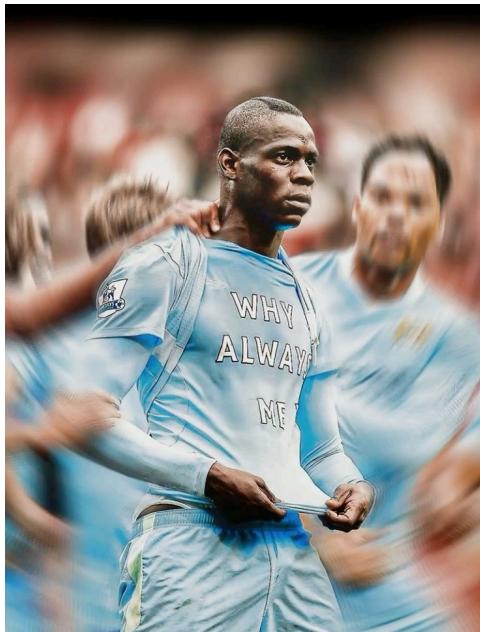


## **My 5 favorite athletes of all time**

*1.24.26 - Stella Rosa Restaurant*



In sports, there are a lot of different types of athletes that gain fandom. One mold / form of adored athlete is the hardworker/achiever. Think of Messi, Lebron, or Tom Brady. Somebody who works their ass off to get to where they are, and to extend their greatness as long as they can. We admire these players because of their work ethic, desire to win/create a legacy, and for the way they carry themselves both on and off the court. These athletes sacrifice their time and leisure to attain status and to ultimately win championships, which gains them respect and adoration. The athletes I like, and the ones I will be talking about here, fall into a different and less conventional category of greatness. These are the athletes who are seen more as "artists," or players that seem to have just been born with a natural skill. These players don't always get the accolades and sometimes come under the microscope for their work ethic, but man do they entertain and put asses in seats. These are the guys whose numbers won't always put them among the greats, and their legacy / character may be called into question, but man do they entertain and give the viewer a unique, exciting experience every time they turn on the television. You watch these kinds of players and you can't help but think "man no matter how hard I worked/trained I couldn't do that, this man was born with a skill/creativity you can't teach and all I can do is appreciate it." Some claim that athletes like this don't "love" their sport but I vehemently disagree. I think these typa guys play for the absolute joy of the game and don't see their sport as a profession, but rather an art/passion. These are my favorite athletes to watch, and I want to highlight some of them here. So, here are 5 of my favorite athletes of all time in terms of their mindset, aura (no glaze), and creative genius. All of these are my opinions so if u disagree kick rockz.

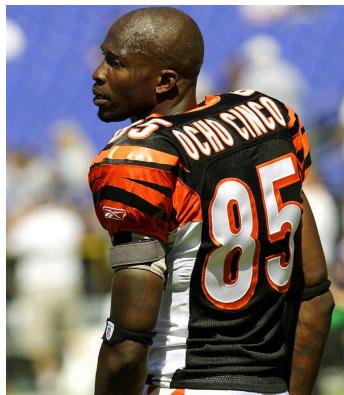
**Honorable Mentions:** Kyrie Irving , Yasiel Puig, Allen Iverson, Lance Stephenson, Swaggy P

Can't have a list without these players, which is why they all get an honorable mention. Going to write a quick blurb to honor each one and give them their flowers.

- *Kyrie Irving*: The ultimate “artist” on any court or field. He is kinda the perfect hybrid between the creator and worker, as its not like kyrie bullshits and his work ethic is documented. The creativity and unique way Kyrie plays is special and unlike anything I've ever seen or will ever see again.
- *Yasiel Puig*: I remember when he first burst onto the scene with the Dodgers in the 2010s. The bat flips, swagger and all that were so tuff. His come up was the last time i really followed the MLB and he was the main reason.
- *Allen Iverson*: From his cultural impact on the game, to style on the court, to not lifting weights because “that shit’s too heavy,” AI is like the ultimate played the game based off feel and with his own energy in which he was unapologetically HIMSELF. 100% the most influential man on this list or at least IMO. Epitome of doing it your way and doing it with mf style. Bro had white kids at his games with cornrows in lol thats motion.
- *Lance “Make ‘em dance” Stephenson*: I have him on my icons wall on the site because I respect Lance so much for how freely he played the game and how much FUN he had doing it. Plus he was actually nice as fuck his dancing and vibes kinda overshadowed he was a 6MOTY and a certified buck. Again, unapologetically himself and understood that basketball is supposed to be FUN. Whether it was a preseason game or a playoff game Lance was gonna try some fuck shit on the court cuz that was his GAME! He didn’t think twice about that shit and that is authenticity. Legend.
- *Nick “Swaggy P” Young*: Do you know how much motion u gotta have to pull off the nickname “Swaggy P” when there isn’t even a “P” in your name? A fucking bucket who let that bitch fly and did not give a fuck. U roll the ball out and Nick Young is gonna hoop its simple.

Now let's get into my top 5 favorites.

## 5. Chad Ochocinco



Chad Ochocinco man. This dude had just changed his name and was hooping on the bengals RIGHT as I got into the NFL as a kid. Ocho cinco jersey was the first jersey I ever asked for no lie. The fact he changed his name to ocho cinco cuz thats his jersey number and thats not even how u say “85” in spanish is the definition of cool i dont really care. Then when you couple that with the fact the dude is hilarious. From the media interactions to the creative celebrations, he was my favorite player as a little kid and now being grown bro still has a special place in my heart no glaze. This dude knew how to have fun with it and did was himself and didn’t care what people

thought in the process. I was so amped when the pats got him even though at that point he was in his celtics shaq era I'm still glad I got to watch bro play for my favorite team. And bro ate McDanks before every game lmao. Definition of just a normal dude who just happens to be extremely gifted and enjoys his gifts without overthinking it too much. He has two great quotes I love and that I try to live by when I hoop:

*"When I retire I want to be remembered as a great player... and entertainer."*

*"I'm a humble person... but at the same time I'm cocky."*

You gotta be a little cocky when you play a sport you love and enjoy imo, and playing to have fun and entertain is the highest form of sport in my opinion. People literally watch sport to be entertained. If you can be good and entertain, you are the cream of the crop, regardless of winning or not.

#### 4. Ricardo Quaresma



I use this photo of Quaresma with this haircut because this is the first time I ever watched him live was on the Portuguese national team when he had the feather hair in EuroCup 2016? I think it was. Immediately I was like that's fucking tuff lol I've never seen that, and his game is so nice. People always are like "man hes just as talented / skilled as the greats but he didn't have the right attitude work ethic" and make him out to be some sort of failure. This guy is a national legend, who played the game in such a unique way he literally invented (or popularized either or ig) the *trivela* and used it in pivotal moments very

successfully. He's at the highest level of soccer playing like it's streetball, I have such an admiration for that. He's also like I said a national legend who is an FC Porto all time great. I talk about this more in the conclusion, but how can you speak negatively on this mans career or spend more time talking about "what ifs" as opposed to enjoying the amazing product he gave football fans for years. People's perspective/framing is the only thing that can cause anyone to look down on or disrespect this mans career. A magician with the ball. If you read this and you haven't seen him play go look up his highlights on youtube, CINEMA.

#### 3. Lamelo Ball



Man I have always like Lamelo, but this year I have become a true fan and supporter. I don't know if theres another player in the league that plays with as much joy as Lamelo does (I will not be calling him Melo out of respect to the real Melo, Carmelo anthony). This dude is always on the court smiling. He plays like hes at the park, and is so

unorthodox in his movement, dribbling, jumper etc. Players that do shit that can't be mimicked or confused with others movements are so gifted and special tbh no glaze and when you combine Melo's genuine love for the game and his unique play style, you get one of the most electric and free athletes of this generation. He is another example of a dude that is himself completely on and off the court and doesn't censor himself. And like all the other athletes on this list, people love him for it. He's a top 10 easily most popular player in the league because of his atmosphere and energy he has created around himself. When you think "Lamelo" you think all the crazy shit that comes on the court, but also the clips of him trolling on ball in the family fucking around with Lavar and his brothers etc. Special player with a special level of joy / creativity. Dude has a fan in me and I hope he gets put on a national stage some point in his career so more people can see it.

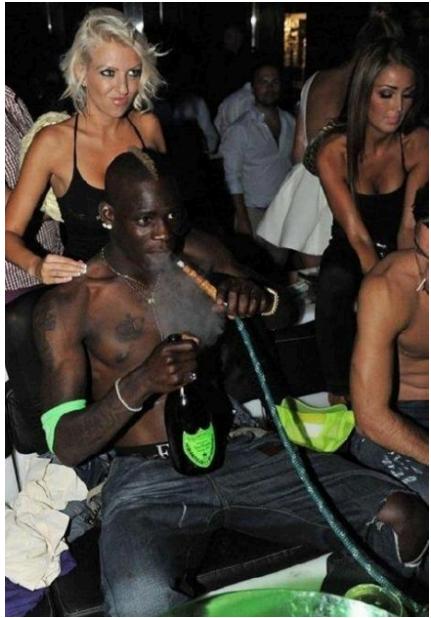
## 2. Nick Kyrgios



It takes a lot of balls to exist/compete in a sport like Kyrgios does where nearly everyone has a stick up their ass and expects its athletes to behave on and off the court as if they were Englishmen in the 1600s. He rubs so many people (pause) the wrong way in his stuck up sport, and that's really why I fuck with bro (he's also a massive Celtics fan). Not only off the court with his attitude and drip (he warms up in basketball jerseys, for contrast most tennis players r wearing polos lol) but his on the court play almost is an act of rebellion against the sport of tennis himself. He bucks and challenges every pretentious tennis norm just by existing. Underhanded serves, uncalled for tweeners, by hand the back volleys (pictured), are all a part of Kyrgios's arsenal. The same things that piss off the tennis patriarchs are the very things that made me and so many others love and appreciate him. There's a reason the stands are always packed at a Kyrgios match, and why the

energy in the air is different everytime he steps on the court. It's cause *literally anything could happen*. He could do some shit you have never seen on a tennis court, negative or positive. And while I don't necessarily condone ALL of his antics, I have a serious admiration and respect for how he exists in such a pretentious world and refuses to conform to its norms and outdated values. I think he is a trailblazer in the tennis world (along with Gael Monfils, don't want to discredit him) and that his creativity and theatrical approach to the game will have a serious impact on tennis and how newer players coming up approach the game. It makes the sport so much more exciting and electric to have a real showman. This dude lives his life, has a good time, and on the side is just rlly nice at tennis lol, and in my mind that's how it should be. Big ups to Nicky. And now last but not least...

## 1. Mario Balotelli



I mean look at this photo lmao. This dude smoked cigs during the season and when his coach found out he basically told his coach “chill, cigs help me relax.” His theatrics and partying off the field were insane and headlines, but he was so nice on the pitch that his play could never be overshadowed. The ultimate freethinker and mad genius on the pitch. Sometimes he made boneheaded plays trying to do crazy shit, but that's a part of the package, as he is an entertainer. The perfect encapsulation and epitome of the idea that sports aren't meant to be your life. Your life is your life if that makes sense. Sports are just a part of your day you show up for, try your best to have as much fun as you can and compete, and then go home. A guy like Mario Balotelli isn't great if he locks himself in a facility and trains 24/7. He'd probably go mental and hate his life. That's because a man like Mario understands that the idea of “ball is life” is a terrible way to approach sport. It just isn't as serious or as life and death as people want you to believe. Lives are not at risk.

Nobody is being harmed. Sports are fun, and if anyone understood that, Mario understood that. For that he has my ultimate respect and is one of my favorite athletes of all time.

### Final Thoughts:

I guess what I'm kinda getting at here is in the end who is more fulfilled / happier in life. The athletes who base their whole careers around chasing rings, winning, and there legacy in other people eyes? Or the athletes who know there gifted, but aren't motivated by extrinsic opinions or factors outside of the game they play? I recognize it's not always this simple, but I feel like I often see people be like (to use an example) “Quaresma was such a disappointment. So talented but he never put it together.” i doubt a man like Quaresma feels that way lol. He played his way, brought joy, creativity, and a unique flair to his sport that captivated millions and made him millions lol. I feel like when a guy like that goes to bed at night, he doesn't give a fuck if he won enough or where some analyst ranks him amongst other soccer players. He probably is just content in the fact he got to play the game he loved his way without compromising his character. Idk maybe I'm wrong, but I think about this often in how sport is approached and what people define as “a successful career.”