

# [***Kyrie Irving s New Shoe Deal With China s Anta: Here s What We Know***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:68P5-4191-JBCM-F01W-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 825 words

**Byline:** William Skipworth, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** The deal comes seven months after Irving was famously dropped from Nike and suspended for an antisemitic post.

**Body**

**Topline**

NBA star Kyrie Irving inked a shoe deal with Chinese Sports brand Anta,the company announced Tuesday a victory for the often controversial sports star who was shunned by U.S. brands last year after promoting an antisemitic film on social media and reigniting questions over the NBA s relationship with China.

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Dallas Mavericks guard Kyrie Irving dribbles during the team's game against the Sacramento Kings in Dallas on April 5. (AP Photo/Sam Hodde, File)

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**Key Facts**

The involvement of a Chinese company in this deal renews questions about how the NBA has generally avoided any criticism of China, one of the league s most important new audiences.

Criticisms stretchback to 2019when Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey deleted a tweet expressing support for Hong Kong protesters and the NBA and Rockets distanced themselves from the message after the league faced boycotts China, one of its fastest growing markets more than 500 million people watched games the season prior and the league had just secured a $1.5 billion streaming deal in the country,the Associated Press reportedat the time.

The deal also comes seven months after Nike canceled Irving s estimated $11 million annual deal (while the Brooklyn Nets suspended him without pay) after he promoted a documentary widely seen as antisemitic, and initially refused to apologize for it.

In addition to that post, Irving has made headlines for a number of other controversial decisions, including his refusal to take to Covid-19 vaccine and his suggestion the Earth is flat.

How much Irving will be paid in thereportedfive-year deal, which gives him the unique title of chief creative officer, was not released.

Additionally, as part of the deal, Irving will be tasked with recruiting more basketball players, independent brands, influential figures in pop culture, artists, musicians, pioneers in environmentalism, trailblazers in humanitarianism and designers to also collaborate with him to create additional product lines under Kyrie's signature line, the company said in a statement announcing the deal.

**Crucial Quote**

Irving said the opportunity to be chief creative officer is more than just a realization of my dreams, describing it as the perfect opportunity for me, an individual who always dreams big and values independent thinking, to leverage my artistic talents to build, create, and unify the culture both on and off court."

**Chief Critics**

Enes Kanter Freedom, who was selected third in the 2011 NBA and has played for several teams including the Boston Celtics, has repeatedly claimed, including duringa congressional hearing Tuesday, he was blacklisted from the NBA after he wore shoes with messages highlighting China s persecution of Tibetans and Uyghurs, a move that prompted China to ban his team s games from being televised in the country. Freedom was cut from the league in February 2022 and hasn t played in a game since, something he alleges is because of his activism. Dave Zirin, author of nearly a dozen books on sports ***politics*** and an MSNBC columnist,wrotethe NBA s silence on China proves it's less interested in human rights than the bottom line.

**Key Background**

Irving plays for the Dallas Mavericks, where he signed a three-year, $126 million extension this month, and has been in the league since 2011. He s a three-time all-star and won an NBA championship in 2016 with the Cleveland Cavaliers alongside LeBron James. In October 2022, Irving tweeted (he has since deleted the tweet) a link to Hebrews to Negroes: Wake Up Black America on Amazon, a 2018 film that falsely asserts Black Americans are the true descendents of the biblical Israelites, that there is an International Jewish conspiracy to oppress Black people and that the Holocaust didn t happen, among other things. That tweet prompted the Nets to suspend him and Nike, who had created Irving s signature shoe since 2014, to cut ties with Irving and cancel the release of the Kyrie 8, the next iteration on Irving s shoe line, that November. After initially refusing to apologize, Irving eventually relented,saying on social mediathat he didn t realize the film contained false statements, narratives and language that were untrue and offensive to the Jewish Race/Religion. However, he deleted that post in February after demanding a trade from the Nets and joining the Mavericks.

**Further Reading**

Mavericks' Kyrie Irving partners with ANTA on new shoe deal(ESPN)

Kyrie Irving Antisemitism Controversy: Nike Latest To Drop NBA Star(Forbes)

Kyrie Irving Reportedly Traded To Dallas Mavericks From Brooklyn Nets(Forbes)

Nike Permanently Dumps Kyrie Irving After Antisemitic Tweet(Forbes)

Kyrie Irving Deletes Social Media Apology For Antisemitic Post After Trade To Mavericks(Forbes)

**CORRECTION (7/12): This story has been updated to clarify Irving** s**$126 million deal is with the Mavericks, not Anta**.

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