely earned enough points to qualify for the Bassmasters Classic. But he took great care with his preparations and pre-fishing practice sessions and entered the tournament with high hopes.

The 2002 Classic was held on Lake Lay near Birmingham, Alabama. Each of the 40 anglers that qualified for the tournament were issued two standard tackle boxes. They were allowed to fill these boxes, but they could not bring along any other fishing gear. Yelas spent 15 hours packing his boxes. His equipment included 60 crankbaits (diving lures with three hooks), 100 Berkley Power Worms, 100 6-inch Berkley Power Lizards, 40 Berkley Power Craws (plastic crayfish), 40 Berkley Power Grubs, 25 spinnerbaits in various weights, a variety of surface lures, 150 hooks, 60 sinkers, fishing line, scissors, a scale and measuring board, glue, a flashlight, sunglasses, and sunscreen. In a separate bundle he brought seven rods and seven reels.

Once the tournament began, Yelas concentrated his efforts on a spot he had discovered during pre-fishing practice. It was located at the north end of Lake Lay, about a quarter-mile from Logan Martin Dam. He noticed that when water was released from the dam, it flooded some shallow areas and created prime habitat for big bass. He fished this area using a prototype Berkley Jay Yelas Power Jig tipped with a Berkley Power Frog. Yelas's strategy worked so well that he led from the opening day of the tournament. In fact, he was ahead by nearly 10 pounds going into the final day. "It's been a dream week for me," he acknowledged. "Everything is going so much better than I anticipated. I predicted that 35 pounds would win the tournament, and I've got 35 pounds after just two days."

During the three-day tournament, Yelas ended up catching 14 fish totaling 45 pounds, 13 ounces to become the 2002 Bassmasters Classic World



Yelas landed the biggest bass at the 2002 Bassmaster Classic.

Champion. "This is just the thrill of a lifetime for me. Winning the Classic makes your career as a professional fisherman," he said afterward. "What an unbelievably humbling experience it was. . . . The hand of God was on my fishing in a way that I have never experienced before in my entire career." Yelas's catch for the tournament included the largest bass caught by any competitor each day, making him the first angler ever to sweep the daily "big fish" awards at a Bassmasters Classic. "I could do no wrong all week at the Classic," he acknowledged. "I caught the big bass every day of the tournament, an unprecedented feat in Bassmaster history."

Yelas's victory—the fifth of his career—was worth over \$200,000 in prize money. But he maintained that the sweetest part was the support he received afterward. "The best part of winning the Classic for me has been all of the very sincere congratulations I have received from everyone," he noted. "Friends, acquaintances, fans, and peers alike have all been so very gracious in their congratulations. Everyone seems genuinely happy for me. Thank you. You don't know how good that makes me feel. It is the best part of winning."

Claiming the 2002 FLW Angler of the Year Title

Yelas capped off his 2002 season and cemented his place among elite sport fishermen by capturing the FLW Angler of the Year title. The FLW tour (short for Forrest L. Woods, the tour's founder) sponsors six major professional bass-fishing tournaments each year. It is the main national rival to the Bassmasters tour, though many top fishermen compete in both. Yelas had not participated in the FLW tour since 1997, when it made a rule requiring competitors to display only the logos of tour sponsors, rather than the logos of their individual sponsors. Out of respect for his personal sponsors, Yelas chose to fish only in tournaments that allowed freedom in endorsements. But in 2002 Yamaha outboard motors—one of Yelas's major sponsors—signed on as a sponsor of the FLW tour. Yamaha asked Yelas to participate in the tour, and he agreed.

On the FLW tour, fishermen earn points based on their finishing position over the six events. The winning angler in a tournament gets 200 points, second place earns 199 points, and on down the line. The competitor who accumulates the most points during the season wins the prestigious title of FLW Angler of the Year. Although Yelas performed consistently on the FLW tour in 2002, defending champion Kevin Van Dam performed better. In fact, Van Dam held a seemingly insurmountable lead of 28 points entering the final tournament on Lake Champlain in New York. This meant that Yelas would have to finish more than 28 spots ahead of Van Dam in the standings in order to claim the Angler of the Year title.

Yelas recognized that he was not in a favorable position. "Kevin had such a big lead that I had virtually thrown in the towel and dismissed my chances of winning as nonexistent," he admitted. "Up until this tournament, Kevin had a perfect record as a closer. Every time in his career that he had led a tournament or an Angler of the Year race going into the last day or last tournament, he had always won."

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"The best part of winning the Classic for me has been all of the very sincere congratulations I have received from everyone.

Friends, acquaintances, fans, and peers alike have all been so very gracious in their congratulations.

Everyone seems genuinely happy for me. Thank you.

You don't know how good that makes me feel. It is the best part of winning."

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But 2002 was a different story. Feeling very little pressure to perform, Yelas relaxed and finished ninth in the final tournament. In the meantime, Van Dam fell apart and finished 44th, handing Yelas the Angler of the Year title by seven points. "That's not much," Yelas noted. "That's just one fish in a season." The victory brought Yelas \$25,000 and a new boat, as well as the opportunity to have his picture on collectors' boxes of Kellogg's Corn Flakes. It also demonstrated his consistency, just as his Bassmasters Classic

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"They're two entirely different titles," Yelas explained about winning the Angler of the Year title and the Bassmasters Classic tournament. "The Bassmasters Classic says the most about somebody who can withstand the pressure and the spotlight. Angler of the Year shows consistency from tournament to tournament."

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victory had shown his ability to perform under pressure. "They're two entirely different titles," he explained. "The Bassmasters Classic says the most about somebody who can withstand the pressure and the spotlight. Angler of the Year shows consistency from tournament to tournament."

Thanks to his dual titles, Yelas found himself in great demand over the next several months. He received hundreds of phone calls and e-mails from fans, the media, and sponsors. He did numerous interviews and made promotional appearances across the country on behalf of his sponsors. He also wrote a book. Titled *Jay Yelas: A Champion's Journey of Faith, Family, and Fishing: An Autobiography*, it was published in 2003. "It's not a how-to book about how to catch fish. It's just an autobiography about a fisherman," he stated. "My main motivation to write the book is to share the wisdom I

learned over the years. If someone can take that book and read it and take something in it and apply it and give them a better quality of life, then my Classic victory wouldn't just benefit me, but help others, too."

Sharing His Love of Bass Fishing

Yelas has joined the ranks of the world's most successful professional bass fishermen. His victory in the 2002 Bassmasters Classic raised his career earnings to over \$1 million, placing him sixth on the BASS all-time money list. He has posted five career victories on the Bassmasters tour, in addition to 15 finishes in the top three, and 47 finishes in the top 10. He has col-



Yelas with the Bassmaster World Champion trophy, in the middle of a fireworks display, 2002.

lected paychecks in 66 percent of the events he has entered on the pro tour, and he has qualified for 12 consecutive Bassmasters Classics.

Despite his success, Yelas claims that making a career as a professional bass fisherman is not as easy as it might seem. "A professional fisherman today has to be part businessman, part public speaker and educator, and part salesman for his sponsors. You have to work at all facets of those things to be successful today," he explained. "A lot of people think, 'What an easy job that must be, fishing.' But it's fishing against the best fishermen in the world. It's not that easy."

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Yelas's favorite lures are spinnerbaits, jigs, and crankbaits. "I consider the spinnerbait to be one of the most highly versatile lures known to man. And it is an excellent year-round bass bait."

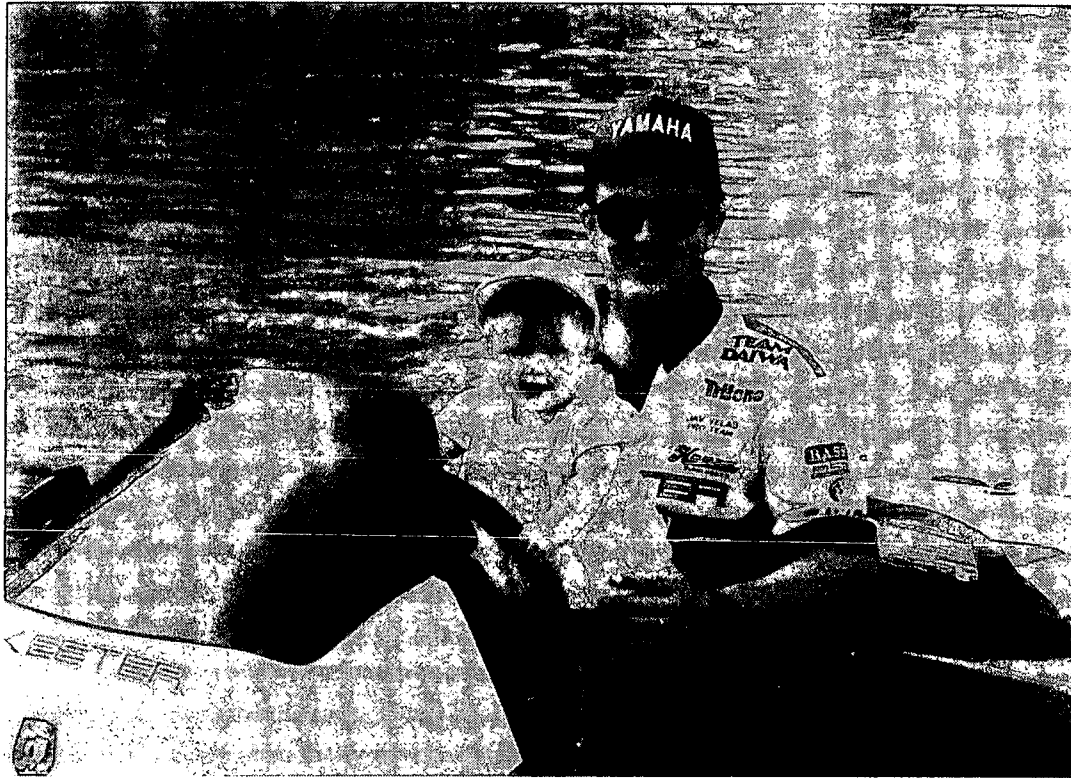
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Yelas also dislikes some of the politics of his sport. For example, prior to the beginning of the 2003 season Anheuser Busch—the makers of Busch and Budweiser beers—signed on to sponsor the BASS Angler of the Year program. In order to participate in the program, competitors are required to put the Busch logo on their boats and clothing. Due in part to his religious beliefs, Yelas refuses to promote alcohol. He is angry that BASS entered into a sponsorship arrangement that would force anglers to promote a specific product against their will. Yelas ultimately agreed to participate in the

Angler of the Year program, but he planned to refuse to accept any prize money from the program as a form of protest against the Busch sponsorship. "This will give me a great platform to share my faith with those who will listen," he explained. "A man who turns down \$100,000 cash based on the principles of his faith will really have an audience. People will be curious. It will be an opportunity for me to glorify Jesus Christ, my priceless Lord and Savior!"

Although some aspects of his career can be difficult, Yelas still loves fishing. His favorite place to fish is Lake Powell in Arizona. "It's the most beautiful lake in the country with its deep, clear water and high red rock walls," he noted. "It's like fishing in the Grand Canyon. I can fish all day and never see another boat. Fishing is fair, but the lake surroundings with its history and natural beauty more than make up for it."

Yelas's favorite lures are spinnerbaits, jigs, and crankbaits. "I consider the spinnerbait to be one of the most highly versatile lures known to man," he



Yelas fishing with baby Hannah.

stated. "And it is an excellent year-round bass bait." The biggest bass Yelas ever caught was an 11 pound, 11 ounce monster from Lake Toho in Florida in 2001. His biggest one-day total catch in a tournament was five bass weighing 36 pounds, nine ounces, also from Lake Toho in 2001. It was the third-biggest stringer (total catch) in BASS tournament history.

Yelas enjoys sharing his love of bass fishing with others. "I've always loved to bass fish, and it's just a God-given talent," he said. "I still love it, and plan on doing it as long as the Good Lord lets me." Yelas feels that his sport has a lot to offer in terms of role models for young people and families. "I think people are disgusted with sports scandals and spoiled athletes and they're looking for positive things they can do with their kids," he stated. "One of the advantages pro fishing has over other sports is that fishermen are a good bunch of guys."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Yelas met his wife, Jillian, in 1989 while he was living in Phoenix. Jill knew very little about bass fishing at that time. "When we met and Jay told me he was a professional bass fisherman, all I could think about was those Sunday shows on TV," she remembered. "I couldn't fathom it."



Yelas and his wife Jillian.

Yelas took the unsuspecting young woman on a fishing trip for their second date. "She never lets me forget that trip to the lake," he said. "I put her in my boat, and proceeded to launch it by just backing down the ramp and stomping on the brakes. By the time I parked and made it back to the ramp, the wind had blown her 50 yards out into the middle of the lake. I yelled, 'Come and get me.' She yelled, 'How?' I said, 'Just put the trolling motor down.' She said, 'What's a trolling motor?' It turned into quite an event."

Yelas and his wife have two daughters, Hannah and Bethany. Both girls enjoy fishing and travel with their father to tournaments when their school schedules permit. "I'm on the road 240 days a year, and time away from family's the hardest thing," Yelas noted. The family lives in Tyler, Texas, which Yelas describes as "a fantastic little city that has just about everything you would find in a big city."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

In his spare time, Yelas enjoys playing golf and gardening. He is an active leader in the Fellowship of Christian Anglers Society (FOCAS). He also makes promotional appearances for his sponsors, which include Skeeter boats, Yamaha outboard motors, Berkley power bait, Daiwa rods and reels, Motorguide trolling motors, Lowrance electronics, and Sadler Smokehouse.

WRITINGS

Jay Yelas: A Champion's Journey of Faith, Family, and Fishing: An Autobiography, 2003

HONORS AND AWARDS

Bassmasters Maryland Top 100, Potomac River: 1993
Bassmasters Superstars, New Orleans: 1995
Bassmasters Missouri Invitational, Lake of the Ozarks: 1997
Bassmasters Missouri Invitational, Table Rock: 2001

Citgo Bassmasters Classic World Champion: 2002
FLW Angler of the Year: 2002

FURTHER READING

Books

Yelas, Jay. *Jay Yelas: A Champion's Journey of Faith, Family, and Fishing: An Autobiography*, 2003

Periodicals

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, June 11, 1995, p.C1
Baltimore Sun, July 27, 2002, p.C1; Dec. 22, 2002, p.D17
Boating World, Nov. 2002, insert sec., p.6
Dallas Morning News, Aug. 1, 2002, p.B13
South Florida Sun-Sentinel, July 27, 2002, p.C11; July 28, 2002, p.C14
Kansas City (Mo.) Star, Apr. 22, 2001, p.C13
New York Times, Aug. 18, 2002, sec. 8, p.12
San Diego Union-Tribune, Jan. 18, 2003, p.D2
USA Today, July 28, 1994, p.C1; Sep. 11, 2002, p.C7

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<http://www.fishingworld.com/Pro-JayYelas/>

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Jay Yelas/Photos: BASS; courtesy Jay Yelas (page 164); BASS; courtesy Jay Yelas (pages 175 and 176).

How to Use the Cumulative Index

Our indexes have a new look. In an effort to make our indexes easier to use, we've combined the Name and General Index into a new, Cumulative Index. This single ready-reference resource covers all the volumes in *Biography Today*, both the general series and the special subject series. The new Cumulative Index contains complete listings of all individuals who have appeared in *Biography Today* since the series began. Their names appear in bold-faced type, followed by the issue in which they appear. The Cumulative Index also includes references for the occupations, nationalities, and ethnic and minority origins of individuals profiled in *Biography Today*.

We have also made some changes to our specialty indexes, the Places of Birth Index and the Birthday Index. To consolidate and to save space, the Places of Birth Index and the Birthday Index will no longer appear in the January and April issues of the softbound subscription series. But these indexes can still be found in the September issue of the softbound subscription series, in the hardbound Annual Cumulation at the end of each year, and in each volume of the special subject series.

General Series

The General Series of *Biography Today* is denoted in the index with the month and year of the issue in which the individual appeared. Each individual also appears in the Annual Cumulation for that year.

bin Laden, Osama Apr 02
Bush, George W. Sep 00; Update 00;
Update 01; Update 02
Clarkson, Kelly Jan 03
Eminem Apr 03
Fuller, Millard Apr 03
Giuliani, Rudolph Sep 02
Holdsclaw, Chamique Sep 00
Lewis, John Jan 03
Roberts, Julia Sep 01
Rowling, J.K. Sep 99; Update 00;
Update 01; Update 02
Spears, Britney Jan 01
Tucker, Chris Jan 01
Wood, Elijah Apr 02

Special Subject Series

The Special Subject Series of *Biography Today* are each denoted in the index with an abbreviated form of the series name, plus the number of the volume in which the individual appears. They are listed as follows.

Adams, Ansel	Artist V.1	(Artists)
Clements, Andrew	Author V.13	(Authors)
Chan, Jackie	PerfArt V.1	(Performing Artists)
Fauci, Anthony	Science V.7	(Scientists & Inventors)
Kidd, Jason	Sport V.9	(Sports)
Peterson, Roger Tory	WorLdr V.1	(World Leaders: Environmental Leaders)
Sadat, Anwar	WorLdr V.2	(World Leaders: Modern African Leaders)
Wolf, Hazel	WorLdr V.3	(World Leaders: Environmental Leaders 2)

Updates

Updated information on selected individuals appears in the Appendix at the end of the *Biography Today* Annual Cumulation. In the index, the original entry is listed first, followed by any updates.

Arafat, Yasir	Sep 94; Update 94; Update 95; Update 96; Update 97; Update 98; Update 00; Update 01; Update 02
Gates, Bill	Apr 93; Update 98; Update 00; Science V.5; Update 01
Griffith Joyner, Florence	Sport V.1; Update 98
Sanders, Barry	Sep 95; Update 99
Spock, Dr. Benjamin	Sep 95; Update 98
Yeltsin, Boris	Apr 92; Update 93; Update 95; Update 96; Update 98; Update 00

Cumulative Index

This cumulative index includes names, occupations, nationalities, and ethnic and minority origins that pertain to all individuals profiled in *Biography Today* since the debut of the series in 1992.

- Aaliyah** Jan 02
Aaron, Hank Sport V.1
Abbey, Edward WorLdr V.1
Abdul, Paula Jan 92; Update 02
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 98; Update 00; Update 01; Update 02
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 Haddock, Doris (Granny D) Sep 00
 Jackson, Jesse Sep 95; Update 01
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2	Asimov, Isaac	1920		Ward, Lloyd D.	1949
3	Fuller, Millard	1935	23	Elion, Gertrude	1918
	Tolkien, J.R.R.	1892		Thiessen, Tiffani-Amber.....	1974
4	Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds	1933	24	Haddock, Doris (Granny D).....	1910
	Runyan, Marla	1969	25	Alley, Kirstie	1955
	Shula, Don.	1930	26	Carter, Vince	1977
6	Van Draanen, Wendelin	?		Morita, Akio	1921
7	Hurston, Zora Neale.....	?1891		Siskel, Gene.....	1946
	Rodriguez, Eloy	1947	27	Tarbox, Katie	1982
8	Hawking, Stephen W.	1942		Lester, Julius	1939
	Spelman, Lucy.....	1963		Vasan, Nina	1984
9	Garcia, Sergio	1980	28	Carter, Nick	1980
	McLean, A.J.	1978		Fatone, Joey.....	1977
	Menchu, Rigoberta.....	1959		Gretzky, Wayne	1961
	Nixon, Richard	1913		Wood, Elijah.....	1981
11	Leopold, Aldo	1887	29	Abbey, Edward	1927
12	Amanpour, Christiane.....	1958		Gilbert, Sara	1975
	Bezos, Jeff.	1964		Hasek, Dominik	1965
	Lasseter, John	?1957		Peet, Bill	1915
	Limbaugh, Rush	1951		Winfrey, Oprah	1954
13	Burnside, Aubyn.....	1985	30	Alexander, Lloyd	1924
	Webb, Alan	1983		Cheney, Dick	1941
14	Lucid, Shannon	1943		Engelbart, Douglas	1925
15	Werbach, Adam	1973	31	Collier, Bryan.....	1967
16	Aaliyah	1979		Flannery, Sarah.....	1982
	Fossey, Dian	1932		Robinson, Jackie	1919
	Lipsyte, Robert	1938		Ryan, Nolan.....	1947
17	Carrey, Jim.	1962		Timberlake, Justin.....	1981
	Cormier, Robert	1925	February		Year
	Jones, James Earl.....	1931	1	Cabot, Meg	1967
	Lewis, Shari.....	?1934		Hughes, Langston	1902
	Tartakovsky, Genndy.....	1970		Spinelli, Jerry.....	1941
18	Ali, Muhammad	1942		Yeltsin, Boris	1931
	Chavez, Julz.	1962	2	Shakira	1977
	Messier, Mark	1961	3	Heimlich, Henry	1920
19	Askins, Renee	1959		Nixon, Joan Lowery	1927
	Johnson, John	1918		Rockwell, Norman	1894
21	Domingo, Placido.....	1941		Sanborn, Ryne.....	1989
	Nicklaus, Jack	1940	4	Parks, Rosa	1913
	Olajuwon, Hakeem	1963	5	Aaron, Hank	1934

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February (continued)		Year
6	Leakey, Mary	1913
	Rosa, Emily	1987
	Zmeskal, Kim	1976
7	Brooks, Garth	1962
	Wang, An	1920
	Wilder, Laura Ingalls	1867
8	Grisham, John	1955
9	Love, Susan	1948
10	Konigsburg, E. L.	1930
	Norman, Greg	1955
11	Aniston, Jennifer	1969
	Brandy	1979
	Rowland, Kelly	1981
	Yolen, Jane	1939
12	Blume, Judy	1938
	Kurzweil, Raymond	1948
	Small, David	1945
	Woodson, Jacqueline	?1964
13	Moss, Randy	1977
	Sleator, William	1945
15	Groening, Matt	1954
	Jagr, Jaromir	1972
	Sones, Sonya	1952
	Van Dyken, Amy	1973
16	Freeman, Cathy	1973
17	Anderson, Marian	1897
	Hargreaves, Alison	1962
	Jordan, Michael	1963
18	Morrison, Toni	1931
19	Tan, Amy	1952
20	Adams, Ansel	1902
	Barkley, Charles	1963
	Cobain, Kurt	1967
	Crawford, Cindy	1966
	Hernandez, Livan	1975
	Littrell, Brian	1975
21	Carpenter, Mary Chapin	1958
	Hewitt, Jennifer Love	1979
	Jordan, Barbara	1936
	Lewis, John	1940
	Mugabe, Robert	1924
22	Barrymore, Drew	1975
	Fernandez, Lisa	1971
	Gorey, Edward	1925
23	Brown, Claude	1937
24	Jobs, Steven	1955
	Vernon, Mike	1963
	Whitstone, Heather	1973
25	Voigt, Cynthia	1942
26	Thompson, Jenny	1973
27	Clinton, Chelsea	1980
	Hunter-Gault, Charlayne	1942
28	Andretti, Mario	1940
	Pauling, Linus	1901
March		Year
1	Ellison, Ralph Waldo	1914
	Murie, Olaus J.	1889
	Nielsen, Jerri	1952
	Rabin, Yitzhak	1922
	Zamora, Pedro	1972
2	Gorbachev, Mikhail	1931
	Satcher, David	1941
	Seuss, Dr.	1904
3	Hooper, Geoff	1979
	Joyner-Kersee, Jackie	1962
	MacLachlan, Patricia	1938
4	Armstrong, Robb	1962
	Morgan, Garrett	1877
5	Margulis, Lynn	1938
6	Ashley, Maurice	1966
7	McCarty, Oseola	1908
8	Prinze, Freddie Jr.	1976
10	Guy, Jasmine	1964
	Miller, Shannon	1977
	Wolf, Hazel	1898
12	Hamilton, Virginia	1936
	Nye, Naomi Shihab	1952
13	Van Meter, Vicki	1982
14	Dayne, Ron	1977
	Hanson, Taylor	1983
	Williamson, Kevin	1965
15	Ginsburg, Ruth Bader	1933
	White, Ruth	1942
16	O'Neal, Shaquille	1972
17	Hamm, Mia	1972
	Nureyev, Rudolf	1938
18	Blair, Bonnie	1964
	de Klerk, F.W.	1936
	Griese, Brian	1975
	Queen Latifah	1970
19	Blanchard, Rachel	1976
20	Lee, Spike	1957
	Lowry, Lois	1937
	Sachar, Louis	1954
21	Gilbert, Walter	1932
	O'Donnell, Rosie	1962
22	Shatner, William	1931

March (continued)

	Year
23 Kidd, Jason	1973
24 Manning, Peyton	1976
25 Dragila, Stacy	1971
Franklin, Aretha	1942
Granato, Cammi	1971
Lovell, Jim	1928
Park, Linda Sue	1960
Steinem, Gloria	1934
Swoopes, Sheryl	1971
26 Allen, Marcus	1960
Erdős, Paul	1913
O'Connor, Sandra Day	1930
Stockton, John	1962
Witherspoon, Reese	1976
27 Carey, Mariah	1970
Wrede, Patricia C.	1953
28 James, Cheryl	
McEntire, Reba	1955
Tompkins, Douglas	1943
29 Capriati, Jennifer	1976
30 Dion, Celine	1968
Hammer	1933
31 Caplan, Arthur	1950
Chavez, Cesar	1927
Gore, Al	1948
Howe, Gordie	1928

April

	Year
1 Maathai, Wangari	1940
2 Carvey, Dana	1955
3 Garth, Jennie	1972
Goodall, Jane	1934
Street, Picabo	1971
4 Angelou, Maya	1928
Mirra, Dave	1974
5 Peck, Richard	1934
Powell, Colin	1937
6 Watson, James D.	1928
7 Chan, Jackie	1954
Douglas, Marjory Stoneman	1890
Forman, Michele	1946
8 Annan, Kofi	1938
9 Haddix, Margaret Peterson	1964
10 Madden, John	1936
12 Cleary, Beverly	1916
Danes, Claire	1979
Doherty, Shannen	1971
Hawk, Tony	1968
Letterman, David	1947
Soto, Gary	1952

13 Brandis, Jonathan	1976
Henry, Marguerite	1902
14 Collins, Francis	1950
Gellar, Sarah Michelle	1977
Maddux, Greg	1966
Rose, Pete	1941
15 Martin, Bernard	1954
Watson, Emma	1990
16 Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem	1947
Atwater-Rhodes, Amelia	1984
Selena	1971
Williams, Garth	1912
17 Champagne, Larry III	1985
18 Hart, Melissa Joan	1976
20 Brundtland, Gro Harlem	1939
21 Muir, John	1838
22 Levi-Montalcini, Rita	1909
Oppenheimer, J. Robert	1904
23 Watson, Barry	1974
24 Clarkson, Kelly	1982
25 Fitzgerald, Ella	1917
26 Giff, Patricia Reilly	1935
Nelson, Marilyn	1946
Pei, I.M.	1917
27 Wilson, August	1945
28 Alba, Jessica	1981
Baker, James	1930
Duncan, Lois	1934
Hussein, Saddam	1937
Kaunda, Kenneth	1924
Lee, Harper	1926
Leno, Jay	1950
29 Agassi, Andre	1970
Earnhardt, Dale	1951
Seinfeld, Jerry	1954
30 Dunst, Kirsten	1982

May

	Year
2 Hughes, Sarah	1985
Spock, Benjamin	1903
4 Bass, Lance	1979
5 Lionni, Leo	1910
Maxwell, Jody-Anne	1986
Opdyke, Irene Gut	1922
Strasser, Todd	1950
WilderBrathwaite, Gloria	1964
7 Land, Edwin	1909
8 Attenborough, David	1926
Iglesias, Enrique	1975
Meltzer, Milton	1915

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May (continued)		Year		Year	
9	Bergen, Candice	1946	6	Rylant, Cynthia	1954
	Yzerman, Steve	1965	7	Brooks, Gwendolyn	1917
10	Cooney, Caroline B.	1947		Iverson, Allen	1975
	Curtis, Christopher Paul	1953		Oleynik, Larisa	1981
	Galdikas, Biruté	1946	8	Berners-Lee, Tim	1955
	Jamison, Judith	1944		Bush, Barbara	1925
	Ochoa, Ellen	1958		Davenport, Lindsay	1976
11	Farrakhan, Louis	1933		Edelman, Marian Wright	1939
12	Mowat, Farley	1921		Wayans, Keenen Ivory	1958
13	Pascal, Francine	1938		Wright, Frank Lloyd	1869
	Rodman, Dennis	1961	9	Portman, Natalie	1981
14	Lucas, George	1944	10	Frank, Anne	1929
	Smith, Emmitt	1969		Lipinski, Tara	1982
15	Albright, Madeleine	1937		Sendak, Maurice	1928
	Almond, David	1951		Shea, Jim, Jr.	1968
	Johns, Jasper	1930	11	Cousteau, Jacques	1910
	Zindel, Paul	1936		Montana, Joe	1956
16	Coville, Bruce	1950	12	Bush, George	1924
17	Paulsen, Gary	1939	13	Allen, Tim	1953
18	John Paul II	1920		Alvarez, Luis W.	1911
19	Brody, Jane	1941		Christo	1935
	Garnett, Kevin	1976		Nash, John Forbes, Jr.	1928
	Hansberry, Lorraine	1930	14	Bourke-White, Margaret	1904
20	Stewart, Tony	1971		Graf, Steffi	1969
21	Robinson, Mary	1944		Summitt, Pat	1952
22	Ohno, Apolo	1982		Yep, Laurence	1948
23	Bardeen, John	1908	15	Horner, Jack	1946
	Jewel	1974		Jacques, Brian	1939
	O'Dell, Scott	1898	16	McClintock, Barbara	1902
24	Beachley, Layne	1972		Shakur, Tupac	1971
	Dumars, Joe	1963	17	Gingrich, Newt	1943
	Gilman, Billy	1988		Jansen, Dan	1965
26	Hill, Lauryn	1975		Williams, Venus	1980
	Ride, Sally	1951	18	da Silva, Fabiola	1979
27	Carson, Rachel	1907		Johnson, Angela	1961
	Kerr, M.E.	1927		Morris, Nathan	1971
28	Giuliani, Rudolph	1944		Van Allsburg, Chris	1949
	Johnston, Lynn	1947	19	Abdul, Paula	1962
	Shabazz, Betty	1936		Aung San Suu Kyi	1945
29	Clements, Andrew	1949		Muldowney, Shirley	1940
30	Cohen, Adam Ezra	1979	20	Goodman, John	1952
?	McGruder, Aaron	1974	21	Bhutto, Benazir	1953
				Breathed, Berke	1957
June		Year	22	Bradley, Ed	1941
1	Lalas, Alexi	1970		Daly, Carson	1973
	Morissette, Alanis	1974		Warner, Kurt	1971
4	Kistler, Darci	1964	23	Rudolph, Wilma	1940
	Nelson, Gaylord	1916		Thomas, Clarence	1948
5	Scarry, Richard	1919			

June (continued)		Year		Year
25	Carle, Eric	1929	11	Cisneros, Henry 1947
	Gibbs, Lois	1951		White, E.B. 1899
26	Ammann, Simon	1981	12	Bauer, Joan 1951
	Harris, Bernard	1956		Cosby, Bill 1937
	Jeter, Derek	1974		Johnson, Johanna 1983
	LeMond, Greg.	1961		Yamaguchi, Kristi 1972
	Vick, Michael	1980	13	Ford, Harrison 1942
27	Babbitt, Bruce	1938		Stewart, Patrick 1940
	Dunbar, Paul Laurence	1872	15	Aristide, Jean-Bertrand. 1953
	Perot, H. Ross	1930		Ventura, Jesse. 1951
28	Elway, John	1960	16	Johnson, Jimmy 1943
29	Jiménez, Francisco	1943		Sanders, Barry 1968
30	Ballard, Robert	1942	17	An Na. 1972
				Stepanek, Mattie 1990
July		Year	18	Diesel, Vin 1967
1	Brower, David	1912		Glenn, John 1921
	Calderone, Mary S.	1904		Lemelson, Jerome 1923
	Diana, Princess of Wales	1961		Mandela, Nelson. 1918
	Duke, David	1950	19	Tarvin, Herbert. 1985
	Lewis, Carl.	1961	20	Hillary, Sir Edmund 1919
	McCully, Emily Arnold.	1939	21	Chastain, Brandi 1968
2	Bethe, Hans A.	1906		Reno, Janet 1938
	Fox, Vicente	1942		Riley, Dawn 1964
	Gantos, Jack	1951		Stern, Isaac. 1920
	George, Jean Craighead	1919		Williams, Robin. 1952
	Lynch, Chris	1962	22	Calder, Alexander. 1898
	Marshall, Thurgood	1908		Dole, Bob. 1923
	Petty, Richard	1937		Hinton, S.E. 1948
	Thomas, Dave	1932	23	Haile Selassie 1892
3	Simmons, Ruth	1945		Williams, Michelle 1980
5	Watterson, Bill.	1958	24	Abzug, Bella 1920
6	Bush, George W.	1946		Bonds, Barry 1964
	Dalai Lama	1935		Krone, Julie 1963
	Dumitriu, Ioana	1976		Lopez, Jennifer. 1970
7	Chagall, Marc	1887		Moss, Cynthia 1940
	Heinlein, Robert	1907		Wilson, Mara 1987
	Kwan, Michelle	1980	25	Payton, Walter 1954
	Otto, Sylke.	1969	26	Berenstain, Jan 1923
	Sakic, Joe	1969		Clark, Kelly 1983
	Stachowski, Richie	1985	27	Dunlap, Alison. 1969
8	Hardaway, Anfernee "Penny"	1971		Rodriguez, Alex. 1975
	Sealfon, Rebecca	1983	28	Davis, Jim. 1945
9	Farmer, Nancy.	1941		Pottter, Beatrix 1866
	Hanks, Tom.	1956	29	Burns, Ken. 1953
	Hassan II	1929		Creech, Sharon 1945
	Krim, Mathilde	1926		Dole, Elizabeth Hanford. 1936
	Lee, Jeanette	1971		Jennings, Peter 1938
	Sacks, Oliver	1933		Morris, Wanya. 1973
10	Ashe, Arthur	1943	30	Allen, Tori. 1988
	Benson, Mildred.	1905		Hill, Anita 1956
	Boulmerka, Hassiba	1969		Moore, Henry 1898
				Schroeder, Pat. 1940

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July (continued)

	Year
31 Cronin, John	1950
Radcliffe, Daniel	1989
Reid Banks, Lynne	1929
Rowling, J. K.	1965
Weinke, Chris	1972

August

	Year
1 Brown, Ron	1941
Coolio	1963
Garcia, Jerry	1942
2 Baldwin, James	1924
Healy, Bernadine	1944
3 Brady, Tom	1977
Roper, Dee Dee	?
Savimbi, Jonas	1934
4 Gordon, Jeff	1971
5 Córdova, France	1947
Ewing, Patrick	1962
Jackson, Shirley Ann	1946
6 Cooney, Barbara	1917
Robinson, David	1965
Warhol, Andy	?1928
7 Byars, Betsy	1928
Duchovny, David	1960
Leakey, Louis	1903
Villa-Komaroff, Lydia	1947
8 Boyd, Candy Dawson	1946
Chasez, JC	1976
9 Anderson, Gillian	1968
Holdslaw, Chamique	1977
Houston, Whitney	1963
McKissack, Patricia C.	1944
Sanders, Deion	1967
Travers, P.L.	?1899
11 Haley, Alex	1921
Hogan, Hulk	1953
Rowan, Carl T.	1925
Wozniak, Steve	1950
12 Barton, Hazel	1971
Martin, Ann M.	1955
McKissack, Fredrick L.	1939
Myers, Walter Dean	1937
Sampras, Pete	1971
13 Battle, Kathleen	1948
Castro, Fidel	1927
14 Berry, Halle	?1967
Johnson, Magic	1959
Larson, Gary	1950

15 Affleck, Benjamin	1972
Ellerbee, Linda	1944
16 Farrell, Suzanne	1945
Fu Mingxia	1978
Robison, Emily	1972
Thampy, George	1987
18 Danziger, Paula	1944
Murie, Margaret	1902
19 Clinton, Bill	1946
Soren, Tabitha	1967
20 Chung, Connie	1946
Dakides, Tara	1975
Milosevic, Slobodan	1941
21 Chamberlain, Wilt	1936
Draper, Sharon	1952
Toro, Natalia	1984
22 Bradbury, Ray	1920
Dorough, Howie	1973
Schwarzkopf, H. Norman	1934
23 Bryant, Kobe	1978
Novello, Antonia	1944
Phoenix, River	1970
24 Arafat, Yasir	1929
Dai Qing	1941
Ripken, Cal, Jr.	1960
25 Case, Steve	1958
Wolff, Virginia Euwer	1937
26 Burke, Christopher	1965
Culkin, Macaulay	1980
Sabin, Albert	1906
Teresa, Mother	1910
Tuttle, Merlin	1941
27 Adams, Yolanda	1961
Moseley, Jonny	1975
Nechita, Alexandra	1985
Rinaldi, Ann	1934
28 Dove, Rita	1952
Evans, Janet	1971
Peterson, Roger Tory	1908
Priestley, Jason	1969
Rimes, LeAnn	1982
Twain, Shania	1965
29 Grandin, Temple	1947
Hesse, Karen	1952
McCain, John	1936
30 Earle, Sylvia	1935
Roddick, Andy	1982
Williams, Ted	1918
31 Perlman, Itzhak	1945

September		Year			
1	Estefan, Gloria	1958	25	Gwaltney, John Langston	1928
	Guy, Rosa	1925		Locklear, Heather	1961
	Smyers, Karen	1961		Lopez, Charlotte	1976
2	Bearden, Romare	?1912		Pinkney, Andrea Davis	1963
	Galeczka, Chris	1981		Pippen, Scottie	1965
	Lisanti, Mariangela	1983		Reeve, Christopher	1952
	Mohajer, Dineh	1972		Smith, Will	1968
	Yelas, Jay	1965		Walters, Barbara	1931
3	Delany, Bessie	1891	26	Mandela, Winnie	1934
4	Knowles, Beyoncé	1981		Stockman, Shawn	1972
	Wright, Richard	1908		Williams, Serena	1981
5	Guisewite, Cathy	1950	27	Handford, Martin	1956
6	Fiorina, Carly	1954	28	Cray, Seymour	1925
7	Lawrence, Jacob	1917		Duff, Hilary	1987
	Moses, Grandma	1860		Pak, Se Ri	1977
✓	Pippig, Uta	1965	29	Berenstain, Stan	1923
	Scurry, Briana	1971		Guey, Wendy	1983
8	Prelutsky, Jack	1940		Gumbel, Bryant	1948
	Scieszka, Jon	1954	30	Hingis, Martina	1980
	Thomas, Jonathan Taylor	1982		Moceanu, Dominique	1981
10	Gould, Stephen Jay	1941	October		Year
	Johnson, Randy	1963	1	Carter, Jimmy	1924
13	Johnson, Michael	1967		McGwire, Mark	1963
	Monroe, Bill	1911	2	Leibovitz, Annie	1949
	Taylor, Mildred D.	1943	3	Campbell, Neve	1973
14	Armstrong, William H.	1914		Herriot, James	1916
	Stanford, John	1938		Richardson, Kevin	1972
15	dePaola, Tomie	1934		Winfield, Dave	1951
	Marino, Dan	1961	4	Cushman, Karen	1941
16	Bledel, Alexis	1981		Kamler, Kenneth	1947
	Dahl, Roald	1916		Rice, Anne	1941
	Gates, Henry Louis, Jr.	1950	5	Fitzhugh, Louise	1928
17	Burger, Warren	1907		Hill, Grant	1972
18	Armstrong, Lance	1971		Lemieux, Mario	1965
	Carson, Ben	1951		Lin, Maya	1959
	de Mille, Agnes	1905		Roy, Patrick	1965
	Fields, Debbi	1956		Winslet, Kate	1975
	Nakamura, Leanne	1982	6	Bennett, Cherie	1960
19	Delany, Sadie	1889		Lobo, Rebecca	1973
21	Fielder, Cecil	1963	7	Ma, Yo-Yo	1955
	Hill, Faith	1967	8	Jackson, Jesse	1941
	Jones, Chuck	1912		Ringgold, Faith	1930
	King, Stephen	1947		Stine, R.L.	1943
	Nkrumah, Kwame	1909		Winans, CeCe	1964
22	Richardson, Dot	1961	9	Bryan, Zachery Ty	1981
23	Nevelson, Louise	1899		Senghor, Léopold Sédar	1906
24	George, Eddie	1973		Sorenstam, Annika	1970
	Ochoa, Severo	1905	10	Favre, Brett	1969
				Saro-Wiwa, Ken	1941

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October (continued)		Year	November		Year
11	Murray, Ty	1969	2	lang, k.d.	1961
	Perry, Luke	?1964	3	Arnold, Roseanne	1952
	Young, Steve	1961		Ho, David	1952
12	Childress, Alice	?1920		Kiraly, Karch	1960
	Jones, Marion	1975	4	Bush, Laura	1946
	Maguire, Martie	1969		Combs, Sean (Puff Daddy)	1969
	Ward, Charlie	1970		Handler, Ruth	1916
13	Carter, Chris	1956	7	Bahrke, Shannon	1980
	Kerrigan, Nancy	1969		Canady, Alexa	1950
	Rice, Jerry	1962	8	Mittermeier, Russell A.	1949
14	Daniel, Beth	1956	9	Denton, Sandi	
	Maines, Natalie	1974		Sagan, Carl	1934
	Mobutu Sese Seko	1930	10	Bates, Daisy	?1914
	Usher	1978	11	Blige, Mary J.	1971
15	Iacocca, Lee A.	1924		DiCaprio, Leonardo	1974
16	Stewart, Kordell	1972		Vonnegut, Kurt	1922
17	Eminem	1972	12	Andrews, Ned	1980
	Jemison, Mae	1956		Blackmun, Harry	1908
	Kirkpatrick, Chris	1971		Harding, Tonya	1970
18	Bird, Sue	1980		Sosa, Sammy	1968
	Foreman, Dave	1946	13	Goldberg, Whoopi	1949
	Marsalis, Wynton	1961	14	Boutros-Ghali, Boutros	1922
	Navratilova, Martina	1956		Hussein, King	1935
	Suzuki, Shinichi	1898		Lindgren, Astrid	1907
19	Pullman, Philip	1946		Rice, Condoleezza	1954
20	Kenyatta, Jomo	?1891	15	O'Keeffe, Georgia	1887
	Mantle, Mickey	1931		Pinkwater, Daniel	1941
	Pinsky, Robert	1940	16	Baiul, Oksana	1977
21	Gillespie, Dizzy	1956		Miyamoto, Shigeru	1952
	Le Guin, Ursula K.	1929	17	Fuentes, Daisy	1966
22	Hanson, Zac	1985		Hanson, Ike	1980
23	Anderson, Laurie Halse	1961	18	Driscoll, Jean	1966
	Crichton, Michael	1942		Klug, Chris	1972
	Pelé	1940		Mankiller, Wilma	1945
25	Martinez, Pedro	1971		Vidal, Christina	1981
26	Clinton, Hillary Rodham	1947	19	Collins, Eileen	1956
27	Anderson, Terry	1947		Devers, Gail	1966
	Morrison, Lillian	1917		Glover, Savion	1973
28	Gates, Bill	1955		Strug, Kerri	1977
	Roberts, Julia	1967	21	Aikman, Troy	1966
	Salk, Jonas	1914		Griffey, Ken, Jr.	1969
29	Flowers, Vonetta	1973		Schwikert, Tasha	1984
	Ryder, Winona	1971		Speare, Elizabeth George	1908
31	Candy, John	1950	24	Ndeti, Cosmas	1971
	Paterson, Katherine	1932	25	Grant, Amy	1960
	Patterson, Ryan	1983		Mathis, Clint	1976
	Pauley, Jane	1950		McNabb, Donovan	1976
	Tucker, Chris	1973		Thomas, Lewis	1913

November (continued)		Year		Year	
26	Patrick, Ruth	1907	16	Bailey, Donovan	1967
	Pine, Elizabeth Michele	1975		McCary, Michael	1971
	Schulz, Charles	1922		Mead, Margaret	1901
27	Nye, Bill	1955	17	Kielburger, Craig	1982
	White, Jaleel	1977	18	Aguilera, Christina	1980
29	L'Engle, Madeleine	1918		Holmes, Katie	1978
	Lewis, C. S.	1898		Pitt, Brad	1964
	Tubman, William V. S.	1895		Sanchez Vicario, Arantxa	1971
30	Jackson, Bo	1962		Spielberg, Steven	1947
	Parks, Gordon	1912	19	Morrison, Sam	1936
				Sapp, Warren	1972
				White, Reggie	1961
December		Year	20	Uchida, Mitsuko	1948
2	Hendrickson, Sue	1949		Zirkle, Aliy	1969
	Macaulay, David	1946	21	Evert, Chris	1954
	Seles, Monica	1973		Griffith Joyner, Florence	1959
	Spears, Britney	1981		Stiles, Jackie	1978
	Watson, Paul	1950		Webb, Karrie	1974
3	Kim Dae-jung	?1925	22	Pinkney, Jerry	1939
	Filipovic, Zlata	1980	23	Avi	1937
5	Muniz, Frankie	1985		Harbaugh, Jim	1963
6	Risca, Viviana	1982		Lowman, Meg	1953
7	Bird, Larry	1956	24	Fauci, Anthony S.	1940
	Carter, Aaron	1987		Flake, Sharon	1955
8	Rivera, Diego	1886		Lowe, Alex	1958
9	Hopper, Grace Murray	1906		Martin, Ricky	1971
12	Bialik, Mayim	1975	25	Ryan, Pam Muñoz	1951
	Frankenthaler, Helen	1928		Sadat, Anwar	1918
	Sinatra, Frank	1915	26	Butcher, Susan	1954
13	Fedorov, Sergei	1969	27	Roberts, Cokie	1943
	Pierce, Tamora	1954	28	Lee, Stan	1922
14	Jackson, Shirley	1916		Washington, Denzel	1954
15	Aidid, Mohammed Farah	1934	30	Willingham, Tyrone	1953
	Mendes, Chico	1944		Woods, Tiger	1975
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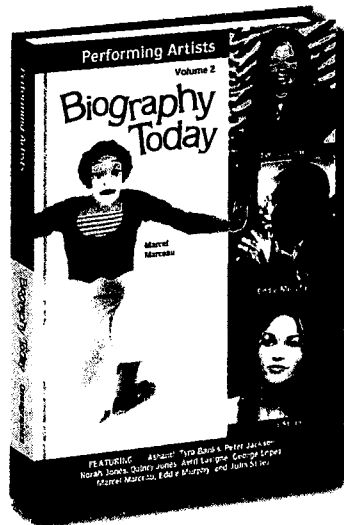
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