

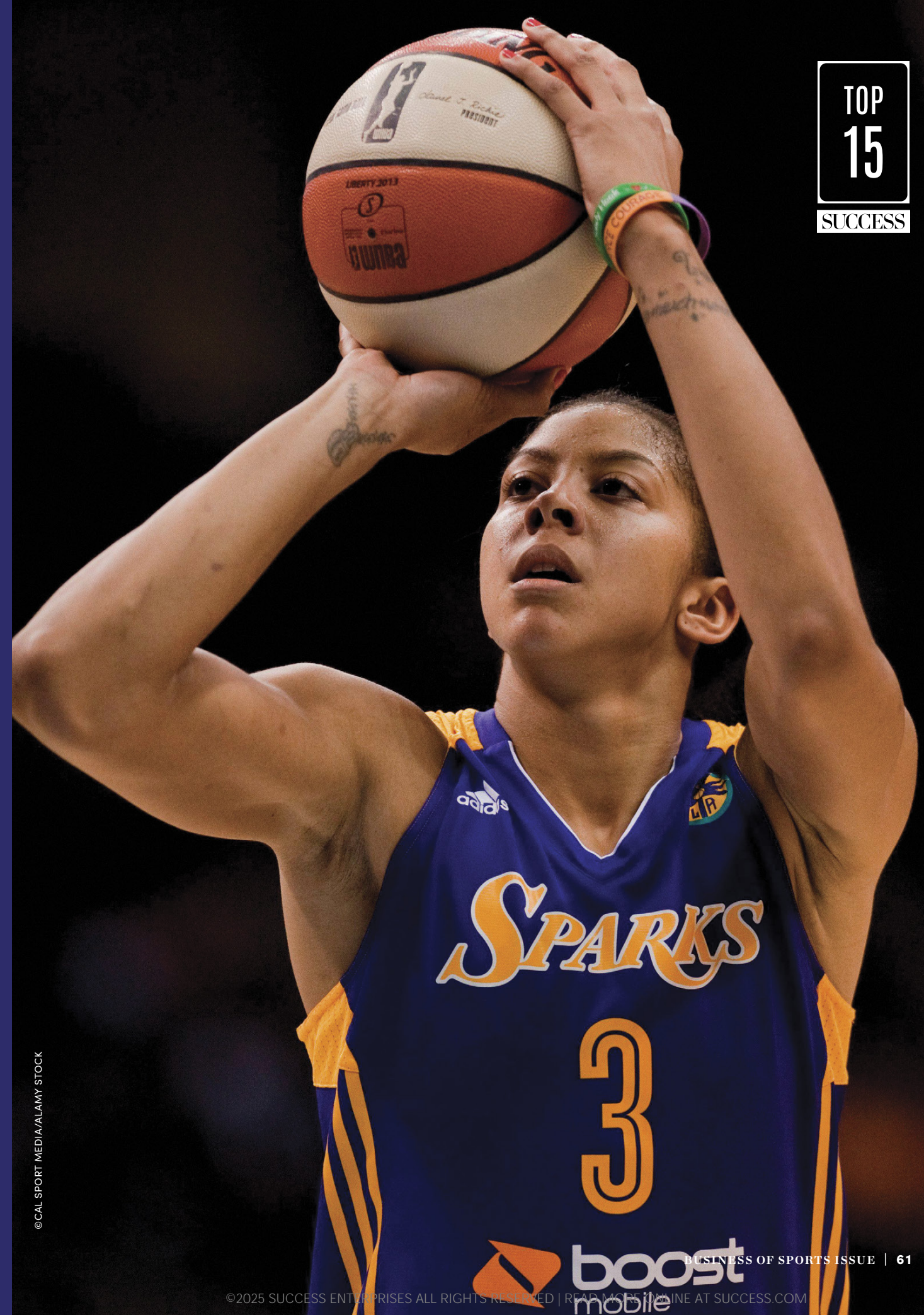
15

ATHLETES SUCCEEDING BEYOND THE Gym

BY STACI PARKS

THESE SPORTS ICONS PROVE THAT VICTORY
ISN'T LIMITED TO THE PLAYING FIELD.

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FOR PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES,

it takes precision, resilience and excellence to compete on a national—or even international—level. Some athletes have taken that drive and focused it on building legacies that extend beyond their sport. Whether launching a successful brand or sharing insights into their everyday lives, these 15 athletes have triumphantly transitioned from sports icons to savvy entrepreneurs.

CANDACE PARKER

BASKETBALL (PREVIOUS SPREAD)

The seven-time All-Star, three-time WNBA champion and two-time Olympian changed the face of women's basketball throughout her 16-year career with her leadership and athleticism. (She was the first woman to dunk in an NCAA tournament.) Parker is the only WNBA player to win MVP and Rookie of the Year in the same season. After her WNBA retirement, Parker's long-running partnership with adidas morphed into her becoming the brand's president over its women's basketball division, where she's elevating the future of women's sports through innovative strategies and empowering initiatives.

AMANDA SORENSEN

MOTORSPORTS

At just 22 years old, the racecar driver is already making history within the traditionally male-dominated sport with precision, power and perseverance. She's one of three female Formula DRIFT drivers and the first woman to earn a podium position in the league. Sorensen started driving go-karts at age 6, winning her first championship at 9. After switching to off-road competition at 11, she'd won two titles by 16, when she discovered the art of drifting. These days, you'll find her behind the Air Force ProSpec car and on social media (with more than 2.5 million followers across the platforms), where she aims to motivate young women to tackle unconventional career paths.

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BRIAN SHAW

STRONGEST MAN ON EARTH

The decorated strongman competitor transformed a niche sport into a bustling enterprise, cementing his place as one of the greatest strength icons of all time. Shaw, at a staggering 6 feet, 8 inches and weighing 470 pounds at his heaviest, pioneered a new era of strongman training that led to more than 25 world records, four World's Strongest Man titles and a place in the International Sports Hall of Fame. Shaw has expanded his brand into multiple successful businesses, including Shaw Strength, Undefined Nutrition and Evolution Athletics. Undefined Nutrition is widely recognized as one of the fastest-growing sports supplement brands in the USA and worldwide. Through Shaw Strength, Shaw shares a curated look into his training methods and everyday life. Evolution Athletics evolved from Shaw cutting and sewing his own weightlifting accessories for competition.



MATT LOMBARDI & KEVIN MORAN

TRIATHLETES

Lombardi and Moran have pushed their bodies and minds to the brink of excellence and ultimate performance as former professional athletes, avid CrossFit competitors, IRONMAN triathletes and marathoners. Eventually, the literal aches and pains of this lifestyle started to take its toll, leading them on a search for a remedy. They founded Boston-based performance wellness brand Beam to meet their own needs and expectations. Beam's science-backed products—like Beam Dream, Beam Greens and their latest collaboration with Shawn Johnson East, Beam Kids—help people improve their physical and mental wellness. Moreover, their products have helped athletes better understand and access CBD.



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ALLYSON FELIX

TRACK AND FIELD

The most decorated track and field athlete in history is using her platform to uplift female athletes and fight for maternity care and benefits. The Olympian turned entrepreneur and advocate started sportswear company Saysh in 2021, two years after longtime sponsor Nike imposed a 70% pay cut after she'd become pregnant. (Felix's story led to public outcry, a congressional inquiry—and a new maternity policy for Nike's sponsored athletes.) Now, Felix is helping collegiate and professional female athletes secure name, image and likeness (NIL) deals through her management company, Always Alpha. Felix continues to be a champion. But, this time, it's on behalf of other women.



SIMONE BILES

GYMNASTICS

Biles is considered one of the greatest gymnasts of all time, and she has the hardware to back it up with 41 Olympic and World Championship medals. Since her 2013 Olympic debut, Biles has dominated the sport. So far, there are five signature skills named after her, and she was the first woman to win six all-around World Championship titles. But Biles has also used her platform to advocate for foster care, sexual abuse survivors and mental health. (Her abrupt withdrawal from the 2020 Olympics sparked a critical conversation about prioritizing mental health just as importantly as physical health.) Brands like K18 hair products have taken notice of Bile's excellence. In 2021, she entered into an exclusive partnership with female-focused apparel brand Athleta.

ATHLETA
POWER OF SHE

POWER OF SHE

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ZACH HYMAN

HOCKEY

On the ice, as the Edmonton Oilers left wing, Hyman has made a name for himself with his work ethic and scoring prowess. (He scored a career high 54 goals during the 2023-2024 season.) He's become a fan favorite as a first-shot scorer and for his relentless play. Off the ice, Hyman is a children's author and founder and president of Toronto-based Eleven Holdings Corp., a gaming and media holding company that owns and operates a portfolio of esports and gaming businesses.



CHUKKY OKOBI

FOOTBALL

Okobi spent nearly a decade in the NFL, where he won Super Bowl XL with the Pittsburgh Steelers. Now, he's sharing what he learned on and off the field from one of the world's most successful sports organizations as a mindfulness coach and motivational speaker. His mantra is focused: You have to change yourself first to change what's going on around you. Okobi uses his background to help individuals, leaders and businesses unlock their potential and develop the high-performance habits of a Super Bowl champion.



ANDREW EAST & SHAWN JOHNSON EAST

FOOTBALL, GYMNASTICS

This husband-and-wife duo are former elite athletes who've become entrepreneurs with a *New York Times*-praised podcast, *Couple Things*, and a family-focused media company, FamilyMade Media. Andrew is a former NFL long snapper, while Shawn is a four-time Olympic medalist who returned to the 2024 Olympic Games as a *Yahoo* commentator. The couple has generated a massive following (12 million across their social platforms) for their honest, transparent conversations about marriage and parenting. Last summer, ahead of the Olympics, the Easts donated \$250,000 to create the Moment Makers Grants, which helped ease the financial burdens Olympic and Paralympic athlete parents experience in trying to get to the games.



JONATHAN CHEEVER

SNOWBOARDING

Cheever is a world-class athlete, Olympic snowboarder and second-generation master plumber—an unexpected combination of skill, grit and determination. He is an anomaly in a sport where top snowboarders often come from wealthy families. Meanwhile, Cheever supported himself with his family trade. He spent 16 years on the U.S. Snowboard Team, where he learned the depths of perseverance and chasing success. These lessons have translated off the slopes, too, as Cheever runs a successful plumbing and heating business in Park Slope, Utah, with his partner Madeleine Soule. “Success is built one small win at a time,” Cheever says. “And you have to embrace every step, even the hard ones.”

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DAVID BECKHAM

SOCCER

Revered as one of the best midfielders to ever play the game, Beckham has been a defining force since his 1992 debut with Manchester United at 17 years old. But his influence has expanded far beyond the pitch. As one of the most sought-after athletes, he’s endorsed brands ranging from Armani and Maserati to Gillette and Stella Artois. In 2003, adidas offered him a \$160 million lifetime sponsorship contract, securing his place in the cultural zeitgeist. In recent years, Beckham has unleashed his entrepreneurial side, founding Inter Miami CF and Studio 99, which produced Netflix’s Emmy-winning docuseries, *Beckham*. Now, he’s honing in on the sweet side of life with a new honey business, which started as a hobby on his Cotswold estate. (He’s even made honey for King Charles III.)

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KIM MULKEY

BASKETBALL COACH

Mulkey’s fashion choices are as bold as her coaching style, with both drawing eyes to the sidelines and often going viral. But don’t be fooled by the feathers, sequins and 3D basketball hoop skirt. Mulkey is currently the highest-paid coach in women’s college basketball with a \$32 million, 10-year contract with Louisiana State University. She’s worth it: Mulkey led Baylor University’s women’s basketball team to three national championships; she’s just getting started at LSU, where she coached the team to the 2023 title. Before she was a sports headline fixture, Mulkey was the scrappy, 5-foot, 4-inch point guard who helped lead Louisiana Tech University to two national titles and four Final Fours between 1980-1984.



CONOR MCGREGOR

UFC CHAMPION

The Irish mixed martial artist fighter is one of the biggest stars in UFC history, having won champion titles in two weight classes—simultaneously. Despite his controversial and often brash behavior, McGregor has amassed a large draw to the sport, headlining the top six most-bought pay-per-view events for UFC. McGregor has found success outside of the Octagon, expanding his brand as an entrepreneur and restaurateur, with a portfolio that includes The Black Forge Inn in Dublin. ♦

PARKS IS A WRITER AND EDITOR BASED IN DALLAS, TEXAS.