GIANNIS INTETOKOUNMPO



Emma Carlson Berne

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At Last, an MVP

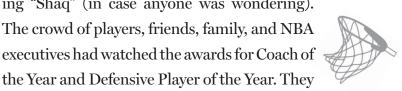




The lights were dimmed at the Barker Hangar, a giant event space in Southern California, and the tables were littered with glasses, napkins, and flowers. It was Monday, June 24, 2019, and the NBA was holding its annual awards ceremony. Shaquille O'Neal was hosting, wearing giant white shorts and a white T-shirt reading "Shaq" (in case anyone was wondering). The crowd of players, friends, family, and NBA executives had watched the awards for Coach of

had watched Kareem Abdul-Jabbar speak and













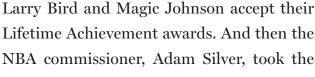






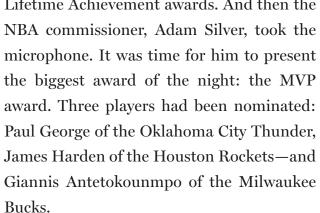
















Silver thanked Shaq and the fans of the

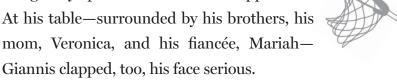




NBA. "Only about four thousand men have played in the NBA over its seventy-three-year history...Just to compete at this level requires unmatched talent and discipline. And to rise above the very best in the world and be considered the Most Valuable Player requires something truly special." The audience applauded. At his table—surrounded by his brothers, his mom, Veronica, and his fiancée, Mariah-

























Silver opened an envelope in his hand. "The 2019 Most Valuable Player Award goes to . . ." Silver looked up. "Giannis Antetokounmpo!"





The crowd exploded into applause. All around Giannis, people rose to their feet. Giannis sighed and smiled. Mariah gave him a hug. He hugged his brothers Alex and Kostas. Up on the stage in his blue suit, Giannis accepted the bronze statuette of a player that Silver handed him. Tears flowed down his cheeks. "I want to thank the front office . . . the ownership . . . for believing in me," he said, his voice choked. He paused and wiped away tears with a giant hand. "I want to thank my dad. Obviously, my dad is not here with me." Giannis's face shone with tears. His mother stood at her seat, clapping, her own face wet with tears. "I want to thank my amazing mom," Giannis said.



















"She always saw the future in us. She always





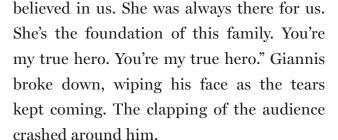
















Giannis was coming off a legendary season with the Bucks—he had led the team to their best season in almost twenty years and was being compared to the all-time great Bucks player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Giannis was third in the NBA for scoring and sixth for rebounds. And he had worked hard for every moment on the court. From his days selling water on the beaches of Athens to his early days alone in the United States away from most of his family, Giannis always focused on training, practicing, and taking care of his family.























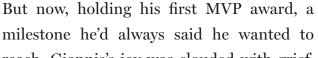






Family First





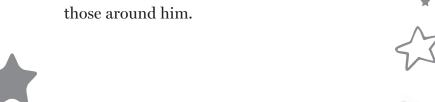


reach, Giannis's joy was clouded with grief. Just two years before, his father, Charles, had



died suddenly of a heart attack. His death left a hole in the family and in Giannis's heart. For Giannis, his devotion to his family has been even more important than his commitment to his game. On the court and off the court, despite his explosive play, Giannis has never forgotten what really matters—love for





















FAST FACT

Before the ceremony, Giannis declared that he wouldn't cry if he won. He couldn't keep that promise!









FAST FACT

Giannis's last name was originally Adétòkunbò... When the family got Greek citizenship, they changed it to Antetokounmpo, which sounded more Greek.







Court College

Think you're ready to dunk? Think again! It's time for Basketball 10!! Let's go over the basics.



The most popular sport on the planet?
Soccer! The second? Basketball! About
3.3 billion people around the world call



themselves fans of the game.

Each team plays two guards, two forwards,
and one center at a time. Giannis has played
both center and forward. Right now, he's
listed as a power forward for the Bucks.

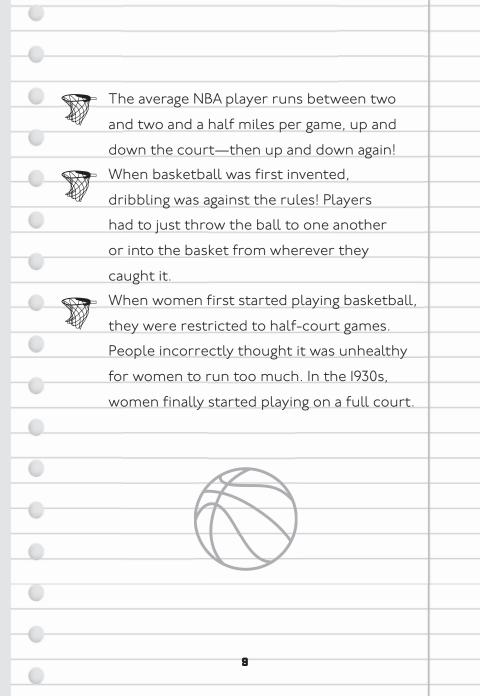
This means he shoots from farther back

on the court.



A gym teacher named James Naismith invented basketball in 1891. He needed a fun indoor game for his gym students, so he nailed peach baskets up in his gym and told students to shoot using a soccer ball.

Basketball was born!



GIANNIS AND MICHAEL AND STEPH . . .

Giannis has some competition for dominance on the court!



Dr. J (Julius Erving)—Julius Erving, also known as Dr. J, is a former NBA superstar who played for the Philadelphia 76ers. Dr. J is remembered as one of the first players to have his own special playing style—frequently pulling off fancy moves like scooping the ball up and dunking from *behind* the basket.



Michael Jordan—Michael Jordan! Face of the NBA for over ten years? Possibly the greatest player of all time? In addition to leading the Chicago Bulls to six championships, MJ also became a worldwide icon and role model, both on and off the court.



Steph Curry—This Golden State Warrior is known for his ability to hit three-point shots, despite being only six feet, three inches. Curry is considered one of the best shooters in NBA history.



LeBron James—Holds the NBA record for most career points—of any player, ever. Plus, LeBron has won four NBA championships and pulled down the MVP award four times. If that doesn't vault him into the annals of GOAT history . . .

