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(He's Not Alone)

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BOLT

*The Olympics Will Belong
(Again) to the Fastest Human Ever*

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JULY 18, 2016
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Robert Beck (Bolt); Noah Graham/
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MERIT BADGE

The Cubs got off to their fastest start since 1918, thanks in no small part to Rizzo's .299 average, 21 homers and league-leading OPS.

Photograph by
Patrick Gorski/Icon
Sportswire/AP



Sports Illustrated



QB or Not QB

For college coaches, the search for the next great quarterback requires patience and persistence. To better understand the process, Campus Rush dived deep with an eight-part series on the recruiting, development and evolution of a quarterback. Go to [CampusRush.com](#) for Lindsay Schnell's examination of the latest trend in recruiting—private quarterback coaches; a look at some of the nation's top signal-callers, including Georgia's **Jacob Eason**; and QB **Trevor Knight**'s essay on his decision to transfer from Oklahoma to Texas A&M.



SI.COM

The Second Act



With the first half of the MLB season in the books, SI.com takes a look at the top performers so far. Which teams are headed for October? Who's on pace to take home the MVP and Cy Young? SI baseball expert Tom Verducci shares his insights, as well as a few bold predictions, his players to watch for the second half and video analysis of every team. Catch it all at [SI.com/mlb](#)

SI VAULT

Digital Bonus

Upside Down

From the SI Vault | July 15, 1991



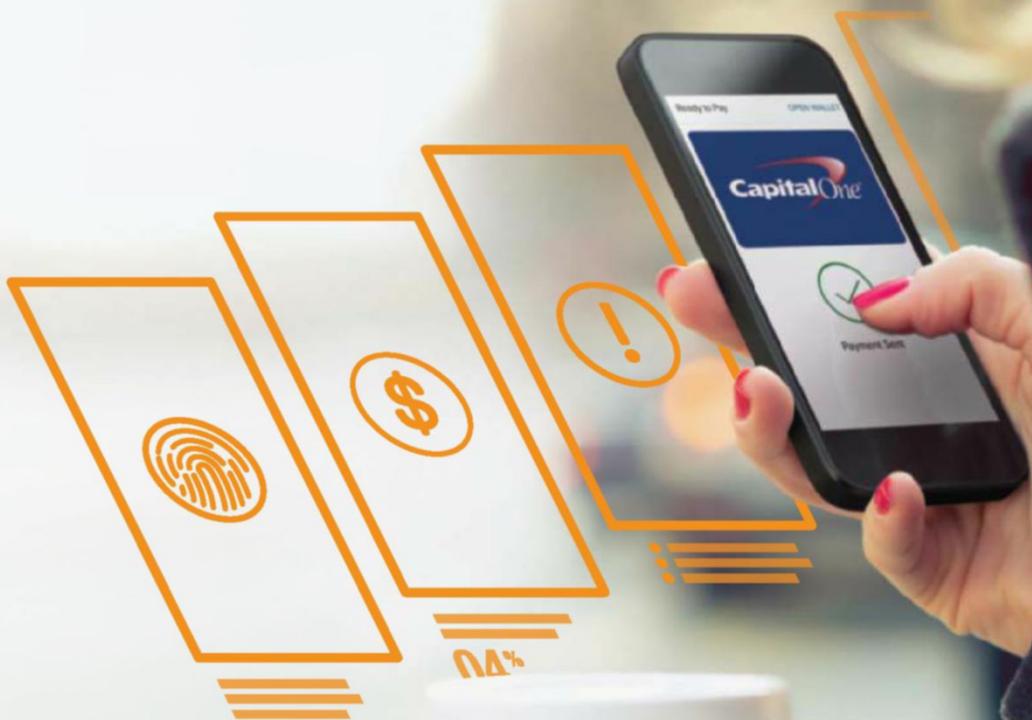
At age 22, **Steffi Graf** emerged from 18 months of frustration to win her third Wimbledon title, the 10th Grand Slam championship of her career
By Sally Jenkins

To read this and other stories from the Sports Illustrated archives, go to [SI.com/vault](#)

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In the 2014 Finals, Duncan made the sort of emphatic throwdown that belied his laid-back Virgin Islands upbringing (right, in 1995).



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Leading Off

The High Time of Tim

By Jack McCallum

■ During interviews with Tim Duncan (a phrase roughly equivalent to *during photo sessions with the snow leopard*) the Spurs' immortal never resisted an opportunity to josh with a teammate who happened to walk by. It certainly disturbed the rhythm of the conversation—if it can be said that one rhythmically conversed with Duncan—but he wasn't sending a message to the reporter, but rather to the teammate. It said:

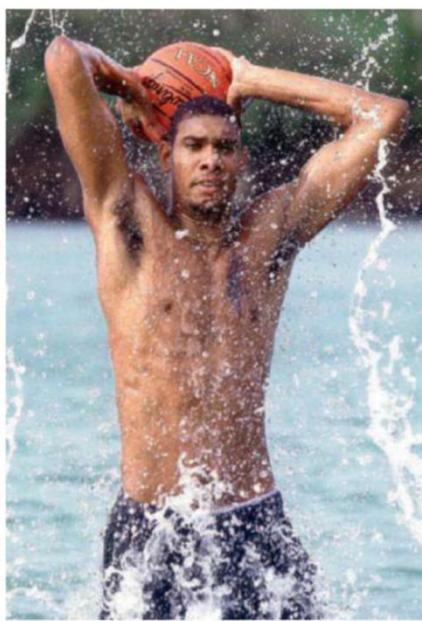
I'm not above you. I'd rather be with you than sitting here talking about myself. So keep the shower running, and I'll be there soon.

As we could have predicted in 1997, when he came into the league as the No. 1 pick after one of those rare things called a four-year college career at Wake Forest, 40-year-old Timothy Theodore Duncan (had to look it up to discover that he had a middle name) retired on Monday without a farewell tour of any kind. Hold the long-winded retrospectives, the heartfelt encomiums, the nostalgic gifts and, it goes without saying, the 50-shot final game. He would have none of that. Duncan hid in plain sight when he was on the court, so his departure was destined to be a brief statement from a Spurs public relations department familiar with his Howard Hughes ways.

Born in St. Croix, V.I., Teemy—as he was adorably called by his French-born teammate Tony Parker—was not a man made for highlight reels and social media. He was, though, a man made for

his city. San Antonio wrapped him in its no-nonsense arms and squeezed tight, especially after he refused a tempting free-agent offer to abscond to Orlando in 2000. It seems so logical now that the Alamo would trump Disney World, but not back then. Duncan had no Parker or Manu Ginóbili beside him, and his fellow twin tower, David Robinson, was getting long in the tooth.

But Duncan stayed, and four more championships (he won his first with the Admiral in 1999) followed. Though there was nothing remotely regal about his demeanor or, for that matter, his wardrobe, Duncan's championship record puts him in the company of kings. He trails (of course) 11-ringed Bill Russell (and a slew of other Celtics from their dynasty years) and,



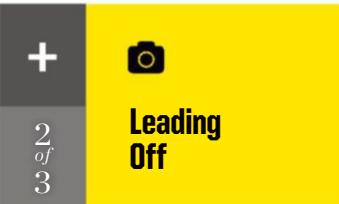
JOHN W. MCCOONISH/MANNY WILLIAMS (RIGHT)

Duncan's partnership with Ginóbili and Parker (9) yielded three NBA championships, after his pairing with Robinson (opposite) led to two.





ROBERT SEALE; JOHN W. McDONOUGH (RIGHT)



more relevantly, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Michael Jordan, who have six. He retires with the same number of titles as Magic Johnson and Kobe Bryant, which seems about right.

It's hard to argue that Duncan does not belong among the top 10 players of all time, given his nonpareil frontcourt versatility. Feel free to join the protracted chat-room disquisitions on whether the 7-foot Duncan was a center or a power forward, but it comes down to this: He was both. He was not the first player to seamlessly blend the positions (Elvin Hayes and Bob McAdoo preceded him, and Kevin Garnett came along later), but Duncan is certainly the best combo four and five—call him a nine—that the league has ever seen.

The big men who rank higher than Duncan on most lists (Russell, Wilt Chamberlain and Abdul-Jabbar) were pure centers, most comfortable with their back to the basket, possessors of hook shots and power moves that usually got them close to the hoop. Duncan had a power game too, though he was just as dangerous facing up from 18 feet. He generally didn't break his defender down off the dribble, but he was skilled at finding space and getting off one of his perfectly targeted bank shots. He was by no means a master of the three-pointer (he converted only 17.9% of his 168 career attempts) but, fittingly, one of his three-point makes is among the most memorable shots in franchise history—a 2008 buzzer beater that gave San Antonio a 117–115 double-overtime victory over the Suns in Game 1 of the first round.

(Duncan had 40 points in that game, and the Spurs went on to win the series in five.)

As befitting his metronomic nature, Duncan's numbers are comically consistent. Beginning in his rookie year, he put up 13 straight double-double seasons, and over the next five he still averaged double figures in points and had rebound averages of 8.9, 9.0, 9.9, 9.7 and 9.1. He was slightly better



in the postseason—he played in 251 playoff games, second all time to Derek Fisher's 259—but more enlightening are his stats in 15 All-Star Games. He was co-MVP of the game once (with Shaquille O'Neal in 2000), and though he didn't score much after that, he still averaged double figures in rebounds. See, somebody has to go get it so everybody else can shoot.

It's a minor sin—which Spurs coach Gregg Popovich would no doubt point out—that the discussion of Duncan the player has gone on this long without mention of his defense. As with Russell and Garnett, D is what moves Duncan into the basketball pantheon.

Duncan guarded centers and





Whether at center or power forward, Duncan was the picture of efficiency and consistency at both ends of the floor, especially during the Finals, when he was named MVP three times (right, in 2005).

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Leading Off

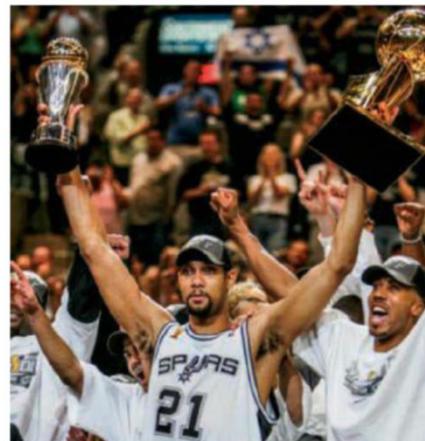
power forwards (sometimes even small forwards) with equal success. And as the NBA became more and more of a high pick-and-roll game, Duncan accepted the extra responsibility of getting involved at the perimeter, while never abandoning basket responsibility. Nobody was better than Duncan at being both an advance guard and the final line of defense.

He accomplished that by being a master of positioning, rarely overcommitting, always thinking, always talking. (Yes, he loved to communicate on the court.) This is a vast oversimplification, but over the years the San Antonio defense was predicated upon most aggressively thwarting the three-point shot and the drive and allowing the midrange jumper, the weakest offensive weapon in the NBA.

Not a sexy vision, for Duncan was not a sexy player. But if he did not put the *fun* in Big Fundamental, he certainly put the *mate* in teammate. Around San Antonio, that might be his most enduring legacy. “When the Guy is just one of the guys,” Spurs defensive stalwart Bruce Bowen once told me, “man, it makes a huge difference. Tim has always been that way, never changed.” It’s often been told that Popovich would rip Duncan in practice, sometimes with legitimate pique but other times just to set an example. Duncan always accepted it.

That’s one thing. But abiding a benching in crunch time of a championship series is something else. That’s what happened to Duncan in Game 6 of the 2013 Finals

when Popovich took him out in favor of Boris Diaw to compete against a small Heat lineup. It is hard to imagine another future Hall of Famer not only stoically accepting it—Duncan’s bench face was the same mask he always wore—but also later defending the move. The Spurs blew a lead in that game, then lost Game 7. And no matter what Popovich or Duncan says, the substitution was a mistake.



That sturdy, I’ve-got-everybody’s-back element is now gone from the Spurs, who were often (and rightly) held up as one of the sports world’s model franchises. But it’s gone from the game, too. It’s hard to imagine that the Duncan blueprint will be duplicated—a four-year college player who comes into the league with a skill set almost fully developed, never bows to free-agent seduction, wins consistently, doesn’t change on or off the court, and then almost tiptoes out the door, no doubt flashing a sly smile at how easily he escaped.

But listen to this, Tim Duncan: Just because you won’t miss us doesn’t mean we won’t miss you.

INBOX

FOR JUNE 27, 2016

Kudos to John W. McDonough for his brilliant photograph of the Block (*Believeland*). The image left me as spellbound as the fans captured in the background, in absolute wonder as they witnessed an unbelievable play.

Randall Wolthuis, Kentwood, Mich.

I found it ironic that the NCAA seemed morally concerned about institutions that allegedly allow basketball players to pretend to be high school students (*Brand Name Stars*). It seems like good training for a world in which basketball players pretend to be college students.

Tim Claiborne, Albuquerque



COVER



I have been a subscriber for more than 20 years and cannot recall a run of covers as epic as the last three: Muhammad Ali, followed by Sidney Crosby and now LeBron James. Two of the greatest players in the NHL and the NBA celebrated their respective championships after we all celebrated the greatest champ ever.

Josh Miely
Rockville, Md.

PAGE
28



SCORECARD
While I appreciate your coverage of the Minnesota Lynx and their historic start this season, I can't help but think that if an NBA team had started 13-0 it would have gotten more than a single page. One of the reasons the Lynx and the WNBA remain, as Richard Deitsch says, "outside mainstream sports culture" is because outlets like SI shortchange their coverage.

Lynn Klyde-Silverstein
Arvada, Colo.

Ben Reiter's story on **Jackie Bradley Jr.** rightly focuses on Boston's young mashers (*Just Keep Playing*), but another longtime Pawtucket commuter should get credit as well. Steven Wright's AL-best 2.68 ERA and three complete games have made the righty a stabilizing force on a less-than-stellar rotation.

Richard Chapek, Ventura, Calif.



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Edited by JIM GORANT + TED KEITH + ELIZABETH NEWMAN

SCORECARD

Catching 22

Serena Williams's seventh Wimbledon title tied Steffi Graf's Grand Slam mark, and inspired one writer to look into the future

BY L. JON WERTHEIM

DEAR TAYLOR:

I'm not sure that's your name, of course—just playing the odds here, kid. It's your grandfather. You're likely reading this on your iRetina or Oculus Rift XIV, which is great.

Indulge me in some storytelling: When Serena Williams was the queen bee of sports, we said that she was a once-in-a-generation athlete, the kind of champion "we'd tell our grandkids about." Well, we were right, and I figured I'd get started and jot down some reflections, long before you're born.

During her extended prime, Serena dominated women's tennis. She was Google to everyone else's Bing. (Taylor: Google "Bing.") She was a peerless athlete, who'd send shot after shot hissing across the net. Her first serve wasn't just the strongest in the history of women's tennis; it was the most fearsome

single weapon possessed by anyone in sports at the time. Her skill was matched by her indomitable will. As she herself put it flatly, "Mentally, no one can break me."

Her unrivaled excellence was so enduring—her winning so ritual—that it didn't always get the appreciation it deserved. In some cases, journalists like me, having exhausted our inventory of adjectives and having written the same fundamental story about her so many times, resorted to conceits to try anew to chronicle Serena's persistent and consistent winning.

Anyway, Serena's singular greatness was thrown into sharp relief at the Wimbledon of 2016. Going into the tournament, she was still ranked No. 1, but she was getting on in years, about to exit the 18-to-34 demographic. Mired in what, by her standards, constituted

a slump, she hadn't won a big title in a full year, stuck on 21 career majors, one behind Steffi Graf's Open-era record. It wasn't that Serena had lost her ability to smite the ball, or that her body was in a state of revolt. She would play deep into tournaments. But then, uncharacteristically, grow tighter than an Eagle Scout's knot. Before the tournament, Serena's coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, put the challenge this way: "Serena needs to meet herself again."

The introduction came at that 2016 fortnight in London. Serena returned to playing at an elevated level through the final. If the pressures of history and age were opponents, she treated them as she did the seven women she faced in the draw—she kicked their butts. In the final, Serena met Angelique Kerber of Germany, who had upset her in the Australian Open

Finding Herself

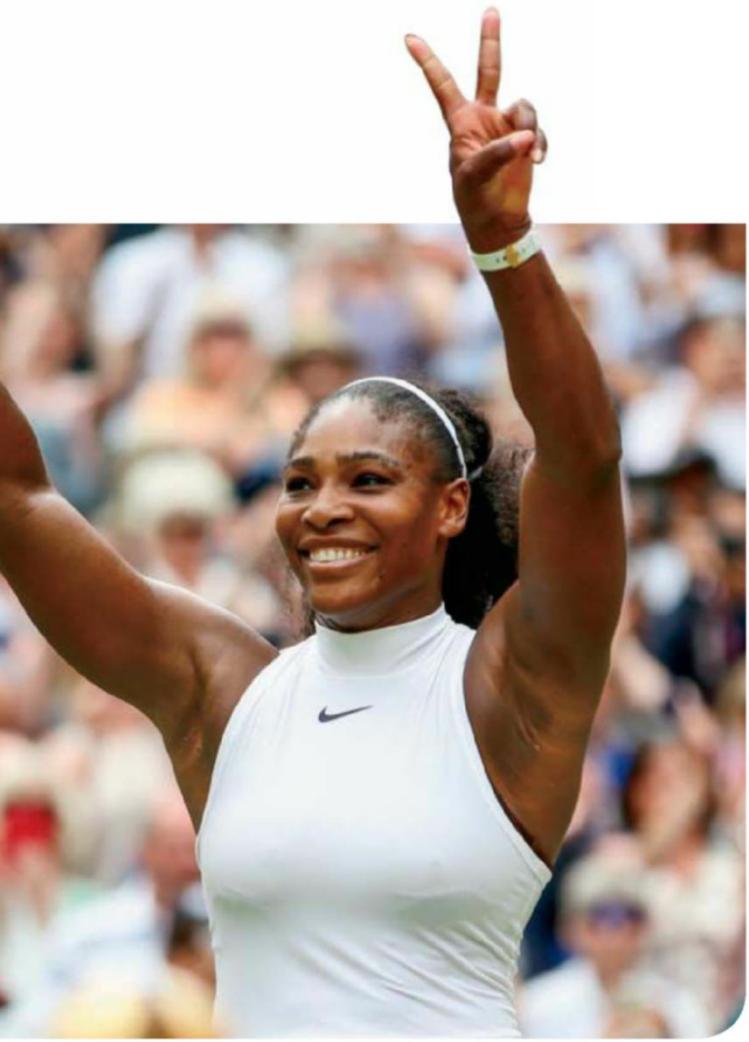
After pulling even with Graf, Williams said, "If I'm totally honest, I'm not relieved to have the 22nd [title]. I'm relieved to have Serena back."

final six months earlier, and exacted revenge, playing a dazzling match and winning 7–5, 6–3.

Throughout the tournament, Serena still sometimes showed her complexity, the kaleidoscopic range of both her game and her emotions. In the early rounds, there were moments when she was far from her best, spraying shots and projecting dissatisfaction. But each time she stalled, she'd hot-wire the engine, betraying her long underrated problem-solving skills.

She didn't win her first few matches so much as she overcame her own anxiety. It beat the alternative, which was on display in the men's draw. Like Serena, Novak





Djokovic had been the Goliath to everyone's David, and came to London having won the last four majors. Yet in his third-round match, against Sam Querrey of the U.S., Djokovic looked distracted and unfocused. His startlingly limp four-set loss underscored how fraught every match can be—even the best players can have a bad day at the office. It also underscored just how dialed in Serena had been all those years.

Look at Serena through the prism of the great Roger Federer. He was born almost two months before her, in the summer of 1981. Federer had remained a force into his early 30s, but what was once a steady stream of victories in majors

slowed to a trickle. At Wimbledon 2016 he reached the semifinals, all but hijacking the tournament. But then, time did its cruel dance and, looking almost arthritic by the fifth set, he lost to Milos Raonic, a Canadian almost a decade his junior, who then lost to Andy Murray in the final. Contrast this with Serena, who has won nine majors since turning 30, feeding on all those millennials and their outsized sense of entitlement.

During the early rounds, Serena wasn't always on her best behavior. In her second match, she both smashed and tossed her racket, resulting in a \$10,000 fine (a lot of money back then!) and eliciting whistles from

the crowd. Then again, as someone wise once said, "Well-behaved women seldom make history." After that bit of self-motivation, she improved and didn't drop a set.

Beyond the tennis, watching Serena in 2016 offered plenty of life lessons that we grandparents relish imparting. On her last point of the tournament, she charged to the net and knocked off a winning volley. *Even—maybe especially—when the end is near, keep charging forward.* A few hours later, Serena teamed with her sister Venus to win the doubles event.

Family first. It was their 14th Slam title in 14 trips to a final, a record even better than Serena's 22–6 mark in singles finals. *Meet the moment.*

At Wimbledon, Serena sent a reminder that she is the boss. Not least to herself. She admitted to me afterwards, "When I lose, I don't feel as good about myself. But then I have to remind myself: You are Serena Williams."

And with that, she was off to Rio and then the U.S. Open—the tournament she won for the first time in 1999. Oh, and in September she'd turn 35, but who cares? Federer aside, it's a reminder of one of tennis's many virtues, something that you should hold dear: Time is largely irrelevant. As long as no one beats you on the last point, you win.

Love, Grandpa

GO FIGURE

3



Triple plays turned this season by the White Sox, the most since the A's and the Red Sox in 1979. The third came last Friday when shortstop Tim Anderson started a 6-6-3 triple play against Atlanta.

\$4 billion

Amount that Zuffa has sold the UFC for, to a group led by talent managing company

WME-IMG. Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta, the league's primary owners, bought UFC for \$2 million in 2000.

2

Strokes Anna Nordqvist was penalized on the second of three playoff holes in the final round of the U.S. Women's Open on Sunday. Nordqvist's infraction, for grounding her club in a fairway bunker, helped give Brittany Lang a three-shot win and her first major title.



SOCCER

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Crying Cristiano

Pain and joy in Paris**TWELVE YEARS AGO,**

19-year-old Portugal star Cristiano Ronaldo was reduced to tears.

He'd missed his best opportunities in the Euro 2004 final and was forced to watch Greece, in all its defensive glory and aesthetic deficiency, lift the European Championship trophy in his home country. A brash, dynamic talent on the rise, Ronaldo vowed to win for Portugal one day and "make up for this huge disappointment."

That day came on Sunday in Paris, where Portugal beat France 1–0 in extra time for its first major international trophy. Again, the tears flowed from Ronaldo, several times



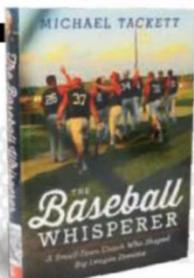
and for wildly different reasons. The first tears came in the 17th minute of the Euro 2016 final, when the lingering effects of a crunching tackle by Dimitri Payet made real the unthinkable: Ronaldo would be forced out of the biggest game of his international career. More tears came at the final whistle, when Éder's 109th-minute goal secured Portugal's unlikely triumph and fulfilled Ronaldo's vow.

Ronaldo may not have been on the field, but he made an impact. He paced and gestured in the coach's box during extra time, alongside stout tactician and level-headed manager Fernando Santos. And Éder, a substitute and improbable hero, claimed that "Cristiano told me that I would score when I came on." For a player whose abundance of self-love inspires haters from all corners of the

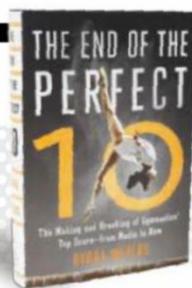
globe, Ronaldo made his leadership qualities clear.

There's plenty of irony—but also symmetry—in the sight of Ronaldo, the captain, lifting the trophy after a defensive-minded, team-oriented Portugal beat the host nation effectively without him. There are also plenty of critics of Portugal's presence in the final, given that the country finished third in its group. But Portugal didn't write the rules of the newly expanded, 24-team Euros; it simply played by them. If anything, the lack of memorable matches and the reward for "negative"—read, defensive—play is a warning sign for FIFA, which is considering expanding the World Cup to 40 teams.

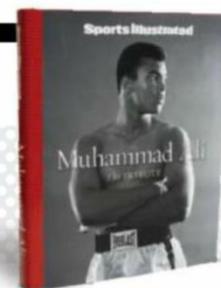
The manner in which this Euro title was achieved is of no consequence to Ronaldo. His tears tell a new story, one of joy, accomplishment and redemption. —Avi Creditor



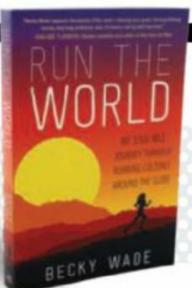
The Baseball Whisperer
Michael Tackett
Gauzy portrait of a small-town, summer-league coach in Iowa who taught baseball and life, producing 36 pros. Tasty if familiar corn. #ozziesmith



The End of the Perfect 10
Dvora Meyers
A poignant and piquant tracing of Olympic scoring over 40 years, it touches marketing, politics, age and body type. High marks. #Nadia



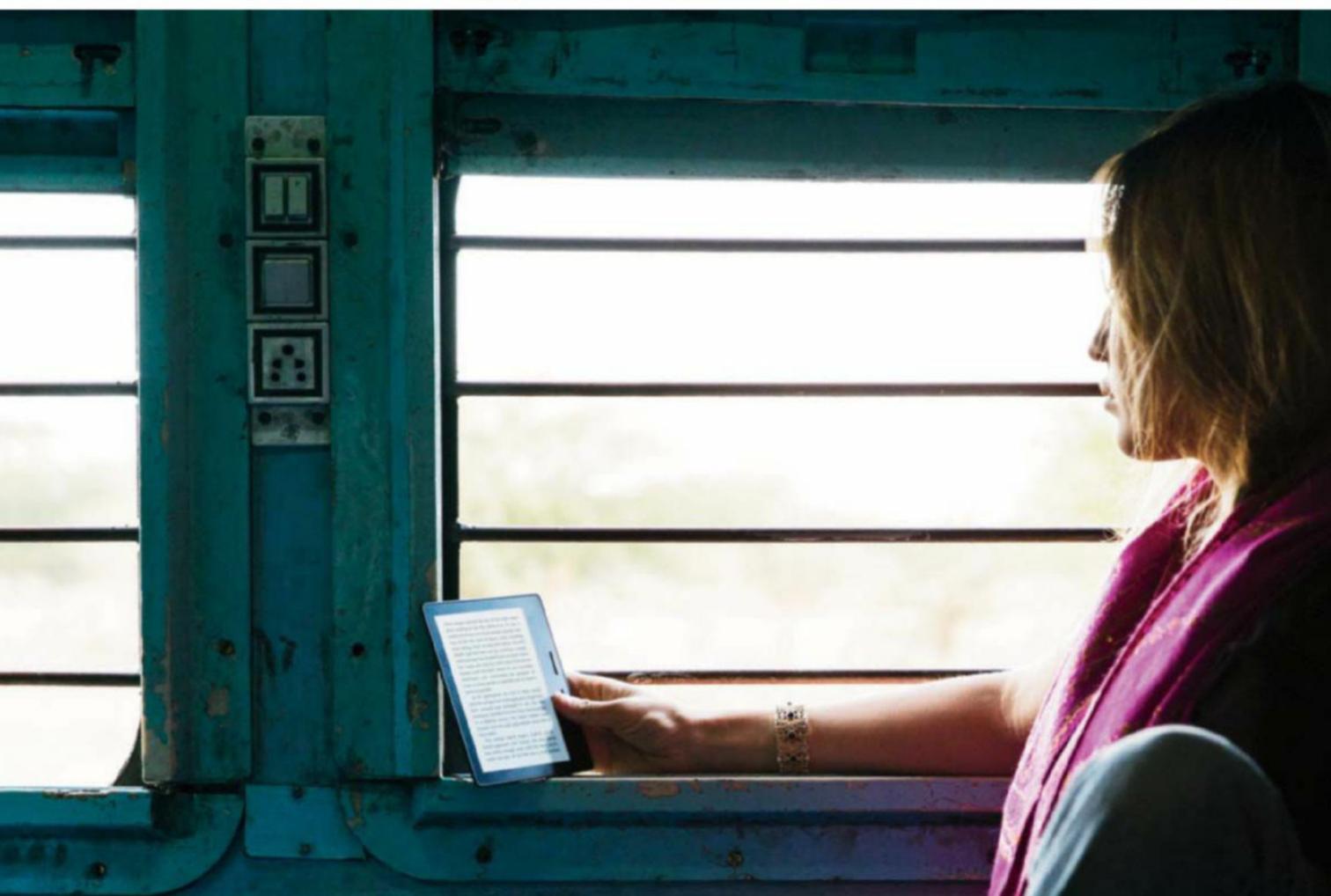
Muhammad Ali
Sports Illustrated
More than 290 pages of SI's best writing and photography on the Champ. Befitting of its subject, it's iconic and captivating. #homegrown



Run the World
Becky Wade
Enduring and endearing memoir of a college star who goes on a yearlong, global running adventure and connects with people and life. #pace



TWEETABLE REVIEWS



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📍 JAIPUR, INDIA 📖 ARAVIND ADIGA, THE WHITE TIGER: A NOVEL @ AMAZONKINDLE



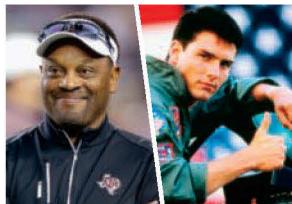
जनस्त किटाणा का सामान, मेवा, देशी धी, तेल,
गुड़, शक्कर, चावल, चाय, गांव से

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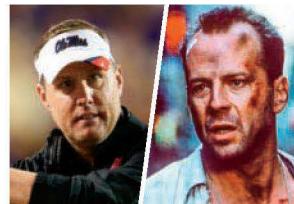
SEC Movie Night

PHOTOS EMERGED LAST WEEK of LSU football coach Les Miles in costume for his role as a police officer in the independent film *Camera Obscura*. Miles so fit the archetype of a movie cop, it inspired some thinking about the other SEC West coaches and the type of character each of them might play, complete with classic examples.



KEVIN SUMLIN
MAVERICK
PETE MITCHELL
TOP GUN

He's young, brash and not afraid to step on some toes. His offense? High-flying.



HUGH FREEZE
THE UNDERDOG
JOHN MCCLANE
DIE HARD

Seemingly overmatched, he beats the odds by [allegedly] using any means necessary.



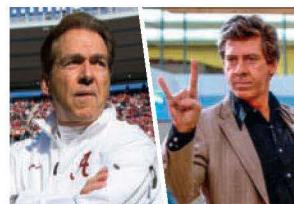
BRET BIELEMA
SMART FOOL
ELLE WOODS
LEGALLY BLONDE

He comes off as a gruff and scatterbrained rube, but he looks smarter every year.



GUS MALZAHN
MAD SCIENTIST
DOC BROWN
BACK TO THE FUTURE

A wolf in nerd's clothing, right down to the sweater vest and wire-rim glasses.



NICK SABAN
THE TASKMASTER
RICHARD VERNON
THE BREAKFAST CLUB

It's his way or the highway. Sure he's stern, but he's only doing it for your own good.



DAN MULLEN
NICE GUY
WALTER
SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE

Earnest, loyal and admirable, but he can never quite get the big prize.



SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

A Georgia Southern athletic department staffer did 10 extra-credit assignments for two football players—who still didn't pass the class.

Pokemon Go

The augmented reality craze has animated creatures popping up in stadiums. And we're not talking about Bryce Harper.



HOT ▲
NOT ▼



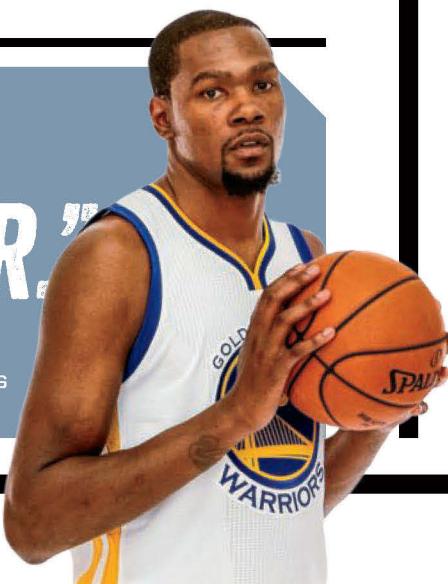
Larry Brown
In a surprise move, he resigned as coach of SMU after four seasons, three with 25-plus wins. The surprise was he stayed that long.

THEY SAID IT

"I'M NOT A \$88 PLAYER."

Kevin Durant

Warriors forward explaining why, in part, his newest shoe, the KD9, has risen to \$150.





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GOLF

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Brexit This

The British Open winner will be a champion and a survivor

WE GAUCHE

AMERICANS have done a variety of vulgar things to the royal-and-ancient game, but maybe the worst of our offenses, worse than even rough-trampling beer carts, is the invention of a seemingly innocuous term: *the signature hole*. You know, 18 at Pebble, 17 at the Stadium course, 13 at Augusta. The eight or so courses in the British Open rota do *not* have signature holes. The Open returns this week to Royal Troon for the first time in 12 years. Maybe you have heard about the tiny 8th, the 123-yard dune-to-dune par-3 called Postage Stamp, as the course's signature hole. It is not! That would be a slight to the other 17 holes.

Poor Troon, named for

a wee town on the west coast of Scotland, hard by a heaving sea called the Firth of Clyde. Beyond that 8th hole, the course is just not that memorable. It is fair (few blind shots), hard (literally), windswept (most every afternoon) and penal (beware the gorse). No matter: By Sunday night we'll have a winner.

"You don't need a lot of flash to be successful there," says Todd Hamilton, who won the last Open at Troon. "You just need—"

Uh, internal fortitude.

This will be the ninth Open played at Troon, and the last six have been won by Americans, each of them an expert in workingman's golf. "You go to that 1st tee with your lunch pail," Hamilton says. Arnold

Palmer won at Troon in 1962, Tom Weiskopf in '73, Tom Watson in '82, Mark Calcavecchia in '89, Justin Leonard in '97 and Hamilton in 2004.

O.K., Weiskopf could be viewed as the outlier in that group. He was a perfectionist and suffered for it. But that week in '73 he accepted the haphazard nature of seaside golf. The winner at Troon will be somebody who knows how to roll with the punches.

Hamilton, U.S. Open winner Dustin Johnson, defending British Open champion Zach Johnson and 153 others—Tiger Woods not among them—will gather for the 145th playing of the Open, which begins on Thursday. Summer's here, and the



Memory Makers

Hamilton, who won at Troon in '04, says the par-3 8th (above) and the rest of the course require a lunch-pail approach.

time is right, people: Wimbledon, the Open, the All-Star Game, the Rio Games. Some lineup. We're taking a holiday from all of the Brexit talk, and if we go to Cleveland, it will be to watch Danny Salazar pitch, not to see Bobby Knight in action at the Republican National Convention. We're definitely



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DUSTIN JOHNSON
2016 WGC-Bridgestone Invitational

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going to Troon, to observe, among other things, how the high priests curve the ball in the heavy sea air. To win at Troon, you have to have all the shots.

For that reason, among others, Weiskopf is bullish on Dustin Johnson. "I think he'll run the tables," he says. Weiskopf envisions four rounds in which Johnson drives it past Troon's menacing fairway bunkers and thereby plays a course far different from many of his competitors, who will be inclined to use irons off the tee to stay short of the traps.

Over the years Troon has barely changed. When Palmer won on the then par-72 course, attacking it with long, straight driving, it measured 7,045 yards. At the '89 Open, Calcavecchia all but invented the modern bomb-and-gauge game. He

won on a course measuring 7,067 yards by driving it long and anywhere, then using his deep-grooved, thick-bottomed irons to play out of the rough. The response of the club to this new form of golf was to do . . . *nothing*. This year, the course (now a par-71) is 7,190 yards, all stretched out.

That is the ultimate statement about how the game is viewed in the kingdom. *It was good enough then; it's good enough now.*

The grand poobahs of golf over there understand that in all links golf, the main obstacle is wind. Unlike the USGA and the PGA Tour, the R&A does not, traditionally, impose intense speed upon its greens. You could find a *bowling ball* with more grass on it than Oakmont's

greens had for the U.S. Open last month.

That's one of the reasons Dustin Johnson's ball on the sloping 5th green in the last round suddenly fell backward off its perch while he was in its vicinity, resulting in a one-shot penalty. The debate over whether he deserved the penalty and when it should have been assessed continues. Nobody seems to like how the USGA handled the matter, but the governing body for American golf is always obligated to make sure its rules are followed to a T, for the sake of every player in the field.

Weiskopf says you could see a similar problem this week but with a different result. "As exposed as some of those greens are at Troon, on that front nine especially, you could have that same situation, easily,"

he says. A ball moves while a player is standing over it. "But over there, that R&A runs the event with so much authority, so much *knowledge*, you'll never have a situation like that mess in Oakmont. They'll say, 'O.K., tell me what happened.' It will be a shot or not, and they'll play on."

Weiskopf's point is this: The Scots invented the rules and the language of the game. You'll never hear a self-respecting British golf snob speak of a "signature hole." But *play on* is a war cry over there. That and, *on you go*. The Open is not an entertainment to them. It is a championship, the oldest and broadest in all of golfdom. You may not remember the 12th hole at Troon. But you'll remember who won there and how he did it. —Michael Bamberger

The Yanks Are Coming

The last six Open Championship winners at Troon have been Americans. Here are the U.S. players in the field who are playing the best according to this year's FedEx Cup points ranking. It's a good time to be a Kevin.



	'16 WINS	TOP 10s	CAREER MAJORS	AGE
1. Dustin Johnson	2	10	1	32
2. Jordan Spieth	2	6	2	22
3. Kevin Chappell	0	6	0	30
4. Brandt Snedeker	1	5	0	35
5. Patrick Reed	0	9	0	25
6. Justin Thomas	1	4	0	23
7. Kevin Kisner	1	5	0	32
8. Kevin Na	0	6	0	32
9. William McGirt	1	6	0	37
10. Matt Kuchar	0	8	0	38



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American Voices

Xander Bogaerts

THE WORD SPREAD like wildfire: A scout from the Red Sox was on the island. This was the summer of 2009, and Xander Bogaerts, then a 16-year-old high school prospect, knew opportunities like this were rare—scouts seldom came to Aruba. But there was a problem: Bogaerts had chicken pox and a 102° fever.

He somehow made it to the field, and he impressed the Boston rep, Mike Lord, with his slick fielding and his bat. On a rock-strewn field lit by car headlights, Bogaerts crushed a ball that sailed out of the park and smashed a window of a house across the street. Days later the Red Sox signed Bogaerts for \$410,000, and in 2013 he became the fifth native of Aruba to reach the big leagues. This season he's bloomed into an All-Star and an MVP candidate, hitting .332 for the Red Sox through last week.



ON HIS COUNTRYMEN

"Curaçao and Aruba, we're like family, and I feel a brotherhood with guys my age. Jurickson Profar [Rangers] and Jonathan Schoop [Orioles] are doing great, and Andrelton Simmons [Angels] and Didi Gregorius [Yankees], who are a little older, are making an impact. It's funny that we're all middle infielders. Some people joke about how the rocky fields back home must have made us better at reacting to ground balls. That may have something to do with it. But really, I think it's total coincidence."

There's a big advantage if you're looking for **talent** where not many other teams are looking.



ON DIVERSITY

"All you need to do is walk into our clubhouse to see that baseball is a true melting pot. It's like this in practically every clubhouse you go into. In ours, it's a great mix: You have the Dominican guys, the Venezuelans, a couple guys from Japan, guys from everywhere from California to Connecticut and me, the small-town kid from Aruba. Sometimes having all these different cultures in one room can make things difficult in getting people on the same page, but it all works for us."



ON COMING TO THE U.S.

"I know four languages, but where I come from, that's not unusual. We spoke English and Papiamento at home. Dutch is an official language. I learned Spanish in school, then dropped it, but when I was in the minors, I started using it again."

"People don't realize how lonely you can be when you arrive here. It wasn't easy for me, but at least I knew the language. I grew to like Florida, and now I love Boston, too. But Aruba will always be home."



ON BASEBALL IN THE CARIBBEAN

"In Aruba the fields, the facilities and the equipment are not very good. We played a maximum of two games a week. Kids from Venezuela and the Dominican, they're playing games almost every day. In the U.S., between high school and the showcases, they can play even more. That's why there's more of a learning curve for someone coming from Aruba or Curaçao when you get to the big leagues."



HOMETOWN HERO

After Bogaerts made his major league debut in 2013 and helped the Red Sox win a championship, he returned to Aruba and was greeted at the airport by a red carpet, a stretch limo, the prime minister and hundreds of screaming fans. He also became the first person to get a star on the Walk of Fame at a local mall. "That's our Hollywood Boulevard," he says. "I guess that means I've really made it."



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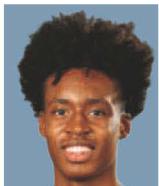
Joe Jares
1938-2016

When Joe Jares died on July 2 at age 78, from lung disease, he was hailed in Los Angeles as a legend for his years as a journalist in his hometown. But he first became a star at SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, where he spent 15 years as a writer and associate editor. Jares primarily covered tennis and college basketball at SI, chronicling the dominance of the Lew Alcindor-led UCLA Bruins but never letting his allegiance to his alma mater, USC, where he had been a freshman basketball player, cloud his work. Not that Jares shied away from getting personal. He wrote about his USC fraternity in "Life in the Jock House" and explored the pro wrestling career of his dad, Frank, in "My Father The Thing." Joe, who left SI in 1981, was a father himself, leaving behind two daughters, two grandchildren and his wife, Suzy. He is also survived by his brother, Frank Jares Jr.

—Ted Keith

**Gina Kim** | Chapel Hill, N.C. | Golf

Gina, a rising junior at Chapel Hill High, shot an eight-over 288 to win the 25th annual Rolex Girls Junior Championship at the Country Club of Rochester (N.Y.) by two strokes. Last October she took the Class 3A state title by six shots with a five-under 139 at the Foxfire Resort and Golf Club in Jackson Springs.

**Collin Sexton** | Mableton, Ga. | Basketball

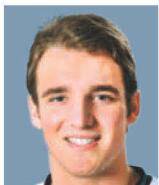
Collin, a rising senior at Pebblebrook High, came off the bench to deliver 16 points and eight assists, leading the U.S. to a 96-56 win over Turkey and the under-17 world championship in Zaragoza, Spain. He led Team USA with 17.0 points per game and was named the tournament's MVP. The 6' 2" guard averaged 28.3 points at Pebblebrook last season.

**Catherine Shields** | Rangiora, New Zealand | Rowing

Shields, a recent Ohio State graduate, led the first varsity eight to an unprecedented third straight Division I title with a 6:19.04 finish in Gold River, Calif. The victory helped the Buckeyes come in second, behind Cal. A two-time Big Ten rower of the year and Ohio State's female athlete of the year, Shields had a 172-2 record over four seasons.

FACES IN THE CROWD

Edited by ALEXANDRA FENWICK

**Andrew Beckwith** | Blythewood, S.C. | Baseball

Beckwith, a rising senior righthander at Coastal Carolina, gave up six hits in 5 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings to pick up his third win of the College World Series, a 4-3 defeat of Arizona that captured the school's first national title in any sport. Beckwith, who was named the series' Most Outstanding Player, went 15-1 to lead the NCAA in victories and had a 1.85 ERA.

**Lori King** | Rockville Centre, N.Y. | Open-water Swimming

King, a public health researcher, became the second—and fastest—person to swim around Bermuda, covering the 36.5 miles in 21:19:00. A native of Norristown, Pa., King (née Baiocchi) swam the 200-yard breaststroke for La Salle from 1993 to '97. Last summer she completed the seven-day, 120-mile, 8 Bridges Hudson River Swim.

**Joe and Matt DeMarco** | Erie, Pa. | Tennis

Joe, a Cathedral Prep rising junior, and Matt, a rising sophomore, won the state 3A doubles title, beating the defending champs from North Allegheny High in three sets. Joe went 23-2 at No. 1 singles and Matt 25-0 at No. 2 singles. Their father, Pat, was a doubles titlist for the Ramblers in '84.

Nominate Now ▾

To submit a candidate for Faces in the Crowd, go to SI.com/faces. For more on outstanding amateur athletes, follow @SI_Faces on Twitter.



JUST MY TYPE

→ Interview by DAN PATRICK

DAN PATRICK: *The mood of Cleveland is what now?*

TERRY FRANCONA: I mean, shoot. Getting to watch the Cavs' Game 7 and then the parade three days later, those people were ecstatic. The way the city poured out its feelings for the team, and the way the Cavs handled it was really cool. I don't pretend to have grown up in Cleveland, but I've been there long enough to care.

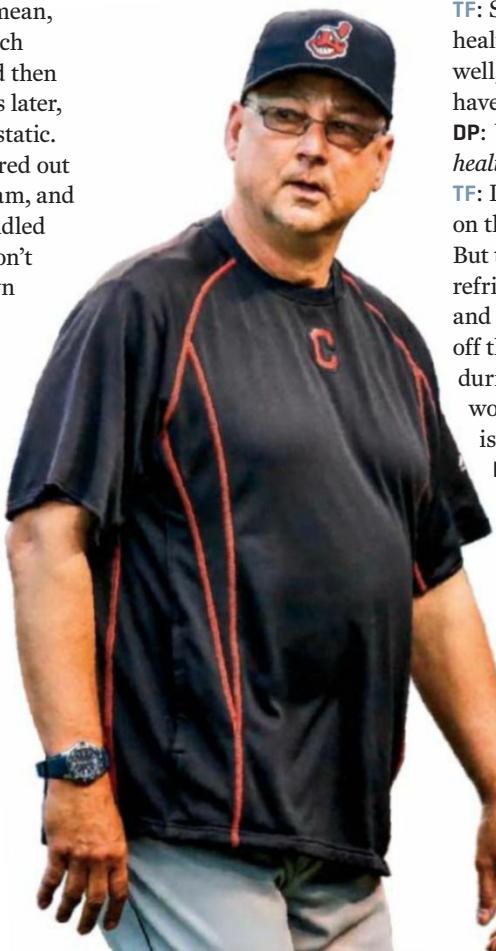
DP: *Does it put more pressure on you now to win or less because this city finally got a championship?*

TF: That really doesn't enter into anything we do. If we start letting external things get to us, shame on us. We need to win. Winning is hard enough.

DP: *Do you do anything different when you're on this hot streak?*

TF: Nothing. We're on such a long road trip. . . . I kid around that I ran out of underwear in Atlanta. The biggest thing is just trying to be consistent. If people come into our clubhouse, and they can't tell if we're hot or cold, that's probably an accomplishment.

DP: *Do you send somebody out to get you underwear?*



TERRY FRANCONA

SNACK ATTACK

During a 10-day road trip, the manager of the first-place Indians, recent winners of 14 straight, airs his dirty laundry—and shares his curious late-night eating habits.

TF: No. Shoot, are you kidding me? You've seen the way I dress. It doesn't matter. All my stuff ends up on the floor, and whatever looks wearable, I just wear it.

DP: *What's this thing I saw with you and Popsicles?*

TF: Supposedly they're healthy. So I kind of figured well, gosh, if one's healthy, 16 have got to be *really* healthy.

DP: *Wait, who said they were healthy? They're full of sugar!*

TF: It says they're healthy on the box! They don't lie! But the clubbies stock my refrigerator with Popsicles and grapes. So I kind of go off the deep end at night during the season, and the worst thing that happens is I get a stomachache.

DP: *Wait, that's going off the deep end, having grapes and Popsicles?*

TF: It's just the way it is during the season. I'm sure it's like that with every manager, but instead of eating nachos, I've at least corralled it to a point where it's semihealthy.

DP: *But I saw that you almost threw up because you ate so many Popsicles.*

TF: Well, 16 is a bit much. I had spent the night in my office because it was one of those late games, early arrivals, and, you know, one thing led to another. In the morning when the guys came in, they were like, Hey, look at all these Popsicle sticks! And I didn't even tell them that I had thrown a couple of them away. So it might've been more. □

GUEST SHOTS SAY WHAT?



Swimming analyst
Rowdy Gaines

doubted that Michael Phelps would retire after the London Games. "I didn't feel like he left everything in the pool in 2012," Gaines told me.

"I don't think he was happy back then. So many things have changed. He's in a great state of mind [now]." . . . MLB Network's **Kevin Millar**



said he and his teammates used to

stop to watch Mark McGwire in batting practice, and one current player draws the same sort of attention from his peers: Marlins slugger Giancarlo Stanton. "He's the closest guy," Millar said. "Where he hits the baseball . . . it doesn't make sense." . . .

Samuel L. Jackson



talked about how he took down

Tiger Woods at St. Andrews: "I beat him once when I was a 16 [handicap]. He gave me all my 16 shots. I shot 78. He shot even par [71]. I win."

New **KD** in

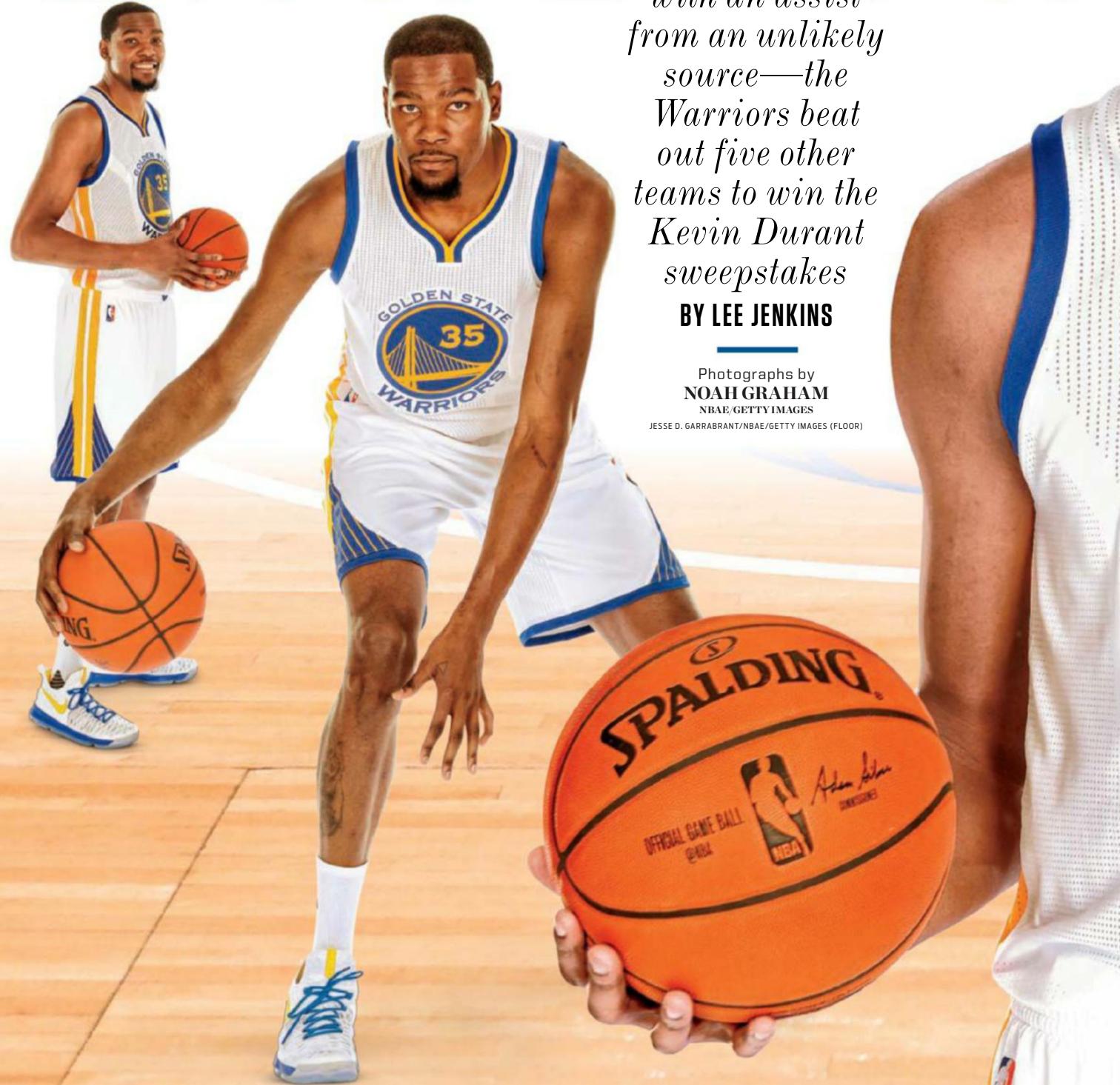
NBA OFF-SEASON

After a relentless pursuit—and with an assist from an unlikely source—the Warriors beat out five other teams to win the Kevin Durant sweepstakes

BY LEE JENKINS

Photographs by
NOAH GRAHAM
NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

JESSE D. GARRABRANT/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES (FLOOR)



Town





LAST FALL the Warriors hired a famous person for an obscure position, tabbing two-time MVP Steve Nash

as a player development consultant. The job description was as amorphous as the title suggests. Nash worked out a bit with Klay Thompson. He sent texts to Steph Curry. A few days every month he flew from his home in Los Angeles to Oakland. Occasionally he addressed the team, walking through actions and demonstrating how to set up ball screens. But Nash, who retired only a year ago, was not looking for a full-time gig. Now 42, he is a father of three, the general manager of the Canadian national team and a promising movie producer.

In 2014, when Nash was still a Laker, he agreed to film conversations with other luminaries for a Vice Sports series called *Back & Forth*. In the most notable video Nash sits on a black leather sofa, wearing a T-shirt and shorts. Next to him, appearing equally casual, is another former MVP: Kevin Durant. With Nash steering the dialogue, they reflect in hushed tones on their roots, motivations and methods. Durant tells Nash that he used to create imaginary basketball games as a boy, using Hot Wheels as players, pennies as balls and tables as courts. They laugh. They connect.

The story of Durant's departure from Oklahoma City and arrival in Golden State, a move that rocked a league and spawned a potential dynasty, features two iconic point guards. The Warriors believe that Durant, loyal to Russell Westbrook on a personal level, was weary of his ball-dominant approach. Curry presented a free-flowing alternative. But several Golden State coaches and executives also acknowledge the everlasting assist of yet another legendary floor general. "Without Steve Nash," one says, "I'm not sure if we get Kevin Durant."

Representatives from six teams



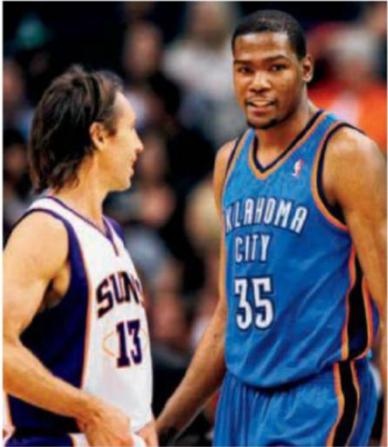
POINT TAKEN

Guided by two-time MVP Nash (above right, in 2011), Durant decided to join the team that ended his '15–16 season.

passed through the gates of the Hamptons mansion where Durant spent the long Fourth of July weekend. The Warriors' presentation on Friday wasn't necessarily more memorable than the others. "We heard the Clippers 'blew him away,'" says Golden State general manager Bob Myers. "We didn't blow him away." Durant was most struck by the body language of the four players who made the trip—Curry, Thompson, Draymond Green and Andre Iguodala—their effortless conversation and easy laughter. He remarked that they looked as if they were holding hands, even though they were not

actually touching. Durant had heard all the breathless accounts of the Dubs' esprit de corps. He wondered whether their kinship was real, and if it was, whether there was space for another. Those were the questions that nagged at him after the gang left.

The Warriors did not lure Durant at the meeting, but in the 48 hours that followed. They are a collaborative organization—remember Nick U'Ren, the lower-level staffer who suggested the lineup change that helped capture the 2015 championship; and Chris DeMarco, the player development coach who recommended switching sides of the court in Game 6 of this year's Western Conference finals—so it should come as no surprise that free agency was also a group effort with contributions from unlikely sources. Warriors adviser Jerry West made headlines with



EXECUTIVES WHO saw Durant over the weekend, in the mansion off the beach, say he looked drained. He was sitting through as many as six hours of meetings per day, while simultaneously hearing from the Warriors, whose pitch never really ended. Iguodala told Durant he'd have the time of his life with Golden State. Curry insisted he'd be embraced immediately. The incumbent MVP swore he didn't care about billboards or shoe sales—he just wanted banners. Durant, already seduced by the Dubs' rollicking offensive system, was eventually sold. When nine Thunder officials visited

hollered Kerr's wife, Margot, turning over in bed and waking him with jabs to the leg.

There was euphoria in Golden State and agony in Oklahoma City, the same as five weeks before, in the wake of the Western Conference finals. But the pain was more acute this time and will take longer to subside. Before every game last season Thunder coach Billy Donovan slipped a handwritten note into Durant's locker. Sometimes it was about leadership. Sometimes it was about defense. Sometimes it was just about the upcoming matchup. It was a simple gesture, one of many, underlining OKC's dedication to Durant. Yes, Westbrook pounds the ball more than Curry, but Westbrook is still one of the three best point guards alive. Yes, Golden State's attack is more fluid than Oklahoma City's, but last season the Thunder still put up the second highest offensive rating in the past five years. If they cannot retain a marquee free agent, after coming up five minutes short of the Finals, what small-market team can?

The NBA will have to answer that question, same as in 2010, when the Heat assembled their Big Three and helped prompt a lockout the following year. The Thunder, meanwhile, must gauge whether they can realistically re-sign Westbrook next summer, or if they have to trade him. They can't lose another superstar for nothing. And the Warriors, the lone winners in all this, get to slide the league's most dynamic scorer next to the two most feared shooters. In the Hamptons, Kerr called up about 15 Golden State plays on his laptop and projected them onto a big-screen TV, showing Durant how he could contribute. "I've got some bad habits," KD said. "That's O.K." Kerr replied. "I'll yell at you."

Westbrook wasn't the only iso-heavy star in Oklahoma City; Durant also liked to hold the ball. But the Warriors are enamored with the potential of his playmaking ability. They envi-

"Steve knows us—our culture and our guys—so well," says a Warriors assistant of Nash. "He doesn't sell anybody on anything. He's just a great sounding board."

a phone call, but Durant shared more fundamental concerns about chemistry and fit in conversations with Nash.

"Steve knows us—our culture and our guys—so well," says Golden State assistant coach Bruce Fraser, one of several Warriors staffers who worked with Nash in Phoenix. "He doesn't sell anybody on anything. He's just a great sounding board." Fraser spoke with Nash throughout the process, allowing the Warriors to understand Durant's concerns and address them.

Even though Myers did not call or text Durant directly, he deployed others, including coach Steve Kerr. "It's orchestrating from a distance," Myers says. "Steve, ask if he has any questions. Steph, give him a call so he's more comfortable. Andre, he might want to hear from you. I encouraged all of them. I'm sure other teams did the same thing. But we wanted to feel like if he said no, it wasn't because we didn't show him who we were."

Durant on Sunday afternoon, hoping for the last word, they realized they were too late. Durant woke up the next day, the Fourth, at 7 a.m., his decision made. Informing Oklahoma City general manager Sam Presti, Durant said, was the hardest thing he's ever done. Even calling Myers was a struggle. "I just want to say you guys are a great first-class organization," he told the Golden State GM. "It was great getting to know you . . . but . . ."

Myers was expecting the qualifier. He had prepared a concession speech, thanking Durant for his consideration, wishing him well in Oklahoma City. "But I just want to tell you I'm coming to the Warriors," Durant said. He wasn't purposefully messing with Myers. He was rattled and fried. When word of Durant's decision reached Kerr, on vacation in Hawaii, the sun wasn't up yet over the islands. "We got him! We got him!"

sion running offense through him at the elbow and in the post, where he can kick to shooters and cutters if the defense collapses, or rise and fire if it doesn't. With Curry and Thompson spreading the court, Durant will enjoy massive swaths of space, and he may never see a double team again. "It should be seamless," Kerr said. The Warriors don't have a rim-protecting center or the depth they enjoyed during their 73-win season—Harrison Barnes, Andrew Bogut, Festus Ezeli, Leandro Barbosa and Marreese Speights were discarded to make room for Durant. But those are Dom Pérignon problems. The Big Four plus a stiff from the marketing department could probably win 50.

The first day, though, was not easy. At his introductory press conference Durant sat stiffly atop the dais, having signed a two-year, \$54.3 million deal with an opt-out next summer. He braced for the inevitable queries about shortcuts to titles. When Kerr suggested he might bring his shiny new acquisition off the bench, everybody laughed except Durant. "I'm joking," Kerr clarified.

Eventually, Durant warmed up. "We live in this superhero comic book world," he said, "where you're either a villain or you're a superhero.... I trusted my gut. I trusted my instincts. It's the unpopular decision. But I can live with it."

From the Philippines, where Canada participated in an Olympic qualifying tournament, Nash downplayed his friend's quest for NBA gold. "I think it was as much a personal move for his happiness and development as it was to win," Nash told reporters.

Late Thursday, after a week of advice, introspection and upheaval, Durant went looking for a little of the joy the Warriors talk so much about. There was only one place to go. He wrapped up his press conference and walked onto the practice court. Far from the meetings and the mansion, he grabbed a ball and took a shot. □



SILLY SEASON

Five other story lines from a strange summer
BY ANDREW SHARP

Westbrook's World

The Year of Russell Westbrook is upon us. Within minutes of Kevin Durant's decision, the most entertaining question in the NBA centered on the guard he left in OKC. Westbrook (*above*) has already shown that in Durant's absence—KD missed most of the 2014–15 season—he's more than capable of unleashing triple doubles and a world of pain on the league. Now we get to watch him do it for an entire season. Guessing how many games the Warriors can win will be a popular exercise, but I'm more interested in guessing Westbrook's numbers. 36-12-11? 38-14-12? Can he carry the Thunder to the playoffs? Will he win MVP? Will he spontaneously combust on national TV?

That's only half the story. Westbrook's also a free agent after this season, and just as Durant had half the league dreaming this summer, he will be the source of constant speculation. Having been burned by Durant, GM Sam Presti could trade Westbrook rather than risk losing him. Or he could keep him, making Westbrook everyone's favorite underdog.

Whatever happens, wherever it happens, the Year of Russell Westbrook will not be boring.

Why Wade?

Dwyane Wade is in Chicago, and nobody knows why. This is his "Joe Montana on the Chiefs" phase. After years of sacrificing his earning power to help the Heat front office maintain flexibility, the 34-year-old Wade saw the contracts being signed during the most lucrative free agency period in NBA history, and he wanted his share. When Heat president Pat Riley refused to give it to him, Wade went home to Chicago and got paid: \$47 million over two years. The decisions in this case make sense for both Wade and the Heat.

But how do you explain Chicago's thinking? The Bulls traded Derrick Rose to the Knicks last month but then held on to Jimmy Butler, rejecting a full-on rebuild. Now they have added Wade, who'll soak up possessions for the next two years, along with point guard Rajon Rondo, who also dominates the ball. It's actually impressive how little sense this makes. As GM Gar Forman said last week, "We didn't want to go into an absolute rebuild, but we wanted to get younger and more athletic."

Enter two free agents who peaked four years ago. Got it. Go, Bulls.



Dollar Days

Consider the contract numbers this summer: \$80 million for Ryan Anderson in Houston, \$94 million for Chandler Parsons in Memphis, a combined \$145 million to Evan Turner and Allen Crabbe in Portland, etc. It's all breathtaking, but it's also an indication of financial health. The NBA has a TV deal worth \$24 billion over the next nine years, and the CBA is working for everyone. If players are getting paid like this, just imagine what life is like for the owners this summer.

But free agency also weaponized a 73-win team. With the collective bargaining agreement up for renegotiation this year—both the players and owners can opt out before July 1—Kevin Durant's move to the Warriors may change the calculus among ownership.

It's one thing to spend historic amounts of money, but spending it without a prayer of competing is a proposition that will rankle many owners. Durant's departure from Oklahoma City represents a kind of doomsday scenario that the current CBA was supposed to prevent. The angst among owners probably won't lead to another lockout, but it's something to watch as the two sides try to make a deal.

C's Get Closer

The bright side in Boston: Al Horford is a Celtic. GM Danny Ainge signed the four-time All-Star to a four-year, \$113 million deal. Horford threw out the first pitch at a Red Sox game last week and posed for pictures with David Ortiz afterward, and everything was lovely. This is progress. Horford should make the Celtics the second best team in the East.

Another bright side: The NBA has never seen three straight Finals matchups featuring the same two teams. If we assume the Warriors will make it through the West, history says the Cavs are due for a letdown, and Boston is perfectly positioned to capitalize.

Of course, when arcane Finals trivia is your best case for making a title run, there's probably still some work to do. Right now the Celtics look like Horford's Hawks—well-coached, full of useful players, but one or two stars short of a real shot at the best teams in the league. They came



close with Durant, but now we return to a stage called DEFCON: DANNY. There will be new trade rumors every two weeks, talk of grand free agency plans, a close eye on the Nets' pick, which the Celtics own.

And we will all watch one more time as Ainge tries to turn three quarters into a dollar.

Boogie Time

When the Kings entered the draft with the eighth pick and left it with Greek center Georgios Papagiannis, DeMarcus Cousins tweeted, "Lord give me the strength." He later explained that the tweet was merely a coincidence. "Bad timing," he said. "It sounds ridiculous, but I was in a hot sculpting



class." Whether you believe this explanation or not is immaterial. What's important is that it's one of the top five alibis in NBA history.

Also important: The NBA's constant churn of player movement has turned pro hoops into a year-round sport, with fans following every move and teams angling for stars years in advance. As attention turns to next summer, plenty of names will be discussed: Westbrook, Blake Griffin, Chris Paul, Gordon Hayward, Paul Millsap, Kevin Love, Carmelo Anthony. But marooned on rudderless Sacramento, the 25-year-old Cousins is younger than all of those players, with more upside than any of them.

He needs the right team, and better teammates, but he could terrorize a league that's going small. He's also a free agent in 2018, and the Kings may have to trade him sooner. All of which is to say, the 2016 off-season is over. Now it's time for teams to find their way into that hot sculpting class.



BIG

GAME FACE

Bolt brings a childlike demeanor to the starting block, but his preparation, as in the Caymans, is all seriousness.

FINISH

Road to Rio



The fastest man who has ever lived, Usain Bolt has withstood a balky hamstring, a needy public and precocious challengers for nine years. He plans to conclude his unprecedented Olympic career with three more gold medals

BY TIM LAYDEN

Photograph by
Robert Beck



THE KING arrives without an entourage. It is a warm spring evening on Grand Cayman Island, just past sunset, and a Caribbean breeze whispers across the tops of the native palms and black mastics that encircle the track at the Truman Bodden Sports Complex.

Green iguanas the size of beagles and lean, wild chickens are everywhere, the former ominous yet docile, the latter plump and frantic. Usain Bolt walks through a tall, swinging gate in the metal fence, accompanied by manager Ricky Simms, longtime masseur Everaldo Edwards, and childhood friend and executive manager Nugent (N.J.) Walker. Just the four of them. It is a lean operation, and always has been. Here in 48 hours Bolt will run a low-key 100-meter race to commence what he has said will be his final Olympic season, before he bows out for good after the 2017 world championships in London.

In the gathering darkness, beneath four light towers, Bolt walks to the backstretch of the deserted track; other athletes were assigned earlier training times so that Bolt could work unbothered. He jogs through a series of warmup strides before climbing onto Edwards's portable treatment table and lying facedown. There are 23 other people in the complex, most of them facility workers but also a half-dozen small children. They watch from 50 meters away as Edwards pours oil onto Bolt's legs and rubs with long, flowing strokes. Bolt checks messages on his phone. Walker places small orange cones on the track for the serious training ahead. After 15 minutes Bolt swaps training shoes for shiny, custom Puma spikes, one as red as Dorothy's ruby slippers, one a pale Carolina blue.

This, then, is the beginning of the end of the most transcendent career in the history of modern track and field. It com-

USAIN BOLT

menced for the world with a stunning gold medal in the 100 meters eight years ago in Beijing and is likely to end with a relay race in Rio and three more gold medals in hand, two days shy of Bolt's 30th birthday. (The 2017 London world championships will be an encore.) He had hoped his final season would be free of injury and drama, full of fast times and dominant victories. "The one thing I've never had is a perfect season," Bolt says. "No injuries, everything smooth, and see how fast I could run." Alas, this would not be that season.

It is Bolt's blessing that he is 6' 5" with the sudden body dynamics of a smaller man. But that long body has proved fragile, especially his lower back, which leads to a chain of leg problems. Bolt suffered a low-grade left-hamstring tear in that first race in the Caymans, an easy victory in which he limped ever so slightly, just past the finish. On the night of July 1, Bolt withdrew from the finals of the 100 meters at the Jamaican Olympic trials with a recurrence of that same tear, which had also affected him in 2015 and in several previous seasons. "It would have been crazy for Usain to run that race," said Simms two nights later in Eugene, where he was representing several athletes at the U.S. Olympic Trials. The Jamaican Olympic selection system allows for medical exemptions, so Bolt was chosen for the team last week. He will test his fitness in a 200-meter race on July 22 in London, but there is little doubt that he will run in Rio. Opponents have seen this routine before.

"It's a tradition," says U.S. sprinter Tyson Gay.

"Come on," says Justin Gatlin, also of the U.S. "You know Bolt is going to be at the Olympics."

Bolt was a prodigy at 17 but didn't embrace the hard work necessary for greatness until he was 20. He has since become the first athlete, male or female, to win consecutive Olympic gold medals in both the 100 and 200 meters; shattered the world records in both events; twice helped Jamaica to golds in the 4×100-meter relay; and took the world championship in every 100 and 200 that



he has completed since 2009. (He was disqualified for a false start in the 100 at the '11 worlds, his only major loss since '07) Bolt has delivered gold when heavily favored and when seemingly vulnerable in some of the most pressurized environments in sports. "For eight years," says 1984 Olympic 100-meter champion and former world-record holder Donovan Bailey, "Usain has physically and psychologically demolished every other sprinter in the world."

"I always put Jesse Owens above everyone," says Michael Johnson, gold medalist in the 200 and 400 meters in 1996 and still the 400 world-record holder. "But in terms of recent years, Bolt is the greatest."

And something more. By the force of his personality, part imp and part superhero, he has transcended track and field to become an international celebrity. Bolt is stalked by TMZ on U.S. soil, and he was a guest on *Saturday Night Live* in October 2012.

"Usain is that television show you turn on, and it gives you exactly what you expect from it, every time," says Steve Miller, a longtime track and field executive who worked for Nike from 1991 to 2000 and is

now chairman of the board of USA Track and Field. "And that name. *Usain Bolt*. You can't invent a name like that."

There is no model, no blueprint. "The next Bolt," says Marc Burns, a four-time Olympic sprinter from Trinidad, "will be for my children's children's children. Possibly."

There is one act left for Bolt. Another three-gold-medal performance in Rio can be his equivalent of the titles that Jordan won after baseball, the Masters

"USAIN IS THAT SHOW THAT TIME," SAYS MILLER. "

that Nicklaus seized at age 46. "These are the Olympics that separate me from the pack," says Bolt. "I'm older now, and it's harder for me. But anytime I start feeling really down, I remind myself, You have got to get this done this year." He has one foot in that present and another in the near future: "What do I think about for my retirement? I just think about not doing track anymore. You know what I mean?"



JAMAICAN RUN

Swiftest of his swift countrymen, Bolt's pre- and postrace pose is borrowed from an island tourism poster.

Walker shoots video of each sprint and sends it immediately to Bolt's 66-year-old coach, Glen Mills, in Jamaica. He travels only to major competitions. Over the speaker on Walker's phone, Mills suggest minor tweaks to Bolt, who nods as he walks back to the starting line saying, "O.K., Coach, O.K." After the last sprint Mills says, "You are performing well at night!" It is a reference to the fact that while Bolt usually trains in daylight, the 100-meter final in Rio is scheduled



Now, under a black sky and a crescent moon, Bolt drops into a three-point stance for a series of six 60-meter sprints. In the distance Simms, a former middle-distance runner, shouts, "Go!" Bolt snatches his hand from the track, drives low and hard for several strides and then rises to his full height. Up close, Bolt in flight is a breathtaking vision—part man, part velociraptor. He is not classically efficient; he holds his chest too high and his shoulders rise and fall

**T GIVES YOU EXACTLY WHAT YOU EXPECT FROM IT EVERY
AND THAT NAME. USAIN. BOLT. YOU CAN'T INVENT THAT."**

in a dance of their own. His stride is immense. (Bolt takes only 40 or 41 steps to complete 100 meters; other top sprinters take 42.5 to 46.) The metal of his spikes clacks against the surface of the track like a tap dancer's shoes on the stage. Bolt is shooting for 80% effort, but still, his average for the six 60s is just above 6.60 seconds. Maurice Greene's world record for the indoor 60 is 6.39 seconds.

for 10:25 p.m. Bolt throws his head back and looses a baritone laugh that reverberates across the island.

ON THE night of Aug. 16, 2008, in the Birds' Nest, the stadium in Beijing, Bolt won the Olympic gold medal in the 100 meters. Seldom has an athlete gained worldwide celebrity so instantaneously. He

had been known in the track community since running a world junior record of 19.93 for 200 meters in the spring of '04, but he had only improved slightly on that in four years and had never run the 100. Indifferent about training and prone to injuries, he seemed unlikely to become a dominant performer.

In July 2007, before losing to Tyson Gay of the U.S. in the 200 at the world championships in Osaka, Japan, Bolt tried a 100 in Rethymno, Greece, and ran a respectable 10.03 seconds. Then on May 3, 2008, in Kingston, Jamaica, he stunned the sport by winning a 100-meter race in 9.76 seconds, just .02 off countryman Asafa Powell's eight-month-old world record. A week later I traveled to meet with Bolt, then 21 years old, for the first time, in the lobby of a Kingston hotel. Bolt folded himself into a small chair, leaned over a table and explained that he had begged Mills to let him run the 100. And also that he really loved cricket. "I was a good fast bowler," he said. "That was my best game." He seemed like a tall adolescent with a disarmingly deep voice.

Two weeks later, on a muggy night on New York City's Randall's Island, shortly after an apocalyptic thunderstorm, Bolt took down the world record by running 9.72. Gay, the defending world champion and presumptive Olympic favorite, was bewildered. "We were on the same rhythm," he said, "but his stride pattern is a whole lot bigger than mine." Afterward Bolt told me he had spent the afternoon sleeping. "Napping?" I asked. "No," said Bolt, "I slept all day."

Eleven weeks later Bolt won the 100 in Beijing. And it was the way he won. After a mediocre start he overtook the field by the 50-meter mark, glided away and then geared down 15 meters from the finish before turning his head to the right to face the crowd and smacking his chest with his open right hand, a gesture that some track oldsters criticized as disrespectful to the sport. The performance was elevated to legend when the clock froze at 9.69. Bolt could plainly have run much faster

USAIN BOLT

(how much faster is the stuff of track and field mythology). The crowd first gasped, then roared. Later that day Phelps earned the last of his record eight gold medals; the two would share the international stage.

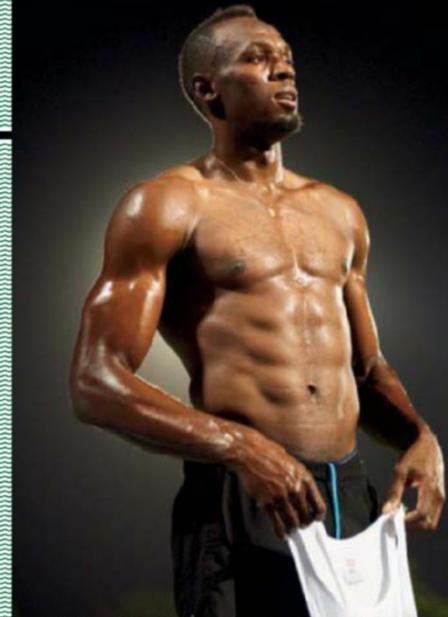
"We've seen Bolt a lot of times since then," says Johnson. "But that night in Beijing, that was the first time. He came out and just ran away. That race was over at 50 meters. He wasn't coming back, and those guys all knew it. I had never seen anything like it."

It was in Beijing that Bolt unveiled his signature To Di World pose, copied from a Jamaican tourism advertisement and often mislabeled as a lightning bolt. The performance and the celebration sent Bolt's profile skyward. Two hours later, after a harrowing golf cart ride through the tunnels of the Birds' Nest, Bolt stood beneath an ornate street lamp, awaiting a ride to the Olympic Village. A handful of Chinese volunteer workers gawked and pointed. "Big feat,

man," said Bolt, nodding. "Big feat."

The men Bolt defeated that night gathered in the McDonald's in the Olympic Village. Among them were silver medalist Richard Thompson and Marc Burns of Trinidad, Powell and Michael Frater of Jamaica, and Darvis (Doc) Patton of the U.S. Bolt's victory looped on TVs around them. "We were in awe, man, we were in awe of what just happened," says Patton, who finished eighth. "The way it happened. The dude ran nine-six. *Celebrating.*"

Burns looked at a screen and said, "I thought I was in the race because I was in lane 8, right next to Asafa. I was just getting ready to breast the tape, and I heard this huge roar and I thought, Oh, could be an upset. Then I looked up and Bolt is halfway around the turn, celebrating." En route to the McDonald's that night, Burns had run into decathlete Maurice Smith, Bolt's roommate. Smith had told Burns that three days hence, Bolt



would be coming after Johnson's 200-meter world record of 19.32 seconds, set at the Atlanta Olympics, which was thought to be unassailable. "I thought, Man, there is no way," says Burns now. "When athletes run anything under 9.9 in the 100 meters, with the stress your body is under, sometimes you can't walk for a few days."

Wallace Spearmon, a U.S. 200-meter

ROBERT BECK

Two irresistible flavors

Hey, I know those guys.

I can't believe they're making
a megastar like me do this.



TAKING SHAPE

A minor hamstring tear forced Bolt to miss the Jamaican trials, but no one doubts his readiness for Rio.

specialist, joined the group. Burns immediately broke the bad news. "News flash," he said. "Bolt is coming after the 200 now." Eight years later, in a Skype interview from Trinidad, Burns is no less amazed at what happened that night in Beijing, and what has transpired since. "We were all mind-boggled," he says. "The guy is a prodigy."

Bolt, indeed, went on to run 19.30 in the 200, breaking a mark that Ato Boldon, the NBC track and field analyst who finished third in Atlanta, predicted would outlive him. A year later

at the 2009 world championships in Berlin, Bolt broke the records again, clocking an otherworldly 9.58 seconds in the 100 and 19.19 in the 200. Both marks still stand. In the seven years since, he has added two more world titles in the 100 and three in the 200. According to the track and field website, Tilastopajia.org, Bolt has won 40 of 44 100-meter races since the beginning of '08 and hasn't lost a final since '13. Over that same span, he is 27–1 in 200-meter finals, losing only to Yohan Blake at the Jamaican Olympic trials in '12, a defeat he avenged one month later at the London Games.

Boiled down: In pressurized, hair-trigger settings against the best sprinters in the world over the past eight-plus years, Bolt has won 67 of 72 races and five times broken the 100 or 200 world record (and contributed to three more world marks in the 4 × 100). And throughout, his infectious enthusiasm has remained.

AFTER BOLT'S workout in the Caymans, he returns to the Governors Suite on the third floor of the Westin Hotel, which rises above a white-sand beach. The suite is impressive in name only, a modest spread with a coffee table and L-shaped couch. Bolt sits barefoot on the couch, wearing a T-shirt and baggy shorts. Simms is at the table on his laptop, managing the careers of more than 150 clients and also sizing up the room-service menu for the two of them. Puma boxes and bags are scattered about.

Bolt is tired. I have interviewed him five times since that first meeting in 2008. He is always friendly and thoughtful, fully engaged in the questions and his answers (uncommon among A-list celebrity athletes). But he is also invariably Bolt Lite, a dialed-back version of the caffeinated character seen on the starting line of the 100 meters. Only once have I seen him truly angry: as he walked from

under 200 calories.

I don't like the way people are looking at us.



I better be getting paid overtime for this.



the stadium to the warmup track after being disqualified for a false start in the 100 meters at the 2011 world championships in Daegu, South Korea. The happy face was hard, a big man pissed off. "Looking for tears?" Bolt said. "Not gonna happen." Later in the week, he crushed the field in the 200 and anchored the Jamaican 4×100 to victory. All was right. Here, on this night in the Caymans, Bolt is just kicked back, looking at 12 long weeks until Rio.

He leans forward to speak. "Sometimes I question myself," he says. "Why am I still doing this? I've accomplished

a little about the last season because it's so fresh." But there are exceptions. The Beijing 100-meter final will always resonate. "That was so amazing," Bolt says. "I guess I wasn't like a normal athlete. He waves, he dances, he's doing different things. That caught people's attention. They wondered what I could have run if I had run through the line. That's the way I came to the world's attention."

The animated Bolt, in the intense minutes before the start of a championship 100 meters, when most sprinters look as if their heads might explode from stress, is making faces, smiling, laughing. (He often choreographs his gestures based on scenes in movies or video games.) "It's the equivalent of having a penalty kick to win the World Cup, and he's back-heeling the ball into the goal," says Boldon. "He's having the time of his life, and he's taking you along with him."

Patton has another take: "Bolt came

VICTORY LANES

But for a DQ in 2011, Bolt has never lost a 100-meter final at the Olympics or world championships.

"SOMETIMES I QUESTION MYSELF"

I STILL WANT TO WIN

beat Bolt twice at the Jamaican trials, as Bolt struggled with a sore hamstring. Last year it was that nagging back, an issue since he was a teenager. He reached Beijing, site of the '15 world championships, having reached only two finals in the 100 and three in the 200 in the previous four months, running none exceptionally well. Meanwhile, Gatlin had ripped a career-best 9.74 seconds. "It was just really stressful, man," says Bolt. "In June, I wasn't running the way I'm supposed to be running and Gatlin was in the best form of his life." But Bolt has learned to catch up quickly, and once healthy, with a major championship approaching, he trains intensely. "Once I do a couple



2008 | BEIJING



2009 | BERLIN



2012 | LONDON

so much in the sport, you know what I mean? I still want to accomplish more, but it gets harder over time. I talked to Michael Johnson once about this, how you shouldn't stick around too long. The more you race, the more you tear down your body. I've been telling people for years that I'm a lazy person, and I don't think they believe me. But I really am. I don't like the training."

Bolt is not inclined to autopsy his career yet, high moments or low. "I think about this season," he says, "and

along, and he was just different, and he was likable and wasn't from the U.S. People still remembered the way those guys behaved with the flag [after the 4×100-meter relay, when the sprinters clowned their way around the track in celebration] in 2000 [at the Sydney Olympics]. It's like people loved Steph Curry because he wasn't LeBron James."

Since 2008 various forces have left Bolt on the verge of major championship defeat. In April '09, he was injured in a car accident in Jamaica. In '12, Blake

of 180-150-100 step-downs at proper [high] speed," says Bolt, "I know I'm in shape." Last summer before worlds he did a series of five 100s with five minutes rest and averaged 10.0s, world-class time for a single race.

In the Beijing final Bolt started respectfully and chased down Gatlin to win in 9.79 seconds. More notably, Gatlin ran his worst race of the season. "Gatlin folded," says Boldon. "He couldn't convince himself that he could beat Bolt." It was the slowest of Bolt's

ON MYSELF," BOLT SAYS. "WHY AM I STILL DOING THIS? TO ACCOMPLISH MORE, BUT IT GETS HARDER OVER TIME."

five major-championship 100-meter victories but in some ways his most impressive. Bolt's nine-year dominance of the 100 is unprecedented; only Carl Lewis comes close. From 1982 to '91, Lewis won three world titles and two Olympic golds, but he was vulnerable in the 200 meters relatively early in his career. (Bolt dislikes Lewis for regularly impugning his performances as potentially drug-aided. In 2008, Lewis said, "I'm still working with the fact that he dropped from 10-flat to 9.6 in one year. I think there are some issues.")

Last summer's Beijing race took on a larger theme. Because track and field was—and still is, of course—struggling with doping issues and because Gatlin

"He cycles those long limbs like a much shorter person," says Johnson. This combination makes Bolt almost unbeatable at top speed; his only weakness is an occasional blunder in the starting block. When Bolt starts cleanly, even if not spectacularly, he can run down any sprinter in history. (Gatlin thinks he can prove otherwise if given one more chance.)

Most people in track are of the opinion that Bolt's record-breaking days are over. "We've seen the best of him," says Burns. Bolt wasn't so sure in May, but that was before his back and hamstring went hinky. Bolt considers the 200-meter record more reachable; it is his native race and less dependent on a good start.

just to win and save my energy for the 200 meters? I really want to break that world record again. If I shut it down in the 100, will people be happy? I don't know. But that's the kind of thing I think about all the time."

Bolt insists that he is finished with the Olympics after Rio and will retire after next year's worlds in London, where he plans to run only the 100 meters. Sponsorships with 17 companies, including Puma, Gatorade and Hublot, push his annual income to an estimated \$32.5 million, according to *Forbes*. He recently signed a deal with insole manufacturer Enertor that makes him a part owner of the company. Bolt, who is not married and has no kids, says, "I want to live comfortably when I retire," and that should not be an issue—it is likely that he will retain relationships with many of his sponsors. His wealth and celebrity have risen as track's profile has fallen, a divergence that under-



served a four-year steroid ban from 2006 to '10 (along with a previous sanction for an ADD drug), the matchup was painted by some as a battle for the sport's soul: Clean versus Dirty. It is a theme that Bolt never embraced. Three times since '08, I have asked Bolt if he has ever used PEDs; three times he has denied it emphatically. A clean testing record may be devalued currency today, but Bolt has one.

From a purely physical standpoint, Bolt's principal advantage has been his ability to coordinate his long limbs.

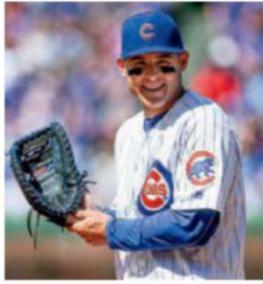
But his goal? "Sub-19," says Bolt. "That would be more amazing to me than winning three gold medals again."

"No," says Boldon. "Forget that."

Bolt thinks about these things and how they might happen. I asked him if he lets his mind wander during the drudgery of training. "All the time," Bolt says. "All the time. I think about victories. I think about world records. The other day I was running 110s and then I was warming down all by myself. In Rio, should I run the 100 meters

scores Bolt's unique place in the universe. Meets with him in the lineup fill giant stadiums; meets without him are invisible to the broader public.

Riven by a worldwide doping scandal and searching for leadership, the sport has been kept relevant by one name. "A guy as fast as Bolt, and as charismatic as Bolt, that's once in a lifetime, man," says Patton. "Once in a lifetime." A last Olympic Games are nearly here. Witnesses should watch closely. They will not see the likes of Usain Bolt again. □



DYLAN BUELL/GETTY IMAGES

*As the second half of the season gets underway, Chicago is laughing in the face of a century of adversity, following the example of **Anthony Rizzo**—the slick-fielding, power-hitting force who holds the Cubs together*

DEN LEADER

BY TOM
VERDUCCI

Photograph by
Dylan Buell
Getty Images

er David Ross, “just as far as his attitude and how he’s able to get along with everybody and gets to know everybody.”

“Every time you’re around him, whether you’re on the field or out to dinner or any place, he wants everybody to have a good time. He’s more worried about everybody else and puts himself second. Whether it’s his at bats, batting practice or anything, he’s quick to take a backseat to others. That’s unusual for a superstar.”

The Cubs reached 50 wins in 76 games, the fastest start for the franchise since 1918. They have soared despite an amalgam of players who didn’t develop together as professionals. Of the 37 players used by Chicago this year, Cubs president Theo Epstein acquired 29 of them from other teams in 4½ years on the job, starting with Wood in December 2011 and Rizzo one month later. The Cubs have yet to use a pitcher this year who originally signed with the organization.

Rizzo is the mortar that binds the bricks. On a Sunday night last month during a home stand, when major league players typically scatter to their families and pads, Rizzo helped organize a dinner that drew 20 members of the team. In Washington, Rizzo took outfielders Dexter Fowler and Jason Heyward to dinner. Whether it’s breakfast in San Diego, lunch in Pittsburgh or cheesesteaks in Philly (“He always buys,” Ross says, “but that one was on me because I told him I could afford it. It was like 40 bucks”), Rizzo is the team concierge.

“He’ll send out a text and invite some of the guys who don’t have family in



IN A SMALL TRATTORIA in the tiny Sicilian hilltop village of Ciminna, amid a Norman castle and churches that date as far back as 1500, John Rizzo, vacationing three years ago with his wife, Laurie, and his baseball playing son, Anthony, did the best he could without speaking Italian to convey to the townsfolk that his grandmother’s family, the Frangipanes, hailed from Ciminna. A member of the trattoria’s staff who spoke English sprang into action. Tables were pushed together, homemade wine was summoned from the basement, several pizzas were served up, and the Rizzos found themselves dining with a dozen new members of the family.

Ciminna knows hospitality. The town of 3,800 holds at least 11 festivals and processions every year, including the Feast of San Vito, the patron saint of Ciminna, as well as of comedians and dancers.

Anthony Rizzo has brought a taste of Ciminna to Chicago. Not only is Rizzo, 26, an All-Star first baseman for the Cubs and on his way to becoming the first lefthanded hitter in franchise history with three straight 30-homer seasons, he also is the enthusiastic team leader, host and comedian of the most rollicking, fun-loving, thick-skinned, insult-hurling fraternal team in baseball. For a club that has shed 51 of the 52 teammates Rizzo played with when he joined the Cubs just four years ago (only pitcher Travis Wood remains from that 101-loss outfit), Rizzo is the guy who pushes the table together to make the Cubs one big *familia*.

“He is probably the most important player we have on the team,” says catch-



HAPPY DAYS

Rizzo has even more than usual to smile about: The Cubs hit the All-Star break leading the NL Central.

Anthony Rizzo

town,” Ross says. “He knows when guys are solo. He keeps tabs on everyone, which is cool. He’s a chameleon; he can fit in like that. You’re never around him where you don’t have a good time.”

Says Laurie, “He was always the leader, even growing up. When you had to plan something—a party, homecoming, whatever—he’d be the one in charge. Always.”

Rizzo has big plans. The Cubs infamously haven’t won the World Series since 1908, when they also were led by a first baseman, player-manager Frank Chance. Known as the Peerless Leader, Chance doled out maxims such as, “Don’t turn a player down too quickly. Give him a chance to develop and show what he has in him.” That ancient wisdom applies to Rizzo, who was passed over through 203 picks in the draft, was traded twice before age 22 and spent his formative pro years stuck on depth charts behind nondescript hitters such as Lars Anderson, Kyle Blanks and Yonder Alonso.

In between Chance and Rizzo, first base for the Cubs has been a carrier of bad karma. Among those to man the position were Charlie Grimm, who played and managed 3,453 games without winning the World Series; Eddie Waitkus, who was shot by a stalker in 1949; Ernie Banks, who played more games than anyone (2,528) without getting to the postseason; and Leon Durham and Bill Buckner, who made two of the most infamous errors ever by a first baseman.

Rizzo, more than any other Cubs player, willingly shoulders the responsibility of ending this Dark Century. Last year he boldly predicted that the Cubs would win the

National League Central. They didn’t, but they did win 97 games, a wild-card spot and a Division Series against St. Louis before losing four straight against the Mets in the NLCS. This year he talks openly about winning the World Series.

“We know when we win it’s going to be insane,” he says. “And that’s more motiva-

BEAR HUGS

Taking a cue from the lighthearted approach of manager Maddon (below left), Rizzo and teammates like Bryant (below right) keep the team’s spirits up.



“RIZZO IS THE TEAM CONCIERGE. ‘HE’S A CHAMELEON; HE CAN FIT IN LIKE THAT,’ SAYS ROSS. ‘YOU’RE NEVER AROUND HIM WHERE YOU DON’T HAVE A GOOD TIME.”

tion to do it, because it’s never been done before—not that anyone can remember. So when it happens, it’s going to be epic.”

It’s pointed out that he’s saying “when,” not “if.”

“We believe it,” he says. “You talk to these guys who won championships: Jon Lester, [John] Lackey, Rossy. . . . That 2013 [Red Sox] team knew they were going to win a World Series. They believed it and they envisioned it. That’s the feeling I have.”

“That’s obviously big picture. You have to do the little things every day. But we envision the parade down Michigan Avenue. We’re going to do it. It’s not going to be easy, but we’re ready for the challenge.”

It’s a long way to October, as well as through it. The franchise is a stunningly inept 22–55 in postseason games since Chance’s champions of 1908. What is certain is that wherever the Cubs are headed, Rizzo will show them the way. He will show them how to hustle, how to hit with two strikes, how to play loose, how to be a good teammate and how to enjoy life.

Life? From what Rizzo has seen of it, 108 years without a World Series title is nothing.

“HAPPY.”

THE SIMPLEST words are the most powerful. This is the word most often used to describe Rizzo.

“He’s always happy,” says Cubs bench coach Dave Martinez. “He’s so positive.”

Rizzo’s lightness influences how the team plays. A pop-up will shoot skyward in the infield, and he will yell at shortstop Addison Russell, “Don’t trip!” or “Watch the skateboard!” Rizzo will predict to teammates how a pitcher will pitch him, and after one or two pitches that prove him right, he will step out of the batter’s box and look into the dugout with a wry “told-you-so” smile.

Rizzo saves his best barbs for Ross, the veteran catcher who happily returns fire. When Ross looked to throw out a runner this year after the winning run already had scored, Rizzo texted him a screen shot of the gaffe. When any in-



FIELD DAY

Though his hitting gets most of the attention, Rizzo is also one of the best defensive first basemen in the NL.

fielder makes an error, Ross tells him, "Hey, police your area, Rizz."

Once, during a replay challenge, Rizzo engaged Ross in a staring contest. Ross, with his right hand hooked on his belt, discreetly showed him his middle finger. Rizzo adjusted his cup.

For Father's Day, Rizzo gave Ross a card with the handwritten inscription, "Thank you for everything you have done for me! Love, your son, Anthony."

Rizzo and third baseman Kris Bryant started an Instagram account in the name of "Grandpa Rossy" to celebrate what the 39-year-old catcher said will be his final year playing.

"What's cool," Ross says, "is when Rizz and KB touch something like that, my popularity has gone through the roof. I can't go to restaurants, whereas before it was no big deal. Our relationship is little brother–big brother."

There is a popular catchphrase among the Cubs: "Too soon?" It's the typical response if anybody dares show the least bit of sensitivity to a friendly insult or jab.

nesses, "How would you get me out?" and sets about fixing those vulnerabilities. Rizzo has quickened and flattened his swing after struggling against fastballs in 2011, adopted a two-strike approach late in '13 in which he chokes up on the bat and forgoes his usual high leg kick and moved on top of the plate in '14 to better attack pitches away. (Pitchers rarely test him inside.)

"I hate striking out," Rizzo explains.

He is on track to become the first lefthanded hitter in the NL since Barry Bonds in 2004 to reach 30 homers and 100 RBIs without striking out 100 times. The erstwhile free-swinging Cubs have taken their cue from him. Ross and infielder Javier Baez are among the teammates who have adopted their own versions of the Rizzo two-strike mode, and Chicago has improved from the worst two-strike hitting team in baseball last year (a flaw that helped doom them against the hard-throwing Mets staff in the NLCS) to a respectable middle-of-the-pack 18th.

"I think the whole leadership thing in baseball gets overrated," Lester says. "What I've seen over two years is that he's a leader because he goes out and plays hard every single day. He almost never takes a day off. Never takes at bats off. Believe me, he's so important to us that everybody notices that. That's leadership."

"SPECIAL."

LAZ GUTIERREZ, an area scout for Boston, kept using that word in 2007 to Red Sox scouting director Jason McLeod whenever he described the makeup of a 17-year-old first baseman for Stoneman-Douglas High in Parkland, Fla. "He kept saying, 'It's the person behind the player,'" says McLeod, who now holds a similar position with the Cubs.

Major league scouts packed Stoneman-Douglas games, but mostly to see a catcher, Danny Elorriaga-Matra. The Red Sox surreptitiously pivoted toward Rizzo.

The first day of the draft, covering five rounds, passed with Rizzo still on the board. Some teams worried that his big frame presaged conditioning problems and a lack of athleticism. Most figured he was ticketed for Florida Atlantic University. Boston began to hear rumors that Detroit, picking 27th in the sixth round, might take Rizzo. The Red Sox, at 20, called his name. They signed him for \$325,000, the equivalent of second-round money. Rizzo has since accumulated the high-

Such looseness serves a team well in the face of high expectations. On June 13, for instance, while Washington pitcher Max Scherzer whiffed nine of the first 10 Cubs batters, the Chicago dugout was oddly giddy.

"Can somebody please make some contact?" Rizzo cracked.

"At least we're getting his pitch count up!" somebody added.

Says Ross, "Literally, we were laughing. What should we be pouting about? This guy is dealing. It's easier to do when you're winning, but that's the personality of this team."

Beyond the jocularity, Rizzo sets the tone for Chicago by how he plays. Broad-shouldered, with massive hands and, according to Ross, the most strength on the team, Rizzo works out nearly every morning and almost never misses a game. He hustles on the bases. He plays a slick first base.

At the end of every season he asks coach Mike Borzello, who breaks down opponents' weak-

Anthony Rizzo

est Wins Above Replacement of any position player in the 2007 draft except first-rounders Heyward and Josh Donaldson, and second-rounder Giancarlo Stanton. "Over the years he has tinkered with his swing mechanics, his hand position and where he sets his feet," McLeod says. "What hasn't changed is, once he lets that swing go, his ability to just hit it straightaway to left centerfield with backspin.

"Laz was right. It became quite apparent in his first season. We heard from coaches about the leadership qualities this kid had and how he took to everybody on the team. Latin players, American players . . . it didn't matter. They all gravitated toward him. And once you got to meet his parents, you could see why."

John, a security firm manager, and Laurie, who worked in fashion in New York City, lived in Lyndhurst, N.J., before a winter's vacation in Florida convinced them to move there in 1986, one year before their first son, Johnny, was born and three years before Anthony. His parents, as they still do, called him Ant or Antnee, while his friends called him Little Rizz in deference to his football-playing brother. After Rizzo's first minor league season, McLeod sent him to Instructional League in the Dominican Republic.

"It was an eye-opening experience for him to see where these players came from and how little they had," McLeod says. "I'll never forget, he was talking to his parents and said, 'Is there anything we can do for these guys? What can we do to help?' He was just a kid."

"CANCER."

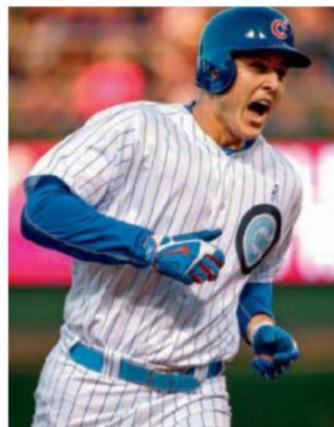
ANOTHER POWERFUL word. Happy's enemy. That's the word the doctor used in 2008. One minute you're 18 years old, tearing up the South Atlantic League with a .373 average, despite odd swelling in your legs and feet, and the next a doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital is telling you about two tumors, one on either side of your pelvis. It's Hodgkin's lymphoma.

"I didn't know what anything was," Rizzo says. "I didn't know what chemotherapy was. I thought chemotherapy was cancer. I had no idea. So they explained what they had to do, and I was like, O.K., let's go. It was obviously tough. I'm an emotional person. There were tears. But there was never a doubt. I truly believed after my first treatment I was all better. You still had to go through the process. It was six months."

Says Laurie, "It was shocking, devastating. But we had a lot of support at the hospital. And once he got a hold of himself, it was, 'Let's do this. I want to get this out of my body.'"

Rizzo came back in 2009 and resumed mashing. McLeod and assistant GM Jed

"AFTER THE CANCER," RIZZO SAYS, "IT VALIDATES EVERYTHING MY PARENTS EVER PREACHED TO ME: LIVE EVERY MOMENT THAT YOU CAN BECAUSE YOU NEVER KNOW."



Hoyer left to run the Padres, but Rizzo was climbing the ladder to Boston—until Epstein, then the Red Sox general manager, traded him to his friends in San Diego after the 2010 season to get All-Star first baseman Adrian Gonzalez. "Someday," Epstein told Rizzo, "I'll get you back."

Rizzo won a job with the Padres in 2011, lost it to Blanks and was demoted. On Oct. 12, 2011, Epstein left the Red Sox to become president of the Cubs. Hoyer and McLeod left the Padres to rejoin their old boss in Chicago. Several months after that, Epstein made good on his promise: He traded pitcher Andrew Cashner to the Padres to get Rizzo.

Says Hoyer, "The Cubs are really fortunate. If Anthony came up and played well, there was no chance the Padres would have traded him."

"I was ecstatic," Rizzo says. "I'm not the biggest West Coast fan. I like being able to stay closer to home."

Says Laurie, "As soon as he was called up to the Cubs [in 2012], he said, 'Let's start a foundation' and we did. His dream was to have a [fund-raising] walk in Parkland. He said, 'If we get 300 people, maybe we can raise \$30,000 to fight cancer.' Close to one thousand people showed up, and we raised more than \$100,000."

THE CUBS are a rolling carnival. Road games are packed with Cubs fans who often drown out the home rooters. The team, at the behest of manager Joe Maddon's "themed" trips, has traveled in "zany suits," track suits, as an homage to NBA warmup outfits, and short shorts. Maddon has fortified the entire silk-screen industry with an endless line of T-shirt slogans: DO SIMPLE BETTER; EMBRACE THE TARGET; IF YOU LOOK HOT, WEAR IT; TRY NOT TO SUCK; et al. In spring training the Cubs were visited by a mime who ran stretching drills, the singer Huey Lewis, honest-to-goodness live bear cubs, Rizzo playing Adele on the electric keyboard and their manager wearing a tie-dyed shirt and driving a 1970s van onto the practice field while blaring Earth, Wind & Fire.



All the goofiness rings with authenticity because the Cubs have won, despite a 6-15 regression going into the All-Star break. And the Cubs win in part because their leader kicked cancer's butt (HAPPY > CANCER would be a nice addition to the Maddon line of threads), which means everyone else with a seat at the Cubs' table sees how well Little Rizzo handles two-strike counts, Scherzer fastballs, Grandpa Rossy admonitions and all other challenges thrown his way. (Ross to Rizzo after the first baseman ranged too far for a ground ball, forcing the pitcher to cover first: "Hey, quit being a ball hog! Let the other kids play too!")

"After the cancer," Rizzo says, "it validates everything my parents ever preached to me: Live every moment that you can because you never know. I feel like when I do things, I do them the best I possibly can."

Says Laurie, "Anthony always had an old soul. After the cancer it became more so."

Three years ago Rizzo honored his roots by playing for Italy in the World Baseball Classic. Says Marco Mazzieri, the manager of that team, "The first thing I would like to say is that he is a first-class human being. He is the most unselfish player I have ever managed."

When Rizzo and his parents visited Italy, they surprised Mazzieri with a phone call while in Rome. Of course Anthony invited him to dinner.

The prequel to the story of how Rizzo came to be the leader of the Cubs goes back to 1905. That was the year his great-grandfather Vito stepped off an immigrant ship from Italy and onto Ellis Island. Of course he was named Vito—the same name as the patron saint of Ciminna, comedians and dancers.

Three years later the last out of the last World Series won by the Cubs settled into the mitt of the Peerless Leader, a first baseman named Chance. One hundred eight years have passed since then, one for every stitch on an official major league baseball. Too soon? Nothing for Rizzo can come too soon. □

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Ricky Williams

TAKES THE HIGH ROAD

A decade ago he smoked his way into becoming an NFL punch line; now 20 NFL teams play in states where some form of marijuana is legal—and that number will grow. A pothead reputation, Williams has found, is no longer such a bad thing

BY GREG BISHOP

Photograph by
ROBERT BECK

JOINT EFFORT
Ricky Williams explores his journey with marijuana and his plans for building the sports-cannabis complex. Watch it at SI.COM/ricky







HE JOINT moves from smoker to smoker, puff-puff-passing its way to Ricky Williams.

He takes the handoff, inhales deeply and blows out a plume of smoke so thick that it temporarily shields him from the sun.

It's March, and Williams is in Barcelona at something called Spannabis—part trade show, part research conference and 100% festival of copious cannabis consumption. Reggae beats thump from towering speakers. T-shirts read RARE DANKNESS and DIE HIGH and NICE PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS. Vendors sell marijuana-infused beer, energy drinks and espressos, not to mention the cookies, brownies and licorice ropes....

This is Comic-Con for weed.

The 39-year-old Williams is deep into a conversation about astrology—the positions of stars and the movements of planets, how the assumptions we're born with interact with the lives we're born into. This is a typical Ricky conversation, deep and cosmic, tangential to everyone there but him. "I'm a Gemini," he says, "and if we're getting it right, we're saying Wow at least five times a day. Geminis are about having an open mind. This is what we're here to do—to have all these experiences."

This marks Williams's latest experience, after involvements (some but not all of them ongoing) in sports broadcasting, photography, fatherhood, coaching, yoga, Ayurveda and other holistic medicines, Tai Chi, massage therapy, *The Celebrity Apprentice*, herbology, psychology and global exploration. Those pursuits came after his most familiar one, as a Heisman Trophy-winning and All-Pro running back—just one of many connected stops on what Williams calls his "path."

Another protracted drag from the J and Williams heads inside the convention center in the name of . . . research. He strolls, largely unnoticed, past stalls peddling 24-karat-gold rolling papers and a display case filled with glass Cheech and Chong bongs. Past the pipes shaped like elephants and skulls and the Super Mario Bros. Past the pictures of marijuana strains named Super Lemon Haze, Exodus Cheese, Peppermint

Kush and Tangerine Dream. He stops at various purveyors and sounds some version of the same theme: *I used to play in the NFL, and I'm interested in the therapeutic benefits for retired football players....*

"Right on," one California-based vendor says. "You have all these stars jumping into the industry now—but you were here before anyone else! You're like the dude who walked away from the NFL."

Indeed, America's most infamous stoner athlete—the one who spent a decade traveling the world, reading hundreds of books, collecting experiences and passport stamps in an attempt to shed that reputation—has circled back to embrace it. He reads headlines that say SCIENTISTS HAVE FOUND THAT SMOKING WEED DOES NOT MAKE YOU STUPID AFTER ALL and he tweets, "I knew it!" He wants now to become the face of cannabis-and-sports. He wants to start a revolution.

Go where you're celebrated, Williams told himself six months before Barcelona. So he chose to leave his wife, Kristin, and their three children in Austin in order to feed his impulses, as he so often does. He'll spend as many as 300 nights a year on the road, checking in with his family





sporadically. Friends describe this wandering lifestyle alternately as “irresponsible” and “just him.”

As the sun sets on day one at Spannabis, Williams has swapped contacts and scheduled meetings with a host of potential business partners. What’s obvious is that two green things are in abundance. Cannabis, sure, but also cash. “The way the industry is growing, it feels newer and it feels fresh,” Williams says. “It’s like I have the chance to make a difference *and* be a superstar.”

He pauses, then repeats in a whisper, “Be a superstar again.”

THE MILLION-DOLLAR party is under way at the Casa Llotja de Mar, a 14th-century palace near Barcelona’s waterfront. There’s a VIP room upstairs, beyond the risotto station and the paella station and the open bar, where DJ Felix da Housecat is spinning. Ornate tapestries hang beside gold chandeliers. Hired dancers in sequin headdresses gyrate next to revelers holding joints in one hand, drinks in the other.

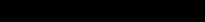
The soiree is courtesy of Advanced Nutrients, a Canadian

hydroponics company that sells products like fertilizer to marijuana growers. Tonight’s bash is also a continuation of Williams’s weed renaissance, his first strides into a marijuana industry that has never been more accepted. Or more profitable.

Laws, policies, attitudes—they all seem to be changing. In June 2015 the House of Representatives voted to slash the Drug Enforcement Agency’s budget, halving the allocation for cannabis eradication. President Obama has said that he believes marijuana to be no more dangerous than alcohol, while an Associated Press poll in March found that 61% of Americans favor cannabis legalization. In May, the House voted to allow doctors to recommend medicinal marijuana to veterans in the now 25 states (and Washington, D.C.) where it is legal. And last month, for the second time, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted 16–14 to permit marijuana businesses access to federal banks, which would remove a major operations hurdle for an industry that so far has worked almost entirely in cash. (This bill is being held up in the House.)

HEADY START

Williams barreled over defenders to gain 6,354 rushing yards in his first five seasons. Since then, only five backs have had such a strong beginning.



Those changes have ushered in both a gold rush and a green one. *Marijuana Business Daily*, in its annual report, forecast that the cannabis industry’s economic impact in the U.S. could reach \$44 billion by 2020, which would represent a 687% increase from ’13. The website predicted retail sales of between \$3.5 billion and \$4.3 billion in ’16 in states in which marijuana is legal for medical or recreational use.

Williams appraised that shifting landscape—half the country having legalized medical marijuana; the celebrities, like Whoopi Goldberg and Snoop Dogg, who have created their own cannabis-based product lines—and decided he wanted in, for reasons both financial and altruistic. He figures he lost between \$5 million and \$10 million in salary and endorsements when his NFL career stalled out because of four failed drug tests (all, he says, for marijuana) between 2002 and ’06. He wants to make that back and then some.

Williams is cofounding a cannabis-friendly gym in San Francisco, Power Plant Fitness and Wellness, where patrons will be able to smoke marijuana or ingest edibles, then work out, take yoga and meditation classes, undergo acupuncture, or get massages. His partner on that venture is the same man, Jim McAlpine, who created the 420 Games, a marijuana-themed series of 4.2-mile races on the West Coast in which Williams participated this year. Williams is also interested in someday opening a chain of sports-themed cannabis social clubs named 34’s, after his jersey number; creating marijuana-infused nutritional supplements (like breakfast bars) and healing



Ricky Williams

products (like massage oils); and giving speeches as a cannabis activist. “That money can make what I lost seem tiny, like pennies,” he says, perhaps generously.

For now, Williams is early in his fact-finding phase. Before the trip to Barcelona he read *The Cannabis Manifesto* by Steve DeAngelo, who argues for legalization and details the history of cannabis as medicine. He scoured the online library at his alma mater, Texas (where he is four classes away from completing his undergraduate degree in psychology), to pour over marijuana research dating to the 1960s.

In May, Williams traveled to Portland for the Arcview Investor Forum, where he listened to cannabis-related pitches. He went as an investor, entertaining dozens of ideas for everything from genetic sequencing research to regenerative

Williams figures he lost between \$5 million and \$10 million in salary and endorsements. He wants to make that back and then some.



organic farming techniques. “To say that conference changed everything is an understatement,” he says. Now he wants to create what he imagines as an advocacy group for marijuana (and other issues) made up entirely of athletes. He even came up with a name: Professional Athletes for Change. Together they’ll argue for more research and acceptance.

Williams has also partnered with Weedmaps, a tech company whose app helps users locate medical dispensaries. Two friends, Doug Francis and Justin Hartfield, founded the outfit in 2008 after spending most of their mornings smoking and brainstorming company ideas. The company now has 240 employees, with offices throughout the U.S. and in Spain (and staff in France, England, Germany and the Netherlands). They’re headquartered in tech country, in Irvine, Calif., with a smoke room and a studio for filming promotional videos for a YouTube channel.

Williams’s deal with Weedmaps includes a stake in the business but remains otherwise open-ended. He’ll blog for them, make appearances, film TV spots and start dialogue, especially in the sports industry, alongside other athletes, both active and retired. Just as important, he’ll provide Weedmaps with a voice closer to the mainstream, someone associated with marijuana but, until now, outside the industry. “He captures the zeitgeist of both the athlete and the pot user,” says Marc Emery, a Canadian marijuana activist nicknamed the Prince of Pot.

To that end Williams hopes to chip away at some old stoner stereotypes, diminishing notions that people who smoke marijuana lie on the couch all day watching TV, gorging on Cheetos. That was never Williams’s relationship with cannabis.

He identifies more with what he calls “the archetype of the mystic,” and points to a favorite quote from 19th-century philosopher William James: “The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour.”

Cannabis unlocks “the part of us that connects with something bigger,” Williams says. “It’s the part that’s active during dreams. You become not so attached to your own stuff. If you integrate that [approach], then addictions—alcoholism, food, porn; all these behaviors that plague society—we’ll start to change them. Those things are a side effect of a lack of integration. That’s how I use cannabis.”

The party ends, and Williams meets up outside the palace with his new teammates from Weedmaps. They’re headed to the rooftop bar at the W hotel. “*This*, Williams says to no one in particular, “is where I’m supposed to be.”

DURING HIS four-day stay in Barcelona, Williams buzzes the door at Betty Boop Bcn, one of dozens of cannabis social clubs across the city. Picture a typical bar, but with joints instead of cocktails, budtenders rather than bartenders; a place where members and their guests can legally procure and consume marijuana. For medical purposes—*wink, wink*.

Williams settles into a leather couch across from concrete walls spray-painted with graffiti and depictions of the curvaceous cartoon character the club is named for. Everyone around him is dabbing, only this isn’t the dance that Panthers

This Bud's for You

Cliff Robinson twice made it to the NBA Finals in 18 seasons; now he runs a marijuana company, Uncle Spliffy. Rohan Marley led the 1993 Miami Hurricanes in tackles and later played in the CFL; now he helps operate Marley Natural, a cannabis outfit. Both men see pot playing a role in sports beyond just recovery

BY MICHAEL MCKNIGHT

I've heard athletes say cannabis can actually enhance performance. How?

CLIFF ROBINSON: I never partook before I played [real games]. I want people to understand: I wasn't high out there. To get to the NBA, I worked my ass off. On off-days, though, or in the off-season, if I'm working out or shooting jumpers, did it help me with my focus and my concentration, open my mind a little bit? Yes.

ROHAN MARLEY: Herb is the thing that brings me together. It de-stresses my mind [and allows me to] be more focused and have direction, y'know? ... It allows a person to kinda—like my father said—"remove oneself from Babylon." Right? To go above the stratosphere and look from the outside in ... to take yourself to a quiet place and bring your mind together, so you can focus. Herb is vision. After I left [Miami], I would always light a spliff before playing soccer. I still do. I play much better!

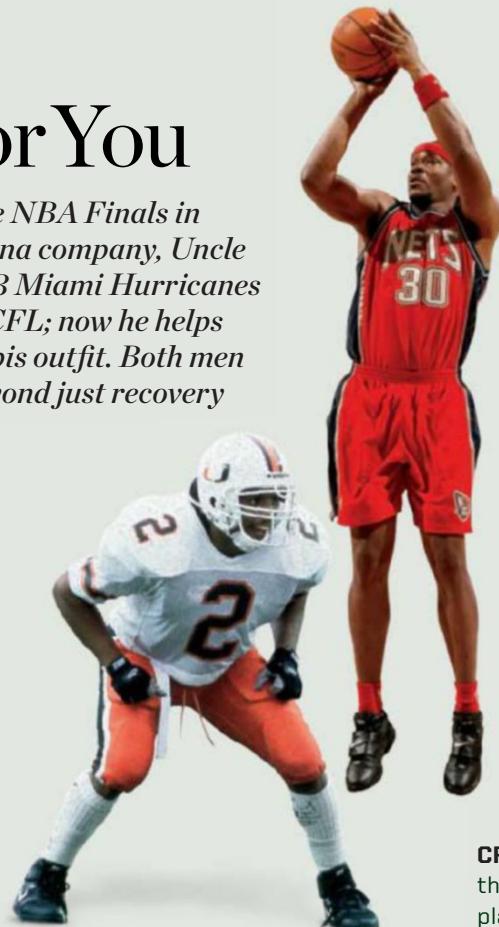
What is the improvement?

Is it in your physical performance?

RM: No, no. Just being focused, feeling the joy of it. It makes you joyful and enhances the game, the love of the game, the passion. It makes you want to be smooth and play the game at a certain level of correctness and ... righteousness.

Can it inspire athletic creativity—trying a daring cross-court pass or other things that you otherwise wouldn't try?

RM: Well I smoked a spliff and then



ran a half-marathon without any training! It takes you to that place of, like, no resistance.

Could you imagine running that marathon without herb?

RM: Misery. I would be tired before I started. Herb allows you to set your pace, meditate, relax. Without that, I'm in competition, I'm not in harmony with myself.

Would you recommend marijuana to, say, an NBA player logging 40 minutes in Toronto one night and then Miami the next?

RM: You think playing 82 games is easy? Not only for their bodies but their minds. C'mon, bro. Basketball players, with the strain they put on their bodies, they need herb. Do you know how hard it is to go home after a game and sleep with pain?

Are executives afraid that if marijuana use is allowed, athletes will be stumbling around the locker room, smoked out all the time?

CR: That's a ridiculous mindset. There are aberrations in any profession, but by and large NBA players behave like professionals when they're at work. It's so important to approach this as a business and usher it in in a positive way. Education. Responsible use. Keeping it out of the hands of children. The more we can educate people, the more we stay out in front and share that information—that's gonna be crucial.

Cliff, You were suspended three times during your career for violating the NBA's drug policy. What roadblocks have you encountered because of your affiliation with cannabis?

CR: Cannabis was always a negative thing throughout my career. I played 18 years; I wanted to go into coaching. I was excited about maybe using that knowledge and helping other guys achieve their goals. I'm sure the stigma around cannabis has cost me in that area. Right now I'm excited about creating a positive atmosphere around something that's been a negative for a long time.

How else can cannabis help athletes?

RM: I believe it can help with these negative situations athletes put themselves in, hurting other people, hurting themselves—the aggression. When I finished playing football, [my brother] Ziggy told me, "You're not Superman anymore." I was so aggressive. Not much direction. Then I started smoking herb, and it calmed my life down.

Right—so would athletes still have the fire to compete?

RM: Competing is different from violence. Sport is love. It's passion. There's no passion in hurting people.

Ricky Williams

quarterback Cam Newton made famous. Dabbing, in the marijuana community, is the process of pressing cannabis extract (known as butane hash oil) against the heated surface of an “oil rig” pipe. The extract contains levels of THC up to 90%—in other words, more than three times as powerful as the strongest joint.

“Wow,” the Gemini says as he exhales.

Williams can hardly believe that he ended up here. He says he has never identified as a pothead, never worn shirts emblazoned with marijuana leaves. He smoked a handful of times in high school but didn’t appreciate marijuana until his senior year at Texas, in 1998. He broke up with his girlfriend that fall, and she started dating his teammate, a Longhorns quarterback. Here he was, a Heisman front-runner who couldn’t sleep at night; he was enjoying one of the best seasons in college football history (2,124 rushing yards, 28 touchdowns), and yet he was still depressed.

One night that fall he smoked with a friend and slept soundly for the first time in weeks. It wasn’t the high that changed his mind. It was the relief.

Williams says he didn’t consume pot regularly until after the Saints famously traded *eight* picks at the 1999 draft to move up and select him fifth. He fractured a rib during his third season, in 2001, and team doctors prescribed Indocin, a strong anti-inflammatory that made Williams feel numb and disconnected from his body, causing constipation almost as painful as the injury itself. The numbness stoked what doctors later diagnosed as his social anxiety disorder, and it made him question the sanity of his profession. (In Williams’s retelling of his story, the basics have remained consistent over the years, but sometimes he gets fuzzy on dates. Asked three times when he first started to smoke marijuana regularly, for instance, he gave three different answers: his first, second and third seasons.)

Often, Williams watched as Saints teammates filtered into the training room, doctors doling out pills like gumdrops. He took the antidepressant Paxil for anxiety and withdrew into his home office, where a friend, Chantel Christopher, delivered him meals. “He would sit in that room, on the computer all day,” she says, “like a zombie.”

In regular marijuana use Williams found a pain-relief alternative that worked for him in ways that painkillers

did not. He joked that only dumbasses failed the league’s once-a-year tests for recreational drugs—then he failed one in May 2002, shortly after being traded to the Dolphins, because they tested earlier in the off-season than the Saints. Still, he led the league in rushing with 1,853 yards that season, his first in the NFL’s drug program, where he met with psychologists and passed dozens of drug tests through most of ’03. Then, in December of that year he separated his shoulder on *Monday Night Football* against the Eagles. Williams smoked that night and was tested the next morning. In the off-season the results of his second failed drug test in 19 months went public.

“My image was soiled,” Williams says. “That was my biggest fear. I wouldn’t say that I contemplated suicide, but my

Williams estimates that between 60% and 70% of NFL players smoke marijuana, including QBs he played with and some coaches.

HOME STRETCH

The infrequency with which Williams (hanging with Asha, top, and Prince) visits his kids in Austin speaks to the wandering spirit that led him to explore alternative views in the first place.

thought was, If my image was tarnished, I was done, my life was over. I’m almost ashamed to say that.”

Suddenly the gifts that had magically appeared at the front door—hello, new mattress—stopped arriving. Contract negotiations with Miami stalled. Sponsorships were not renewed. “He was the bad guy, *instantly*,” says Kristin, who met Ricky in 2000, when she was a Delta flight attendant on his plane, and married him nine years later. Williams began to openly question whether he wanted to play football anymore, and the answer his soul returned surprised him. “Because it was *no*,” he says.

Williams made a deal with himself the following April: He would play out the 2004 season and then retire, unless—unless—he failed another drug test before training camp. And then off he went. He toured Europe backstage with Lenny Kravitz, returned to Florida for one night and took a drug test, then jetted to Jamaica to visit Bob Marley’s family. His sojourn then continued to the Bahamas, where he found out he had indeed tested positive again, and he immediately retired. Then back on the road he went: Hawaii, Tokyo. . . .

He knew, deep down, that he had failed on purpose. He had given himself an out. “People often tell me about how much courage it took for me to [walk away],” he says. “But underneath, I felt like a coward. I’d had the idea that I didn’t want to play football anymore, but I didn’t have the courage to make the choice.”

Those events, he says, led to a new beginning. “Everything up to there, you could call it training or practice,” he says. “But that moment, *that’s* my new birthday.”

It’s also the exact moment when Ricky Williams and marijuana fully intertwined.



IN SEPTEMBER 2004, Williams decided to return to football, and he did so in the most Ricky Williams way possible. After passport issues prohibited him from catching a benefit concert that his agent, Leigh Steinberg, had organized at the Great Wall of China, he found himself stranded in Thailand. He planned to fly instead to the Himalayas, where he would hang for six months with a friend from Australia who went by the name Mystic Steve. But while he was waiting for a ride to Chiang Mai airport, Williams spied a game between the Raiders and the Buccaneers on the TV in his hostel. Right there he decided he would come back. He needed the money anyway. He called Kristin and said, "I'm coming home."

By then, the name Ricky was widely used as a synonym for aberrational behavior. Days earlier the Dolphins had won an \$8.6 million judgment against him over his signing bonus. And his solution—the way he would leave behind his status as the pothead who threw away fame and fortune—was to . . . *change his name*. He would become Rio Don, swap jersey numbers, from 34 to 21, and play for Oakland. He even signed a batch of footballs for Steinberg: RIO DON #21.

"Luckily," Williams says, "that idea didn't stick." What *did* stick is the stoner tag.

Only Williams did not return to football right away. He says he saw a TV interview in which one of his Dolphins teammates, Jason Taylor, expressed disgust over Williams's soul searching, and so he figured the climate was not yet right. Later that fall, as the 2004 NFL season went on without him, he packed up his Jeep Wrangler in Florida and drove with Christopher to California, stopping only for gas. "To add to the strangeness of all this," says Steinberg, "he goes to study Ayurveda, and he [moves to] the one city in the world whose name you can't say, in respect to what's happening, without laughing: Grass Valley."

Mike Wallace and his *60 Minutes* cameras found Williams



there, and when Wallace asked Williams if he still smoked marijuana, the retired footballer said, "Mmm-hmm."

"A seminal moment in pot history," Williams jokes now. "That's when I was immortalized."

He hated how the reputation stuck: the monologue where Jay Leno said the racehorse Smarty Jones planned to retire and "smoke dope with . . . Ricky Williams," the Texas jerseys changed from Longhorns to Bonghorns, the doctored photos that depicted him running toward bags of weed or smoking superimposed joints. "It bothered me that people thought I quit football to go smoke," Williams says. "That's not true. People put way too much weight on the reasons they do things."

In the spring of 2005 he made good with the Dolphins; he served his four-game suspension and played 12 games for them that fall before failing another drug test in early '06. He then spent that season with the Toronto Argonauts, in the CFL, where there's no testing for marijuana.

Every story written about him mentioned the failed tests. The hardest part, for Williams, was having to explain over and over that he didn't leave the NFL simply to smoke pot. From 2005 through '15 he fought to change perceptions about him, but as states began to legalize marijuana and that industry trudged into the mainstream, Williams came to realize that in combating the stereotypes he also was perpetuating them—and hiding his true self.

Last October his friend and former Saints teammate Kyle Turley invited Williams to talk about his experience with marijuana at a conference in Phoenix. For the first time, Williams told his story to a group of strangers. He told them he wouldn't have won the 1998 Heisman Trophy, or played 11 NFL seasons, without cannabis. They showered him with a standing ovation.

Go where you're celebrated? He'd finally found that place.

IN THE cavernous halls at Spannabis, as revelers ignore the NO FUMAR signs posted on every wall, Williams explains how difficult it is for active athletes—celebrities with brands and reputations to protect—to speak their minds. He lauds Eugene Monroe, the former Ravens tackle who pushed the NFL this spring to increase research into potential medicinal uses of marijuana.

"The NFL is in a position where they could invest in something that actually takes care of [their players]," says one vendor who is selling seeds.

"Exactly," Williams responds. "That's the other side of the story. Because the league didn't take care of me."

Williams doesn't understand the NFL's ultraconservative approach to marijuana. He is not alone in that regard, but he is uniquely steeped in his understanding of league rules, which, in a nutshell, are this: The NFL views cannabis as illegal under its "substances of abuse" policy, which is separate from its

Ricky Williams

policy on “performance-enhancing substances.” For the former, the league tests nonoffenders once a year (*sidebar, page 59*), before the season; violators are tested more regularly, sent to mandatory counseling and fined game checks—the times and amounts depend on how many tests they fail. Williams lived this for almost 10 years, and it shaped his ideas about how the system might work better. Not that anyone has asked.

He’d start by tweaking the testing program, which doesn’t measure drug use so much as motivation and intelligence. He watches players like Martavis Bryant and Josh Gordon flunk test after test, and he wonders if they feel the same ambivalence toward football that he once felt.

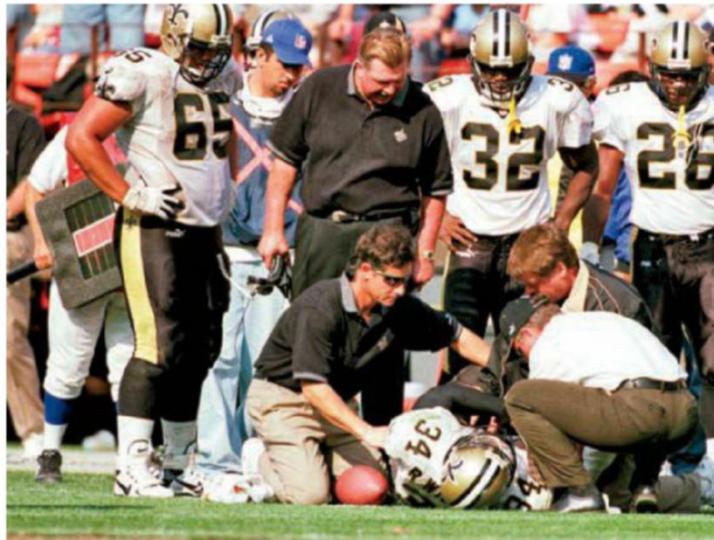
By his own conservative math Williams estimates that he was drug-tested more than 500 times—more, he thinks, than anyone in sports history, and so often that he was eventually able to pee on command. That he failed only four of those tests strikes Williams as a “pretty good ratio.” Kristin, meanwhile, still has flashbacks every time she sees a FedEx truck pull into the driveway. One tester liked the cherries she supplied; another helped fix a window frame. “Some of them were like family,” she says.

Nothing in the league’s policy deterred Williams from smoking marijuana when he wanted or needed to. It didn’t address what the league described as substance abuse—or Williams’s belief that sporadic marijuana use didn’t constitute abuse at all. Instead, Turley says, the league’s policy turned Williams into a target. “The NFL took it upon itself to try and ruin someone,” Turley says. “I can’t imagine the career Ricky would have had if these idiots had left him alone and just let him play football.”

Williams acknowledges that choices *he* made are what landed him in the NFL’s drug program, but he doesn’t believe the program fully addressed what issues might lie beneath those choices. (He says, however, that the therapy he completed was helpful.) He found the process more punitive than rehabilitative, set up to shame marijuana users rather than help them. “I was treated like a criminal,” he says.

What Williams wants is an NFL drug program based on cutting-edge rehabilitation techniques, driven by addiction experts. That approach would mirror President Obama’s intention to increase drug-treatment spending by \$1.1 billion. Separate from that, but still under the NFL’s drug policy, he wants the league to consider marijuana a potential pain-relief alternative to opioids. He’s not advocating rampant marijuana use, but he says the league “owes it to its players” to examine every possible option, cannabis included. “I definitely think the NFL could do more,” he says.

At Super Bowl 50, last February, commissioner Roger Goodell said the NFL was aware of scientific developments in marijuana studies but maintained that the league’s current policy remained in the “best interest of our players.” (Goodell has also said he remains open to changing his stance as more information becomes available, and *The Washington Post* reported recently that the league had set up a conference call



10,009

Career rushing yards, which ranks 29th in NFL history.

147

Career regular-season games played in 13 years, out of a potential 208.

13,788

Projected rushing yards if he'd played 13 uninterrupted seasons—No. 5 in NFL history.*



*Adjusted his missed/partial 2004–06 seasons to match average of 1999–2003; adjusted his truncated '07 season to match average of last four seasons.

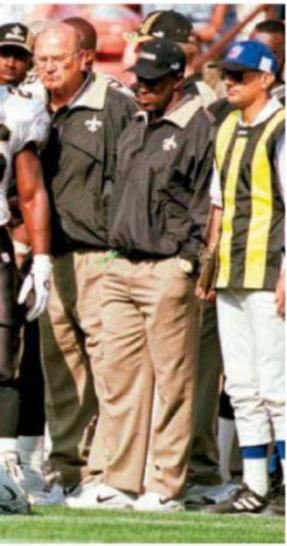
in addition to a long list of injuries, with a cocktail of painkillers, muscle relaxers and psych meds. “If you were around it, you know,” he says. “It was the wild, wild West.”

Nine NFL seasons eventually left Turley broken. In 2009 his wife found him trying to jump from a third-floor window. “Suicidal and homicidal tendencies became part of my daily living,” he says. “I couldn’t be around a knife in the kitchen without having an urge to stab someone, including my wife and kids.”

Turley says he finally kicked his painkiller habit in February 2015, when he began using only marijuana. He surfed more

with marijuana advocates.) Williams wonders, though, why the NFL remains so comfortable with the opioids that teams provide those players. He points to a class-action lawsuit, filed in May 2015, by a contingent of retirees who allege that teams systematically fed them painkillers to keep them on the field while failing to properly educate them about the associated risks. (A recent attempt to have the case dismissed was denied by a judge.)

Turley personifies Williams’s concerns over league-prescribed opioids. He took his first painkiller after blowing out his knee in 1996 at San Diego State. Over most of the next 20 years he countered anxiety, rage, depression and chronic headaches,



CHRONIC, INJURY PROBLEMS

Williams, who soothed his football sores with marijuana, can't understand why the NFL won't embrace its medicinal value.

often and lost 10 pounds. He says marijuana saved his life, his marriage and his relationship with his two children. He is now an outspoken advocate for marijuana reform and the founder of the Gridiron Cannabis Coalition, which is dedicated to the advancement of medical marijuana.

"There are so many of those stories," says Monroe. "People who lost loved ones . . . addictions to painkillers. Current NFL policy

does not allow for every potential option in mitigating pain. The NFL says it's doing everything it can. It's not."

Williams, meanwhile, estimates that between 60% and 70% of NFL players smoke marijuana, including quarterbacks he played with and some coaches. He believes that cannabis will be legalized nationwide in his lifetime, and he plans to grow his own plants, the same as when he planted his first garden—tomatoes, jalapeños, lettuce and bell peppers—in San Diego at age 13. He hopes Goodell remains true to his word and that the league embraces marijuana's potential if future research supports such a move.

"Follow the laws," he says. "And follow the science."

WILLIAMS STOPS at a Spannabis booth specific to cannabidiol (or CBD), one of the two most prevalent compounds found in marijuana. CBD doesn't produce a high, unlike the other abundant compound, THC. But CBD seems to hold more potential scientific benefits. One study, published by the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* in 2013, found that in experimental models CBD reduced nausea and vomiting, suppressed seizures, and combated psychosis, inflammatory and neurodegenerative disorders, along with tumors, cancer cells, anxiety and depression. Williams asks several questions about the benefits of CBD.

"Is this for you?" the vendor asks.

"It's for me specifically, but in a broader sense it's for other athletes," Williams says.

"Ahhh—football players," the vendor responds. "Like anything else, we're the healers; but we're also the destroyers."

"Amen," Williams says.

The more laps Williams makes around the Spannabis showroom, the more he speaks about his own experience: the trauma inflicted on his body, the torn right pectoral

muscle, the broken left ankle and arm, the dislocated right elbow, the broken ribs, the separated shoulders, the neck pain, all the inevitable results of thousands of collisions. Some days he feels tingling in his left arm, a numbness that dates to 2006. "I get scared sometimes," he says. "I'm like, This can't be normal. Is it going to get progressively worse the rest of my life?"

He wonders where exactly cannabis fits in among the various healing techniques he's mastered. He believes that additional research will validate his own experience, in which marijuana wasn't a panacea but proved beneficial as part of a more holistic approach to health. It eased his pain, sharpened his focus and boosted his creativity. "We have a ton of stories about how it has benefited people, but we're just on the surface in terms of how it works," Williams says. "I feel like I have the soul of a healer, and I want to see what's possible here."

The research that Williams seeks is already under way. In Colorado Springs, at the Realm of Caring Foundation, the focus is on cannabis research, education and advocacy. The foundation partnered with Johns Hopkins to commission a study of current and former athletes—largely football players—called When the Bright Lights Fade. (Monroe has donated \$80,000.) "My hypothesis," says Heather Jackson, the foundation's CEO, "is that football players who are using cannabis as part of their therapy are seeing a better quality of life than those who are not. The NFL spent \$100 million on concussion research but not *one dollar* on something [like this], with known medical benefits."

Jackson admits she is biased. "This plant," she says, "saved my kid." Her son, Zaki, started having seizures when he was four months old, up to 200 a day. Doctors tried 17 different pharmaceutical combinations to slow the seizures and none worked. Then, in July 2012, Zaki started taking CBD-based medication, and in the first 48 hours he didn't suffer a single seizure. He hasn't had one in almost four years. Now 13, Zaki has grown in several cognitive areas since discovering CBD. He has learned his colors and numbers, and he can ride a bicycle without training wheels, climb trees and speak in full sentences. Jackson says that her son's experience led her to start the organization and conduct this study, among the largest of its kind. She's not arguing for unchecked marijuana use, but rather specific, targeted research, and she's not dismissing the real dangers from any drug, cannabis included—addiction, dependence, overuse. She wants to see if what worked for her son will work for others, too. "This isn't even a conversation about marijuana anymore; it could be dandelion roots," Jackson says. "I identify with these players who want relief. I was trying to save my son's life. They're trying to save their own."

In Doylestown, Pa., at Kannalife Sciences, researchers are working with Temple University to explore the idea of CBD as a potential treatment for chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE. Dr. Bennet Omalu, of *Concussion* fame, served on

Ricky Williams

Kannalife's board. One founder, Thoma Kikis, explains that his company has taken a more biopharmaceutical approach than others exploring the same area. They want to synthesize CBD and distribute it in pill form to increase both its effectiveness and the rate at which it is absorbed into the bloodstream. "Cannabis research is going to be the new wave of medicine this century," he says.

Especially, Williams hopes, for football players. "The NFL empties your tank," he says. "I look at Junior Seau.

I played with Junior. He literally gave everything he had, and when I heard about his suicide, I understood. We have to teach these guys that everything's connected: the body and the mind, all the trauma. With all the damage we've suffered, we're one group of people with an amazing capacity to heal. We just need the tools."

The biggest obstacle that cannabis researchers confront is marijuana's status as a Schedule 1 drug, meaning that it's classified by the U.S. government as a substance with high potential for abuse without medical purpose. Ryan Vandrey, an associate professor who studies human behavior pharmacology at Johns Hopkins and who is helping craft the Realm of Caring study, falls somewhere between marijuana truthers and those who insist the plant has no benefit at all.

Vandrey is intrigued by the research possibilities. He says there's clear scientific evidence that cannabis "contains properties that are helpful for pain management." The key, he says, is to separate the pain control from the intoxication, to make cannabis use more specific and more targeted. For athletes, perhaps that means they won't smoke marijuana; maybe CBD will be infused into their food or administered through creams and oils or synthesized into a pill. But Vandrey also suggests that it's too early to tell just how beneficial cannabis might be. "There's not enough information yet," he says. "We need to study policy changes, regulation, quality control. We've got a million questions to address."

TWO WEEKS after Spannabis, Williams will be back home in Austin with Kristin and their three children: Prince, 14, Asha, 9, and Elijah, 6. (Ricky has two other kids with two other women.) He will help Prince with his math homework and play catch with Asha in the backyard—but he'll leave the next morning for another speaking engagement. "I don't think he has an attachment gene," Kristin says. Asked what he's most attached to, she says, "His freedom."

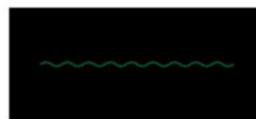
Kristin long ago acclimated to Ricky's whims. On their second date he told her that most of his friends were women and that he liked to travel, bunking in hostels, absorbing

different cultures—and that he would never travel with her. That, she says, is Ricky: seeker, wanderer, explorer; someone who says his five children understand that he'll never be what most people consider a normal parent. He once considered moving to Australia, told his friends it would be permanent, and then changed his mind. Kristin recalls one night after the 2011 season when she and Ricky stayed up late discussing how he wanted to play for the Chargers in '12 (despite the year



GROW YOUR OWN WAY

Williams's new passion for pot led the growers at Urban Greenhouse in Phoenix to name a strain after him: #34 OG.



remaining on his Ravens contract), what his goals were, where they would live. . . .

"The next morning," she says, "he comes into the room at 6:30, flips on the light. I'm dead asleep, and he says, 'Guess what? I'm retired.'" (Williams remembers this differently; either way, he never played another down.) "That's what every day was like," Kristin says, adding that sometimes three or four days will pass in his absence before one of her children asks, "Where's Dad?"

A number of people close to Williams feel burned by his itinerant lifestyle. They describe him as selfish, and yet they love him all the same. The couple has decided to divorce, but Ricky says Kristin remains supportive. "I trust him," she says, "because no matter what he does, it always seems to work out."

Williams jokes that Austin, long his home base, is the only city in the U.S. with statues for two potheads, himself and country singer Willie Nelson. He's a football analyst for the Longhorn Network, and he spends a lot of time in his office-library. Whereas he once collected houses and sports cars, he now amasses books, which he rearranges according to his mood every time he stops home. He has been known to leave Gucci loafers behind in hotel rooms in order to fit recent purchases—volumes like *Back to Eden, The Web That*

Through the Smoke

Five things you probably didn't know about the NFL's marijuana rules BY JACOB FELDMAN

1. The league's substance abuse policy predates its PED protocol.

Commissioner Pete Rozelle first introduced a loose recreational drug code, focused on education, in 1971; the preseason testing structure still used today came into being as part of the '82 CBA—and suspensions didn't begin until '89. Separate language for steroids didn't appear until '83.

2. Players outside the "intervention program"—those who've never had a violation—are tested just once a year.

Anyone under contract is tested once between April 20 (yup: 4/20) and Aug. 9. The player is given at most a three-hour warning before being visited by a collector, who must directly witness the player providing the urine sample.

3. For every player suspended under the policy, five to 10 others anonymously enter and exit the intervention program.

Not even teams are made aware of a player's positive test until he is suspended, which only occurs after multiple violations. Team physicians, however, have that information in order to prevent cross-medication issues.

4. Marijuana is handled differently from all other substances.

The discipline procedures for marijuana abusers are less strict than violations for all other drugs. Clause 1.5.2(c) states that an additional offense is allowed before suspensions are leveled in cases involving marijuana. And up until that point, fines for positive tests are less steep.

5. Hundreds of people are involved in the program.

There are generally two or three clinicians per NFL team who administer treatment plans for each player in the program. Then there's the legion of agents who help conduct 15,000-plus tests each year. Combined with the steroid program, the NFL spends about \$13 million per year on its drug programs.

Has No Weaver and Planets in Therapy—into his suitcase.

In order to remain active, he plays linebacker and running back on a local flag football team, the Swangers. He patrols the outfield for the Dirt Bats in an adult softball league (his position, naturally: left-center). At a recent game the team's shortstop wore jeans, and a portly pitcher lobbed softballs in a tie-dyed T-shirt.

Williams sees his latest foray, into the marijuana industry, as not only the continuation of his path but also something that brings all his disparate endeavors full circle. Sometimes that feels redemptive. Mostly, it just feels right.

In an industry built outside convention, Williams experiences less anxiety in social situations. He wonders if all the issues from his playing career stemmed from being around too few like-minded people. "I always felt like an outcast, like the black sheep," he says. "This experience has normalized me. I don't feel so crazy. I want to go from being thought of as crazy to *eccentric*."

Still, Williams may be underestimating the reaction to come. The NFL's collective attitude toward marijuana seemed evident at the draft in April, when Mississippi offensive tackle Laremy Tunsil tumbled from the top of some boards to the Dolphins at No. 13, after a video was released online, moments before the first round, showing Tunsil smoking marijuana through a bong attached to a gas mask. "It's a reminder that some people are still in the dark," Williams

says of the way teams appeared to recoil from Tunsil. "People are still uneducated. We have a lot of work to do."

Williams refuses to let others define him the way they once did, the way they will define Tunsil moving forward. "In my search for the truth, I've learned to be comfortable with myself in a way that I don't have to apologize for, instead of trying to hide parts of myself to prove I'm a good person," he says. "The legacy I want to leave is one that's true to who I was. Not an image I portrayed of what I should have been."

ON HIS final morning in Barcelona, Williams takes a cab to the beach at sunrise. He hasn't slept. His flight leaves in six hours, and he plans to listen to a lecture about the planet Mercury on the nine-hour flight to his layover in New York City.

The beach is mostly empty, save for the last stragglers exiting nightclubs, some joggers and a yogurt delivery truck. Williams walks slowly down the coast, alone, as the sun peeks over the horizon. He kicks off his checkered Vans and digs his toes into the sand. Waves crash into the shore. He assumes the lotus position—legs crossed, back straightened.

There's so much to do: an astrology class in Italy, a conference in Dallas, a speech in Philadelphia. That, along with marijuana to smoke and to study, an industry to immerse in, money to be made. For now, though, the wanderer just sits there, considering what's next, momentarily at rest. □



The Omaha Trail

→ BY CHRIS BALLARD

LAST THURSDAY, 23-YEAR-OLD Alex Ngan arrived at the airport in Oakland more than an hour early, just as you're supposed to. He cruised through security with only his backpack and a duffel bag, which held his swimsuit, goggles and a change of clothes, and settled in to wait for Delta flight 1374 to Salt Lake City, boarding at 4:15 p.m. From there Ngan would connect to Omaha, crash for the night and, in the morning, fulfill a life's dream by competing in the U.S. Olympic Trials. His heat in the 50-meter freestyle was scheduled for 10.

Only the 4:15 takeoff became 4:40, then 5:15. Ngan checked his itinerary: 37 minutes to connect in Salt Lake. The plane was now 40 minutes late. It was going to be tight. Very tight.

At 5:33 p.m., when the flight lifted off, Ngan put his head back and visualized his strokes for the next morning. A 2015 graduate of Columbia who had been accepted to the prestigious UC Berkeley–UC San Francisco Joint Medical Program, Ngan had whittled his 50 free times lower and lower over the past year until, in May, at the Speedo Grand Challenge in Irvine, Calif., he touched the wall, looked up and saw 23.20 on the scoreboard. The cutoff for qualification was 23.29. It was, he recalls, a feeling of "pure bliss."

Finally the plane touched down at 7:54, 11 minutes before Ngan's next flight. He hit the tunnel in a dead sprint and by 8:07 could glimpse the connecting gate. Then he saw the closed doors and the empty spot on the tarmac. The gate agent apologized; he had tried to hold the flight. With no other planes leaving that night for cities even close to Omaha, Ngan ran toward the car-rental booths. If he drove all night, he might make it.

By 9, Ngan was on the road. He bought two large Red Bulls and a Monster drink at a convenience store, then pulled up Google Maps: 941 miles, 12 hours and 45 minutes. Estimated time of arrival: 10 a.m. exactly. Without stops. Still, Ngan felt strangely optimistic. He could beat Google Maps; he knew it. He tore off into the night on I-80.

He pushed the Hyundai Veloster past 85 mph, up to 90, then 95. On his phone, he watched the ETA inch down. Utah became Wyoming. Then, at 10:14 p.m., as Ngan

zoomed through Uinta County, he heard a noise that made his stomach sink. Sirens. Worse than the \$230 fine was the delay: 15 minutes lost. By the time he pulled back on the highway, his ETA was past 10 a.m. Making matters tougher, he'd now need to keep within 10 miles of the speed limit. Still, it was possible.

Ngan drove on into the predawn, imagining the race. He felt strong, confident, positive he would set a PR. Sure, his chances of actually qualifying for Rio were remote—"I'd need to have miracle swims, basically," he says—but stranger things have happened.

Just after 5 a.m. That's when the dream died. Somewhere in the grassy fields of western Nebraska, as dawn warmed the bottom of his windshield, Ngan switched to Apple Maps, to see if it provided a different route. Upon doing so, he almost yelled. Apple Maps' arrival time was nearly an hour later. And that's when it hit him: The Google ETA hadn't accounted for the one-hour time change. Even if he drove 100 the rest of the way, he wouldn't make it in time for his race.

Past Lincoln, the clock hit 10. Ngan pulled over. He'd missed the Olympic trials, his dream as a kid in Santa Clarita, Calif., by less than an hour.

Later that morning, Ngan walked into the CenturyLink Center in Omaha in a sleep-deprived daze, awed by the size and the flames that shot out when swimmers were introduced, as if it were a circus. He'd stopped for gas three times. Listened to hundreds of songs. Wolfed down a box of Clif Bars. He had beaten Google Maps, only Google Maps then beat him. But something about the experience also energized him. Four years isn't that far away. "Maybe I could give it another shot," he says. "Who knows?"

Then Ngan pauses. "Though I think I'd book an earlier flight next time." □

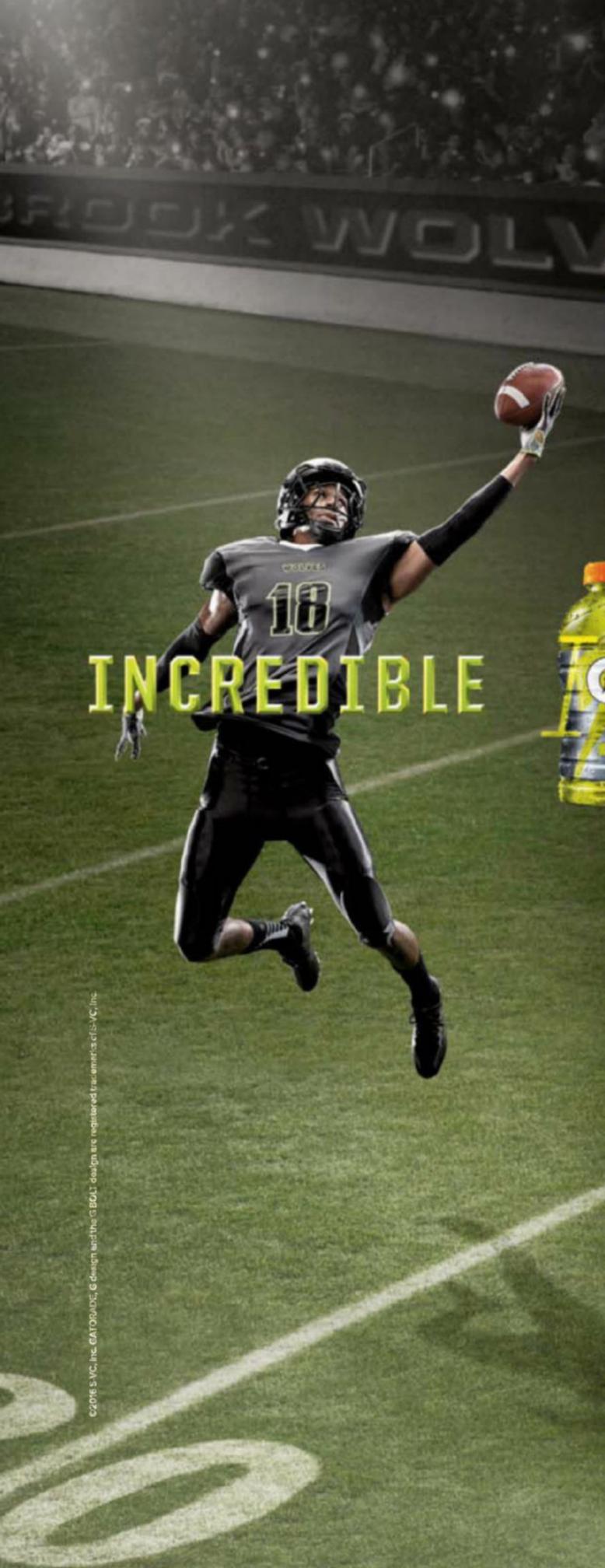
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