



## **My Drift**

**Title: LeBron James**

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**LeBron James in his rookie season (2003-2004) with the Cleveland Cavaliers.**

**Avg Stats 2003-2004 thru 2009-2010:**

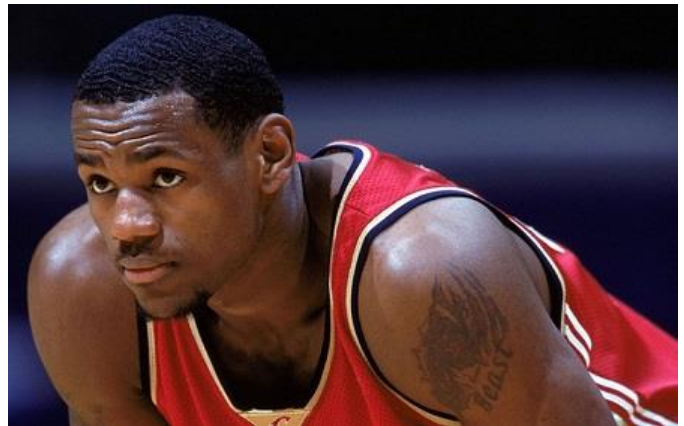
**Points per game - 27.8**

**Rebounds per game – 7.0**

**Assists per game – 7.0**

**Field goal percentage – 47.4%**

**Free throw percentage – 74.2%**



**LeBron James in his first season (2010-2011) with the Maimi Heat.**

**Avg Stats 2010-2011 thru 2013-2014:**

**Points per game – 26.9**

**Rebounds per game – 7.6**

**Assists per game – 6.7**

**Field goal percentage – 54.3%**

**Free throw percentage – 75.8%**



**LeBron James in his first season back (2014-2015) with the Cleveland Cavaliers.**

**Avg Stats 2014-2015 thru 2017-2018:**

**Points per game – 26.1**

**Rebounds per game – 7.7**

**Assists per game – 8.0**

**Field goal percentage – 52.5%**

**Free throw percentage – 71.0%**



**LeBron James in his first season (2018-2019) with the Los Angeles Lakers.**

**Avg Stats 2018-2019 thru 48 games:**

**Points per game – 27.1**

**Rebounds per game – 8.6**

**Assists per game – 8.1**

**Field goal percentage – 51.3%**

**Free throw percentage – 65.8%**



**Avg Stats Career (so far):**

**Points per game – 27.2**

**Rebounds per game – 7.4**

**Assists per game – 7.2**

**Field goal percentage – 50.4%**

**Free throw percentage – 73.6%**

As you can see by LeBron's stats, he is a great basketball player. He is currently playing for the Los Angeles Lakers in his 16<sup>th</sup> season in the NBA. The teams LeBron James played for have made the NBA playoffs in the past 13 seasons. He missed the playoffs in his first two years with Cleveland and the Lakers are not going to make it this year. Yes, this season has been a disaster for James. He suffered a groin injury against the Golden State Warriors on Christmas Day and missed the next 17 games. This was the longest streak of consecutive missed games of his entire 16-year career.

I have never been a big LeBron fan. I always thought the muscled 6'8" 260-pound James just bullied his way to the basket and hardly ever got a foul called on him for charging but cried like a baby when no foul was called on the player he just run over. But I do agree that he is a great player and it is about time I wrote an article about him before he retires. The first part of this article will be the general stuff you can find on web sites like Wikipedia. The second part will be about some life stories titled "Lost stories of LeBron James" that will reveal things many of us never knew anything about. The last part is about his current family, his many tattoos, and some other miscellaneous stuff.

**GENERAL**

LeBron Raymone James Sr. was born on December 30, 1984 in Akron, Ohio which makes him 34 years old at this writing. He is widely considered the best basketball player in the world and regarded by some as the greatest player of all time. His

accomplishments include four NBA Most Valuable Player Awards, three NBA Finals MVP Awards, and two Olympic gold medals. James has appeared in fifteen NBA All-Star Games and been named NBA All-Star MVP three times. He won the 2008 NBA scoring title, is the all-time NBA playoffs scoring leader, and is fourth in all-time career points scored. He has been voted onto the All-NBA First Team twelve times and the All-Defensive First Team five times.

James played high school basketball for St. Vincent–St. Mary High School (The Irish) in his hometown of Akron, Ohio, where he was heavily touted in the national media as a future NBA superstar. A prep-to-pro, he joined the Cleveland Cavaliers in 2003 as the first overall draft pick. The 2003–04 NBA Rookie of the Year, he soon established himself as one of the league's premier players. After failing to win a championship with Cleveland, James left in 2010 to sign as a free agent with the Miami Heat. This move was announced in an ESPN special titled “The Decision” and is one of the most controversial free agent decisions in sports history.



**High School Picture**

In Miami, James won his first NBA championship in 2012, and followed that with another title a year later. He was named league MVP and NBA Finals MVP in both championship years. In 2014, after four seasons with Miami, James opted out of his contract to re-sign with the Cavaliers. In 2016, he led the Cavaliers to victory over the Golden State Warriors in the NBA Finals, delivering the team's first championship and ending Cleveland's 52-year professional sports title drought. In 2018, James opted out of his Cleveland contract to sign with the Lakers.

Off the court, James has accumulated considerable wealth and fame from numerous endorsement contracts. His public life has been the subject of much scrutiny, and he has been ranked as one of America's most influential and popular athletes. He has been featured in magazines, books, documentaries, and television commercials. He also hosted the ESPY Awards, Saturday Night Live, and appeared in the 2015 film Trainwreck. Yes, James is already fitting right into the Los Angeles entertainment scene. Just a week after James opened a fully funded school in his Ohio hometown, CBS announced that it has ordered a TV series produced by the newly minted Los Angeles Laker LeBron James. Million Dollar Mile challenges contestants to run a mile-long obstacle course while elite athletes try to block their path. Conquer all that, and contestants receive — you guessed it — \$1 million. Maybe LeBron should either stick to basketball or else retire and go into the TV or movie business.



## **LOST STORIES OF LEBRON JAMES**

**(The following are from three 2013 articles in ESPN The Magazine titled, “Lost stories of LeBron James”)**

### **PART I**

*James was born to a 16-year-old mother, Gloria Marie James who was a sophomore in high school at the time. His father, Anthony McClelland, has an extensive criminal record and was never involved in their life. LeBron grew up angry and hating his father for abandoning him and his mother.*

*LeBron’s life changed while he was in the fourth grade. Here is the story:*

*He began that fourth-grade school year the same way he had begun so many others: sleeping on a couch in a one-bedroom apartment that belonged to another of his mother's friends, where parties continued late into the night and police were sometimes called to investigate noise violations. His mom, 25-year-old Gloria, had recently quit a job at Payless Shoes, according to a friend. She was living on welfare. She liked to go out and sometimes left LeBron to supervise himself. Often, he chose not to go to school, spending his days immersed in video games, shuttling between the apartment and a corner store where his mother's food stamps paid for his snacks.*



***The 10-year-old LeBron posed in a blue Hornets shirt, with mother Gloria behind him***

*By then, James had already spent two-thirds of his life essentially without a home, moving every few months with Gloria from one apartment to the next. For the first few years they lived with four generations of family in a big house they owned on Hickory Street, a dirt road bordered by oak trees and railroad tracks near downtown Akron.*

*Gloria went back to school; her grandmother and her mother, Freda, watched LeBron. Her grandmother died a few months later. Then, on Christmas Day in 1987, Freda died suddenly of a heart attack, and all family stability disintegrated.*

*Gloria and her two brothers, Curt and Terry, tried to maintain the house, but the place was cavernous and old, and they couldn't afford to pay for the heat. A neighbor visited that winter, when James was just 3 years old, and what she saw would later remind her of the movie Home Alone. The house was frigid and unkempt, with dirty dishes piling out of the sink and a hole developing in the living room floorboards. "It's not safe here," said Wanda Reaves, the neighbor. "Can you please come stay with me?" That night, Gloria and LeBron arrived at her house with a single suitcase and a blue stuffed elephant. "You can share the couch," Reaves told them, and so began a nomadic six years for a mother and son who were both trying to grow up at the same time.*

*"I just grabbed my little backpack, which held all the possessions I needed," James has said, "and said to myself what I always said to myself: It's time to roll." They lived with Reaves for a few months ... then with a cousin ... then with one of Gloria's boyfriends ... then with her brother Terry. Their housing situation reached its lowest point in the year of 1993, when they moved five times in three months during the spring, wearing out their welcome in a series of friends' small apartments while Gloria remained on the waitlist for a subsidized housing waiver from the city.*

*In the summer of '93, they were about to be kicked out again from a friend's two-bedroom place in a faded-brick housing project downtown when Bruce Kelker pulled into the project's parking lot looking for 8 and 9-year-old football players to join his rec team. Kelker noticed Gloria first, sitting on the steps outside the apartment. She was 5'5" and stunning -- "Loud, proud and beautiful," Kelker says -- and as he walked over to her, he saw LeBron, lean and lanky, already as tall as his mother, playing tag with a few neighborhood kids. Kelker was, in truth, more interested in scoping out football players than women, so he walked past Gloria toward LeBron. "You guys like football?" he asked the kids. "That's my favorite sport," James said.*

*Kelker was about to begin his first full season as a coach of the East Dragons, a youth team limited to boys under age 10 who weighed less than 112 pounds. The team's motto was "Teaching boys sportsmanship and teamwork," but Kelker wanted to win badly enough that he had assembled a depth chart and a 30-page playbook. He had been a great high school cornerback before wasting a decade "drinking and getting high," he says. Now he was sober, and he thought coaching a championship team might help redeem his reputation. He needed a star.*

*Kelker asked James and his friends to line up for a footrace, 100 yards across the parking lot. "Fastest one is my running back," he told them. James won by 15 yards. "How much football have you played?" Kelker asked him. "None," James said. Kelker told him where to meet for the team's first practice, he says, but Gloria interrupted him. She said she couldn't afford to pay for her son's equipment. She had no car and no way to take him to practice. "How do I even know football will be good for Bron Bron?" she asked. "Don't worry about any of that," Kelker told her. "I'll take care of everything, and I'll pick him up."*

*LeBron took his first handoff for the East Dragons 80 yards from scrimmage for a touchdown. After that, the pieces of LeBron's chaotic life slowly began to congeal. His mother began rearranging her weekends around his football games. Teammates warmed to LeBron, gravitating to talent, even when it emerged in a boy who could still be "awkward and shy," Kelker says. Kelker became the most reliable adult in James' life: He stored the boy's football equipment in the back of his car and arrived to pick him up every afternoon at 3:45, sometimes only to discover James had moved again. "I was tired of picking him up at different addresses," he says, "or showing up at one junked-up place and finding out they had already moved to another."*

*Two weeks into the season, Kelker invited his new star player to live with him. He wanted more stability for James, and he also wanted to make sure his best player continued to show up for games. When Gloria said she felt uncomfortable having her son move in with a virtual stranger, Kelker invited her to come too. He already had a live-in girlfriend, Kelker said; he promised Gloria that his only interest was in helping take care of her son. Gloria promised to cook Hamburger Helper twice each week and chip in some of her welfare payments for rent.*

*So began their life as an unconventional family. For the next several months, Kelker watched as the people he called "Glo and Bron" found a footing in Akron's sports-centric world. Gloria volunteered to become "team mother" rather than pay the league participation fee; she came to practice, took attendance and filled water bottles. James scored 17 touchdowns that season, and Gloria raced down the sideline each time -- "stride for stride with LeBron, looking like a maniac," Kelker says. During one touchdown celebration, she whacked her son's shoulder pads so hard he fell to the ground. "That was their first taste of success," says Rashawn Dent, another one of James' coaches that year.*

*James was still sheepish and subdued. He had always thought of attention mostly as something to avoid. As the new kid in class -- year after year, in school after school -- he had cultivated a habit of sitting in the back and keeping quiet or skipping class*

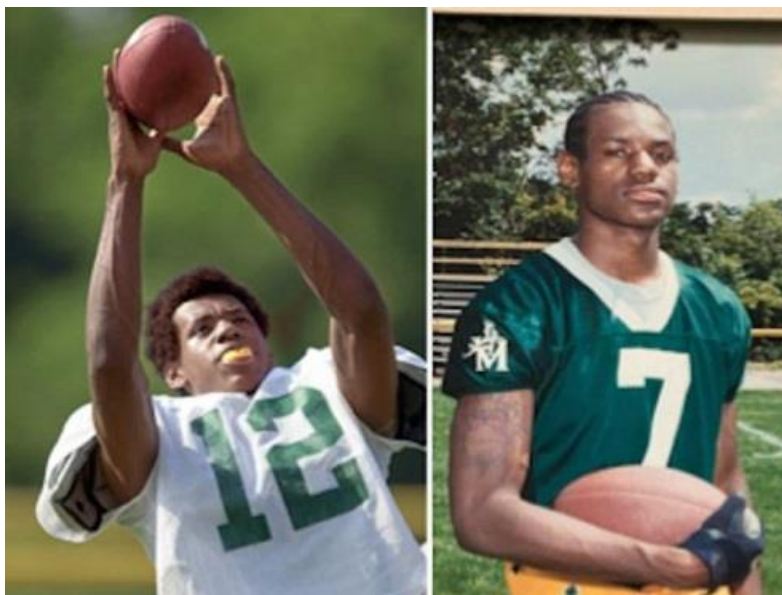
*altogether. Even in the fall of 1993, during the months in which he lived with Kelker, he continued to miss school, at first not sure which one to attend, then uncertain about where to catch the bus, Kelker says. And during the football season, when opposing coaches started to complain about his size and demand his birth certificate, James sloped his shoulders and dipped his knees in the huddle.*

*"What the hell are you doing?" Kelker asked him.*

*"Trying to blend in," James said.*

*"You ain't ever going to blend in," Kelker told him. "And that can be a good thing."*

*After another few months, late in the fall of '93, it was time to move again. Kelker's girlfriend felt crowded with four people living in the small apartment; Gloria and her son agreed to leave. She considered sending James away to stay with relatives in Youngstown or even New York so he wouldn't have to stay on couches with her, but another youth football coach made a better offer. Frank Walker suggested that James live with him in a single-family house in suburban Akron. That way Gloria could stay with a friend and still see her son on weekends, and the East Dragons could keep their best player. It would prove, for LeBron and Gloria, a turn of great luck.*



*LeBron James' first love was football where he played running back and wide receiver*

*The Walkers had three children, and James shared a room with Frankie Walker Jr., a football teammate who would become one of his best friends. It was James' first experience with what, years later, he would call "a real family." The Walkers were hard workers with 9-to-5 jobs -- Frank at the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority and his wife, Pam, in the offices of a local congressman. James had to clean the bathroom every*



*other weekend. Frank cut LeBron's hair every Saturday afternoon, and Pam baked German chocolate cake for his birthday. They made James wake up at 6:30 a.m. for school and finish his homework before practicing basketball, which was now the in-season sport. Frank taught him how to dribble and how to shoot lefthanded layups. He signed up James to play for a 9-year-old team and enlisted him as an assistant coach for 8-year-olds, believing that coaching would accelerate his basketball learning curve. "You could see his skills getting better at Frank's house literally every day," Kelker says.*

*The Walkers enrolled James in Portage Path Elementary, one of the oldest schools in Akron. It was a poor inner-city school with an aging building where roughly 90 percent of students qualified for free lunches. But it had also begun to experiment with what the administration called "holistic learning." Students took classes in music, art and gym - - all three of which became James' favorites. He didn't miss another day of school that year.*

*At the beginning of fifth grade, James and his classmates took a weekend field trip to Cuyahoga Valley National Park. James had never been there before -- he had rarely left Akron -- and his new teacher, Karen Grindall, wondered whether he might cause mischief in the park's dormitory. Grindall also had taught Gloria years earlier; she knew the family's troubled history. "You worried, with all that tumult, about the past repeating itself," she says. But instead there was James, running through the pines, hiking to waterfalls, always back by curfew. "So steady. So happy," Grindall says, and she never worried about him again.*

## **PART II**

*Before Maurice Clarett ever won a BCS championship at Ohio State, after he partied with 50 Cent (the rapper), warred with the NCAA, sued the NFL and spent three and a half years in jail for aggravated robbery and carrying a concealed weapon, he watched a basketball game with LeBron James' mother.*

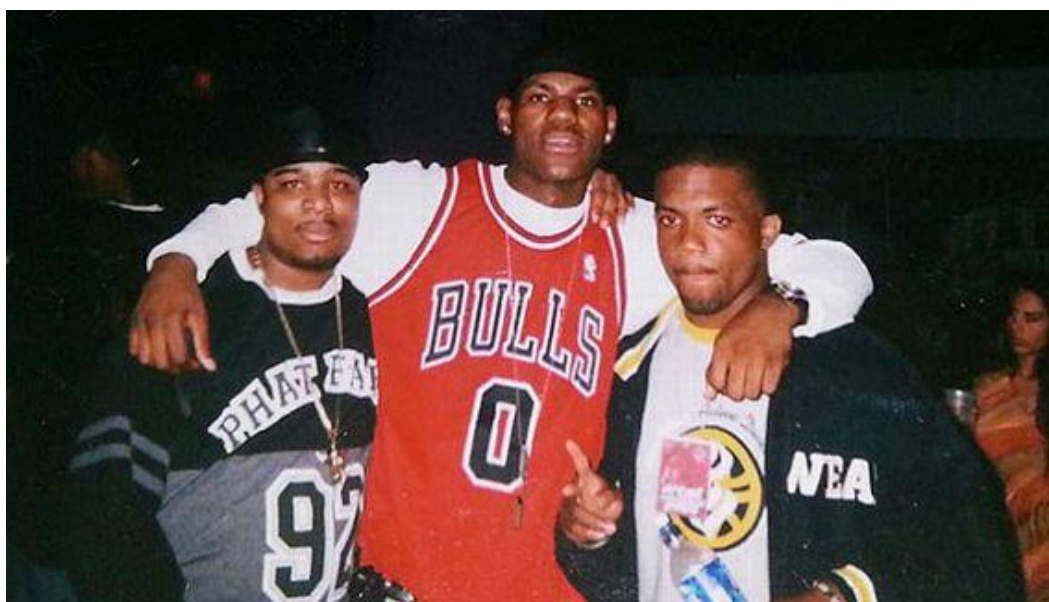
*On Feb. 17, 2002, Clarett, an early enrollee at Ohio State, drove from Columbus to Youngstown State with no ticket and no plan. The star tailback, USA Today's high school offensive player of the year, knew that the NBA's future No. 1 pick was barnstorming through Clarett's hometown. What the 18-year-old did not anticipate was finding just one open seat among 6,500 in the Beeghly Center: down there, courtside, to the right of a cheering woman he'd never seen before.*

*Gloria James and Maurice Clarett would become acquainted soon enough. The former -- whose 17-year-old was on that week's cover of Sports Illustrated -- wondered why locals kept approaching this 5'11" kid for autographs. The latter -- who obliged every*



*request with his self-appointed sobriquet, "The Greatest of All Time" -- noted that this lady kept calling LeBron her "baby." Introductions were made, parallels were drawn. At the buzzer, Clarett was whisked into the St. Vincent-St. Mary locker room for a summit with Gloria's son.*

*What ridiculous luck!*



*The friendship between James (center) and Maurice Clarett (right) seemed fated*

*As it turned out, Akron's Chosen One -- in his free time a nigh-unstoppable prep receiver -- had heard all about The Greatest: the 300-yard games, the 10 yards a carry, the 30 touchdowns in a season at Warren G. Harding High. The pair of Ohioans, born one year and 50 miles of I-76 apart, swapped numbers, pledging to reunite. "We were two young guys from the hood," Clarett says. "We grew up in single-parent homes. We had success we'd never seen ourselves having. We were happy being around the best."*

*No, their backgrounds weren't mirror images: Clarett's youth had jagged edges -- he was sent to a Youngstown juvenile-detention center for fighting, breaking and entering, and auto theft -- while a circle of male role models had stepped in to insulate and center LeBron after a fourth-grade year of constant instability. But this friendship seemed fated, historic. Soon, LeBron proudly announced to reporters that the two were talking "every day."*

*Take June 8, 2002, when James broke his left wrist in a hard fall in AAU ball, imperiling his senior football season. This was no minor injury, and LeBron actually loved the gridiron more than the hardwood. Yet the brazen Clarett -- who'd committed to OSU by*

*cold-calling then-head coach Jim Tressel and saying, "I'm coming to your school. This is Maurice Clarett" -- couldn't resist sending a mischievous get-well text: "Man, leave football to me." LeBron obliged, even doing his friend one better: He happily left college to Clarett too.*

*It is a sunlit afternoon in late August, and Clarett sits at the dark brown dining table inside his lightly decorated house in Canal Winchester, a sleepy suburb southeast of Columbus. Clad in black shorts and a sleeveless workout shirt, his 230 pounds are so thickly muscled, so football-ready, that the 29-year-old's past 10 years feel ever more unfathomable.*



*Maurice Clarett was a star running back at Ohio State*

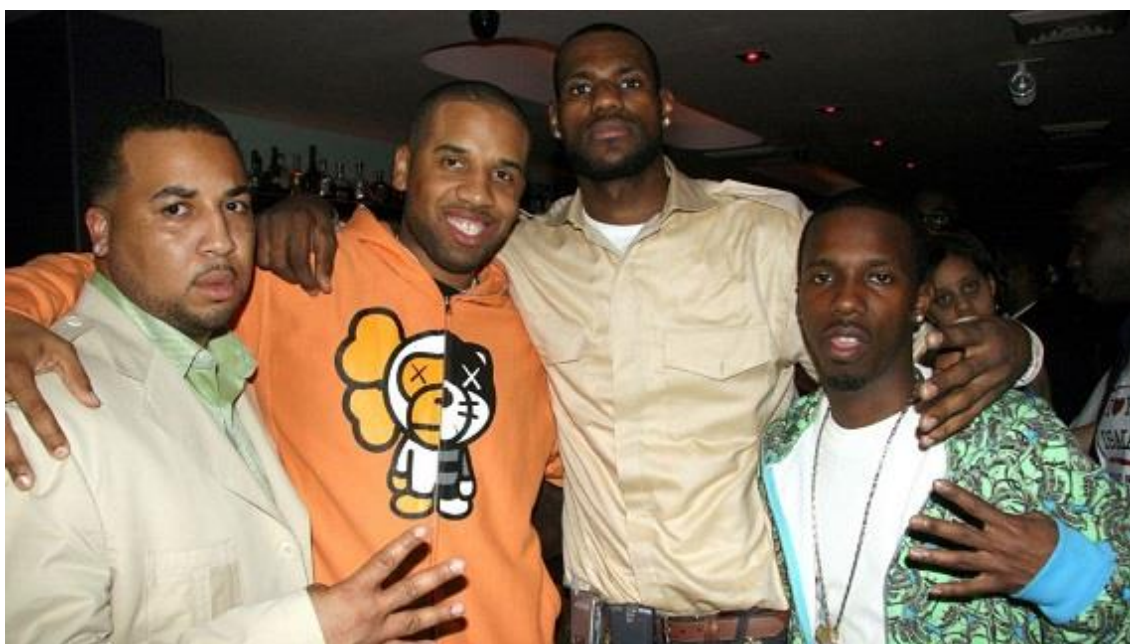
*Who'd have guessed that rushing for the winning touchdown in the 2003 BCS title game as a freshman -- a child's fantasy come true -- would end up as Clarett's final meaningful act on a football field? Who'd have guessed that Clarett, hailed as LeBron's football counterpart, would ruin his life trying to approximate King James? "The celebrity that me and LeBron had, it was like magic," Clarett says. "I was having a ball, man."*

*At least it felt that way then.*

*Three weeks after capturing the Buckeyes' first national title in 34 years, Clarett sat courtside at LeBron's last home game in Akron. A month later, in March, he watched LeBron drop 27 at the McDonald's All-American Game in Cleveland; security had to keep autograph hounds in the crowd at bay.*

*When out on the town, LeBron's crew operated less like an entourage than a unit. To inhabit his inner circle was to enter and exit vehicles with a practiced efficiency, LeBron*

*the first one in and last one out. To grace LeBron's birthday party in Cleveland was to glide from limo bus to cake-cutting to VIP section, through back halls Clarett never knew existed. To try to schedule LeBron was to hear a refrain: Don't call me, call Mav. Maverick Carter was a childhood friend, fellow ex-wideout at St. Vincent–St. Mary and manager-in-waiting. Which is to say that LeBron's buddies already rolled like they worked for a millionaire.*



***James' Posse - Rich Paul, Maverick Carter, LeBron, and Randy Mims  
(Friends from high school, LeBron prefers to call them his business associates or  
The Four Horseman)***

*And in essence, they already did. With the one-and-done rule still a glimmer in NBA commissioner David Stern's eye, there was no pretense about a basketball prodigy's trajectory. Hell, LeBron was driving a Hummer H2 that his mom had secured after being approved for a loan because her son was, well, LeBron. Conversely, no player, not even the best freshman back in Buckeyes history, could jump to the NFL until he was three years out of high school. Leave football to me? Clarett wasn't allowed to accept a dime until 2005.*

*"He was this \$90 million brand," Clarett said of James, pictured below on his draft night.*

*One spring afternoon, though, while trudging past OSU's English building, he heard what making millions felt like. Well before the Cavs drafted him, an excited LeBron*



*called: He'd just signed a seven-year, \$93 million deal with Nike. "It was high-level moment after high-level moment after high-level moment," Clarett says.*



*David Stern with James on NBA draft day*

*There was the time LeBron took him to a 50 Cent concert in Cleveland, a night Clarett was so psyched for that he brought a camera. There was the time they hung out with Jay Z backstage. There was the time they attended a party in Cleveland and Biz Markie deejayed. There was the time Clarett traded numbers with Snoop Dogg, who knew the tailback from controlling him on PlayStation.*

*Clarett says he was intoxicated by being "a somebody. And if you're a somebody, you want to be around another somebody." That summer, he was around LeBron so much that he even opted to work out with his pal's personal trainer rather than back in Columbus. That decision rankled Ohio State, predictably. But it was nothing compared to the chaos to come. On Sept. 10, 2003, the school's AD announced that Clarett was suspended for his entire sophomore season due to an NCAA investigation. The charge: He'd received improper benefits worth "thousands of dollars" from a family friend and misled investigators on the case. Maurice Clarett was guilty of acting like a pro, a few seasons too early!*

*"I'll be there 24/7 for him if he needs me," LeBron told reporters after the news broke. "I know it's going to make him a stronger person. I hope he just knows I'm there for him." At the time he said this, he was on the set of a commercial shoot in Cleveland.*

*Clarett's response arrived two weeks later, ringing with defiance. His college season was dead, so he hired a legal team to sue not the NCAA but the NFL, challenging the three-year rule that barred him from his millions. Clarett was on television nonstop, taking Football Inc. head-on, and LeBron's prediction came true: His friend had turned into a figure of strength. In private, though, he was veering wildly, straining to keep his path parallel to LeBron's.*

*From memory, Clarett can recite the exact time and place when he finally felt his trajectory turn asymptotic. Fatefully, again, his 20th birthday, Oct. 29, 2003, had doubled as LeBron's NBA debut. A limo carrying Clarett and 14 friends and family members pulled up to a club in Columbus to celebrate. But before heading in, Clarett's eye caught the car's TV showcasing his buddy in Sacramento. "A couple months ago, we'd been rolling in the same crew," he says. "Now it was like, man, our lives are in so different places. He's running on the court as LeBron James, and I'm in Columbus. I was so far away."*

*The Greatest had been reduced to a lawsuit winding grimly through the courts. Clarett's petition was denied on May 24, 2004; by then, the bridge back to OSU was torched. So, for the next year, until he was NFL draft-eligible, Clarett had one mission: Get back to being a somebody, by any means necessary. His ego never once let him consider joining LeBron's crew even in some menial capacity. Instead, Clarett ran with 10 old friends and cousins, all from Youngstown. And he returned to the very question that had thrice gotten him locked up as a kid: What can I do to get respect from my friends?*

*The answer involved clubs across the country, and Percocet, and tributaries of alcohol, and Tylenol-Codeine No. 4, and a series of women who didn't know enough to know he was a has-been, and Tussionex Pennkinetic, and Vicodin, and weed, and Xanax. "I didn't know to talk to a psychiatrist or psychologist," Clarett says, his voice shrinking to a low rasp. "Depression hurt more than any hit I've ever dealt with. There are no weights to lift to get that off you."*

*That Denver still made him a third-round pick in 2005 was either a remarkable tribute to his talent or an astounding scouting failure. Either way, Clarett insisted on bypassing the Broncos' guaranteed \$410,000 signing bonus for an incentive-laden four-year deal that could have been worth anywhere from zero to \$7 million. The 21-year-old -- still desperately dreaming of being a millionaire -- was promptly cut in the preseason, receiving zero.*

*Despite his old friend's public 24/7 offer, about the only thing Clarett was successfully doing was dodging LeBron. "He was this \$90 million brand," Clarett says. "I was a nobody. I didn't identify with him anymore."*

*In truth, he barely recognized himself. On Jan. 2, 2006 -- the same night Ohio State won the Fiesta Bowl -- Clarett turned himself in for robbing two people with a gun outside a club in downtown Columbus. Released on bond, he was slated to appear in court on Aug. 14. But come Aug. 9 -- three weeks after Clarett's girlfriend, Ashley Evans, gave birth to a daughter, Jayden -- erratic driving metastasized into a high-speed police chase that terminated with a spike stick deflating his SUV's tires. Inside, cops found Clarett wearing a bulletproof vest alongside four loaded guns. He weighed 270 pounds.*

*By his own admission, Clarett had been making calls while driving. He rang an ESPN reporter, apparently asserting that he'd just phoned LeBron, who was then overseas for the FIBA World Championship. But when asked now, Clarett can't remember if a conversation with LeBron happened. In fact, he can't remember much of anything from that night. Police had also discovered a bottle of Grey Goose, half-empty, in the car.*

*On one of his four Christmases behind bars, Clarett received a gift: a new number for the guy he used to talk to every day. He's not sure if it was a Don't call me, call Mav situation; the info came via Rich Paul, a crew member who has since become LeBron's agent. But Clarett could never bring himself to pick up the phone. His ego, as usual, wouldn't permit it: "I know I could've been like, 'Yo, I need something: some clothes, some money.'"*

*Instead, back at his dining table, he calculates that it has been seven years since he and LeBron have spoken -- for certain -- and a decade since they last saw each other in the flesh. "Saying 10 years is, like, whoa," he says. "It feels weird. It doesn't feel that long." He pauses. "That's probably because I see him on TV so much. Because, I guess, everybody sees him."*

*Since being released from Toledo Correctional Institution in April 2010, Clarett has played a season with the Omaha Nighthawks of the now-defunct United Football League, and he couldn't resist using Twitter after the Trent Richardson trade to ask the Browns for a tryout. (No response.) He even called coach Mike Tomlin, who'd sent Clarett an inspirational letter in jail, when the Steelers' running back depth shriveled this summer. Tomlin's reply: We just signed Felix Jones. "But it just felt good to tell him that I'm doing well," Clarett says. "That I'm supporting myself outside of football."*



*Forty-three months of prison have grafted structure onto his life for the first time, shoving books into his hands -- he calls *The Wisdom of Andrew Carnegie as Told to Napoleon Hill* "my bible" -- and inspiring daily workout sessions at 5 a.m. "In jail, you literally sit all day, thinking about how a life unravels," Clarett says. On the brink of 30, he is acutely aware that those lessons came too late, that his window for LeBron-level success has long shut.*

*But while the NFL may not want Clarett as a player, the league did have him address this summer's rookie symposium in Aurora, Ohio. Colleges pay to hear him speak. And in August, he heard from Romeo Travis, a member of LeBron's inner circle. He asked if Clarett could counsel Alex Abreu, a guard at Akron, where LeBron's old St. Vincent–St. Mary coach, Keith Dambrot, is the head man. Abreu pleaded guilty in June to one count of felony drug trafficking. The 22-year-old, who is no longer enrolled at Akron, needed to comprehend that his path was running closer to Clarett's than to LeBron's.*

*"I definitely believe that what separates success is operations," Clarett says today. "I honestly believe LeBron was thinking ahead about the relationships he wanted to have and the people he wanted to stand next to." The teenage Clarett never understood LeBron's trajectory as a function of foresight and organization. These days, however, Clarett is awed by the fruits of such maturity. High-level moments still widen his eyes, even watching on a screen.*

*There was the time LeBron received a police escort, driving to a Jay Z concert the wrong way down a Miami street. There was the time he slung an arm around Jerry Jones, the billionaire owner of the Cowboys, before a game in Dallas. There was the time LeBron accepted an invitation to speak at an Ohio State football pep rally, of all things, before the Buckeyes beat Wisconsin at home on Sept. 28. "I say this all the time," LeBron declared to a delirious crowd in Columbus. "If I had one year of college, I would have ended up here."*

*Maurice Clarett's alma mater erupted, perfectly underscoring the magical celebrity of LeBron James. Nobody cared that they were applauding something that never even happened. Nobody remembered that the Chosen One had left Columbus, happily, to a friend who wanted to be The Greatest.*

### **PART III**

*Inside Cleveland's Quicken Loans Arena, LeBron James is leading a historic 27-point comeback against his old team. It's March 20, 2013. Cavaliers fans are enraged, Heat fans are enthralled, the cops are distracted, and LeBron James' Biggest Fan has decided the time is right -- he's going to make a run for it. James Blair is more nervous than he*

*has ever been. He hesitates at the top of the aisle and wipes his sweaty hands on his khakis for what feels like the hundredth time. He can't shake the anxiety. He has prepared extensively for this moment, his big opportunity to show the world how much he loves his hero, a chance to make a face-to-face case that King James must return to his rightful throne in Cleveland. He knows the risks too. Blair, 21, has studied footage of other sports daredevils on YouTube and watched an endless stream of drunken fans being tackled, handcuffed and humiliated.*

*Yet here he is, in the same spot he scoped out a month ago -- Section 123, Row 14, Seat 9. He's diagrammed in his head the security posts along the court; he's plotted out vendors whom he could duck behind for cover; he has on the white J.C. Penney V-neck T-shirt he recently bought for the sole purpose of writing a message to LeBron; he's hit the bathroom (his thought: If I get tased and end up pissing my pants on TV, that would not be good); he's handed off his belongings to his twin sister, Nicole, who's at the game with him. She knows the whole plan, down to the exact spot where her brother parked the car. "You'll probably be driving home without me," Blair tells her.*

*He has been tweeting all day that he is going to make a run at LeBron, and Blair isn't about to let down his 1,000 followers. Now he gathers himself and sends out one last tweet: a shot of police idling, oblivious to what is about to unfold in front of them. Nicole watches him prepare. Her brother has always been a big dreamer who knows how to work the angles. This scheme, though, seems too elaborate for even him to pull off. But as the Cavs dribble down the court, she sees Blair rear up to bolt down the aisle. Her stomach churns as panic sets in: Oh gosh, this is really going to happen.*

*"It's sweet as heck," Blair says as he unrolls a 12-by-12-foot canvas poster of LeBron James. If James Blair had a life motto, that would be it. On this August day, months removed from that tempestuous March night, Blair is safe and sound inside his parents' home in Ashtabula, an hour northeast of Cleveland. He works part time at his uncle's fiberglass shop and takes physical therapy courses at a local college. Today he's wearing his favorite white No. 6 Heat shirt, flashing two earrings and a half-grown soul patch.*

*He bought the poster on eBay for \$100, and it spans the entire TV room, draping over furniture like a boat cover. It's too large to hang up inside the house, so he keeps it rolled up like a rug. His room is already squeezed for space: The walls are adorned with LeBron posters and illustrations, the corners are filled with boxes of unopened limited-edition figurines, the space beneath his bed holds St. Vincent–St. Mary's yearbooks from James' prep career, his closet bursts with 30 LeBron T-shirts and every LBJ-brand sneaker ever produced. His attic is a small warehouse for even more collectibles. It's a dizzying display to a fresh set of eyes.*

*Family members shake their heads about his LeBron fandom, but Blair has a knack for winning over people with his "It's sweet as heck" attitude and childlike appreciation for the things he loves. He hasn't failed enough in life to know that interrupting an NBA game will probably end very badly. "He doesn't have any fear," Nicole says. "He just thinks that everything is going to be okay. And I can tell you that he has the best luck in the world. It's amazing the things that happen to him."*

*Make no mistake, though: Blair is a smart young man. He was his high school valedictorian, and during his graduation speech, he instructed his class of 256 seniors to place a hand on the person to his or her right. "Now I can say that my speech touched everybody in this place," Blair said. He then turned his back to the crowd, snapped a selfie with his phone and posted it to Facebook.*

*By that point in his life, he had been completely captivated by LeBron James, the hometown prodigy. Blair drew so many pictures of James in art class and referenced him in school papers so often that teachers started referring to Blair as "King James." You can imagine, then, how The Decision shook Blair's faith. When James announced he was taking his talents to South Beach, Blair, by his own admission, shut down. He spent two days mourning in silence, then decided that though he loved the Cavs, he could not deny his allegiance to LeBron. "He kind of hurt me at first," he says. "But in the end, I've been a supporter of his since day one, so I'm always going to support him wherever he goes."*

*When LeBron returned to Cleveland for the first time, in 2010, Blair went and watched as the rest of the crowd rained down boos on him. He felt the same hurt they all did, and he longed for the day when James would become a free agent and come home to Cleveland. The difference was, as his fellow Cavs fans vented at James, Blair was plotting to get him back.*

*He started online, tweeting thousands of times about the brilliance of LeBron. On #teamblebron, an unofficial fan site that is promoted by LeBron's official website, Blair got his own page, with photos and a bio. He took a tour of Team LeBron's headquarters in Akron, where he sat in LeBron's gold-color office chair and posed for photos of himself hoisting LeBron's ESPY award. But Blair never got in front of LeBron to make the case that Cleveland needed him -- heck, Blair needed him. Tired of working around the edges, Blair made his own Decision: He had to meet the man himself, King James, and the meeting had to be a spectacle.*



*With nine minutes left in the fourth quarter, the Heat rally is in full swing. LeBron throws an overhead pass to Ray Allen, who sinks a three to put the Heat up 83-79 and inch the team closer to a 24th consecutive victory.*

*Blair moves closer to the floor, lurking in the aisle. When Allen's shot hits, some Heat fans stand to cheer, giving Blair cover. He sprints down the stairs, passes the end of the player tunnel, squeezes through a space between the Heat bench and the media table and reaches the hardwood untouched. Blair runs right up to his childhood idol and taps him on the back of his arm. "Hey, LeBron!" Blair shouts.*

*"Tired of working around the edges, Blair made his own decision. He had to meet the man himself, King James, and the meeting had to be a spectacle."*

*James looks back with wide eyes. Players move away and Blair backpedals toward midcourt. He stretches out the front of his shirt, calling attention to a message he has scrawled on it for LeBron to see: we miss you on the front, 2014 come back on the other side.*

*Within seconds, a security guard has Blair wrapped up and is dragging him off the court. A sinewy 6'1", Blair squirms his body around to face LeBron one last time. And that's when it happened, when another idiot on the court turned into something else.*



***LeBron's Biggest Fan rushes the court to meet his hero***

*LeBron walks toward Blair and raises his hand in a "wait a second" motion. James high-fives his Biggest Fan and pats him on the head, palming it like a basketball. The crowd cheers. In that moment, Blair becomes more than just a court stalker. He represents everybody in that building who has not seen a sports title in almost 50 years, those who wish they could corner LeBron and tell him how much he hurt them ... then*

*beg him to come back. And with one head pat from The King himself, that return feels just a little more possible.*

*As he's pulled off the court, Blair feels the crowd's roars, and one word flashes through his brain. "Crazy," he says. But as it turns out, the craziness has just begun.*

*In August 2011, Cleveland Browns guard Jason Pinkston was jogging off the practice field when a screaming fan caught his attention. Pinkston, a rookie fifth-round pick, stopped, curious at the rare fan who even knew he was on the team.*

*"Hi, I'm James Blair," the fan said.*

*Pinkston had no idea he was actually the target of a fan's well-orchestrated sting operation. Blair had noticed that Pinkston was one of the few Browns players who regularly interacted with fans on Twitter and decided to target him in hopes of cozying up to Browns players. He positioned himself directly in front of the players' entrance, where Pinkston couldn't avoid him. Just work my way closer and closer, Blair thought.*

*And shockingly enough, it actually worked. The two talked for a few minutes, and after that Blair started tweeting with Pinkston. That led to playing online video games together, which led to text messaging, which led to friendship. When Joe Haden and Josh Gordon had a joint birthday party last year, Pinkston brought Blair as his guest. "There are some athletes in the NFL who forgot that at one point in their life, before they were a rookie or a freshman, they were a fan," Pinkston says. "That's one thing in my life I've never forgotten."*

*And on March 20, 2013, Pinkston is a fan himself, watching a riveting Heat-Cavs matchup, the hottest ticket in town, when he sees his pal Blair run onto the court. After the game, he reaches out to Blair's parents, who are reeling. As usual, when it comes to their son's antics, they feel a mixture of anger and "wow, only James could have pulled that off." Pinkston offers to put up \$400 for Blair's bail money, and his parents accept. Now, 23 hours after he was arrested, Blair is out, charged with criminal trespassing, a misdemeanor. Bail, it turns out, is only \$382. "I actually made \$18," Blair says with a giggle.*

*As soon as he gets back to his parents' house, Blair takes to Twitter, where he's at 4,000 followers and growing. Blair sends a tweet directly to LeBron: "appreciate you showing love when I came on floor last night follow back homie," he types.*

*Ten minutes later, LeBron responds with "Yesir! Brave guy," and an email arrives in Blair's inbox -- King James now follows him.*

*Blair freaks out. He screams and runs with his laptop to his sister, who reads the tweet and screams too. LeBron is now an official member of the James Blair fan club. Blair lies in his bed that night, unable to sleep, with one thought running through his head: Wow, this is sweet as heck.*

*Over the next few months, Blair's life gets only sweeter. On Twitter, he surges past 7,000 followers. Media requests seeking interviews with him flood in. He receives several inquiries from T-shirt makers who want to produce and sell copies of his shirt. When Blair appears in front of the judge two days after the incident, she asks him, "You're the LeBron fan, huh? You really want him to come back?"*

*He has gone from a LeBron fan to the LeBron fan, reconciling Cleveland's pain of 2010 with the hope for 2014. And with that title of James' biggest fan comes responsibilities. Like being in Miami for Games 6 and 7 of last season's NBA Finals.*

*Again, friends and family shake their heads when they hear him plotting ... well, even Blair admits he doesn't know what might happen once he gets down there. Nobody wants to pony up a few thousand dollars to accompany Blair on yet another LeBron chase. Besides, family members wonder, Blair's luck has to run out sometime, right?*

*When he finds no takers in Cleveland, he floats his plan on Twitter, and Kenford Abrams, a 34-year-old New Yorker who has become captivated by Blair's saga, wants in. "We were so into this mission and going down there and seeing LeBron celebrating in the championship," Abrams says.*

*After the Heat win Game 7, Blair and Abrams go to the team's championship party the next day. They drink \$13 beers all night until finally a commotion draws their attention to an elevated VIP area. There, LeBron, Dwyane Wade, Chris Bosh and Drake are celebrating. Blair, one floor below the Heat stars, wiggles his way closer. Blair looks up at the DJ booth and spots Steph Floss, the Cavs DJ, whom Blair has -- of course -- befriended on Twitter and partied with in Cleveland. Apparently, Floss has been flown to Miami for the party.*

*What ridiculous luck.*

*The next few moments will come together like a perfect pick-and-roll. Floss directs LeBron's gaze to the dance floor, where Blair is waving. LeBron smiles and salutes Blair.*

*For the first time, they share a private moment. (LeBron will later recall that night and tell Sports Illustrated, "Yeah, that's James Blair, he's my guy.")*

*Blair smiles back, and those Coronas taste just a little bit better the rest of the night. "After the incident in Cleveland, a bunch of people -- haters and the naysayers that just always want to talk crap -- were like, 'Oh, he'll never even remember who you were after that,'" Blair says with a grin. "So, the fact that he still remembered my face and knew who I was and could point me out was like, 'Wow, he knows who I am now.'"*

*As he sits on his bed, with a LeBron James Fathead soaring above him, Blair has one regret: He hopes the Cavs security team didn't catch too much heat. "I planned it out so well," he says. "It's not like they weren't doing their jobs."*

*He sounds sincere, but he also sounds like a man who wants his one-year ban from Cavs games lifted on March 20. When asked for comment about Blair's stunt, a Cavs PR person addresses arena security in general, saying simply, "We exceed what the NBA requires." He declines to comment further, because "everything we say about LeBron gets interpreted into 2014 free agency."*

*For now, Blair is finishing his final year of physical therapy courses and trying to increase his access to LeBron. He's had no correspondence with James since the Heat team party. A source close to James' marketing team says the player's interactions with Blair have been a controversial topic among Team LeBron, the NBA and the Heat. Ultimately, because of LeBron's fondness for Blair, no consensus was reached. "This kid ran onto the court," says the source. "Do we want to be seen as condoning this stuff? I really think that after LeBron did what he did, what do you do then?"*

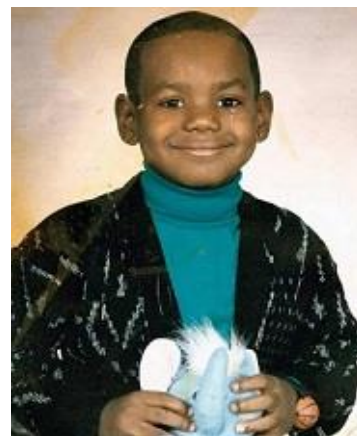
*Still, no matter the verdict on how Blair is treated going forward, rest assured he's not going to back off. His big-picture plan, the one so crazy that only James Blair could accomplish it, is to have a one-on-one, face-to-face conversation with LeBron someday. "I think the goal is pretty much done with everyone knowing that I am probably the biggest LeBron fan that is out there," Blair says with a look of satisfaction. "But I still would obviously like to meet LeBron in a different setting, where I actually get to talk to him besides right before I'm going to jail."*

**--END--**



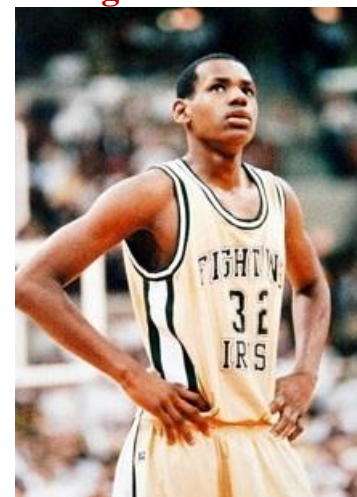
Okay, I know – those stories were a little long, but I found them interesting, so I included them in this article. Besides that, I learned quite a few things about LeBron James, his mother, his posse, his friends, and his personality such as:

Young LeBron had a very rough childhood until he was 10 years old and in the fourth grade. During most of this early period, LeBron and his young mother Gloria who had no home, no car, no job, no money, and stayed with family and friends until they got kicked out. Yes, they had to move around often. Gloria might have been poor, but she seemed to have enough money to go out partying most nights. It's not too difficult to figure out how she got what money they did have. LeBron was a shy quiet angry boy who was left alone a lot.



**Young LeBron James**

Then everything changed when a couple of football and a basketball coach discovered LeBron's exceptional athletic ability. They took LeBron and his mother under their wings, give them a place to stay, and kept them out of trouble. As he continued to grow and get better at basketball, they knew LeBron James was a special talent.



**LeBron – Special Talent**

When Gloria and LeBron became friends with Maurice Clarett, things could have turned out bad. Clarett wanted to be the greatest football player ever but broke the law, took illegal money and various drugs and ended up in jail. LeBron again got lucky – He was considered the best high school basketball player in America and signed a seven-year, \$93 million deal with Nike. Then he skipped college and went straight to the NBA as the number 1 pick. LeBron and Gloria were suddenly rich!



**Gloria James**

LeBron's personality changed once he was convinced that he was the best basketball player in the world. He considered himself to be "The King" and the "Chosen One" among other things. James become hard to coach and a person who was used to getting his way.

Gloria still likes to party but now that she has millions, she does it on her terms. All thanks to her famous son.

## MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

**TATTOOS:** Inquiring minds want to know just how many tattoos does LeBron James have? After much research, the answer is a mind boggling 42. Here are four of the most famous ones:



LeBron sports a "Beast" body art on his left shoulder



James proclaims himself the "Chosen 1" with a large upper back tattoo



The words "What we do in life" is tattooed on one arm and it continues on the other with "Echoes in eternity"



Fierce looking "Lion head" wearing a crown with "KING" at the top and "JAMES" at the bottom

**TOTAL EARNINGS:** LeBron James' career earnings went over the \$1 billion mark after the four-time NBA most valuable player signed a four-year \$154 million deal to join the Los Angeles Lakers.

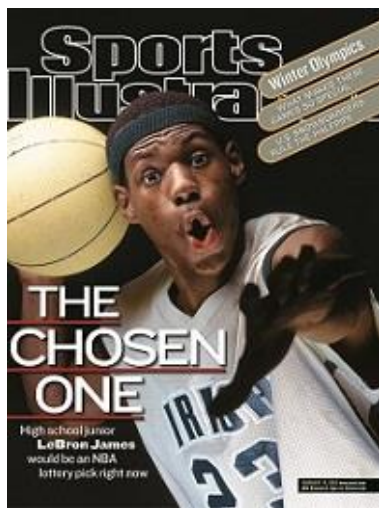
**FAST FACT:** In James' first season playing football, in fourth grade, he played for a team called the East Dragons and scored 17 touchdowns in six games.



## MOST SPORTS ILLUSTRATED COVERS

Athlete	Sport	Covers
Michael Jordan	Basketball	50
Muhammad Ali	Boxing	40
LeBron James	Basketball	26
Tiger Woods	Golf	24

Here are four of LeBron's SI covers:



## JAMES NEW HOME IN LOS ANGELES



James Family \$23 Million Brentwood Mansion

## LEBRON JAMES AND FAMILY



**With wife Savannah, and his three children Bronny, Bryce, and Zhuri**

**FAST FACT:** In just his second year in the NBA and as a 19-year-old, LeBron became the youngest player in NBA history to score 2,000 points. The record will likely remain unbroken, as the NBA won't let you in until you've played a year of college ball...for now. LeBron was in the second-to-last draft class that allowed high schoolers.

Do you now know more about LeBron James than you ever wanted to know? I know that I do! One good thing about being old, by tomorrow, I won't be able to remember half this stuff.

**One last thing.** Yes, LeBron James is a great basketball player, but he only ranks third on my list of greatest basketball players ever. I believe that Wilt Chamberlain and Michael Jordan are the best ever.

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