

Of Course She Has A Shoe Dot Com



The

Five

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50XLES 1 ANGEL REESE CHICAGO SKY Angel Reese learned how to play basketball from her mother at a very young age and grew up playing against her brother, Julian, in their driveway. She emerged as one of the best players in the city and had success playing above her age group. and on boys' teams. She played the point guard position before having two growth spurts by her first year of high school. Reese often attended Washington Mystics games and drew inspiration from WNBA players Candace Parker and Maya Moore, as well as former NBA player and Baltimore native Muggsy Bogues. She was coached by Ron James with Team Takeover, an AAU program based in Washington, D.C. that competes in the Nike EYBL national circuit. Her AAU teammates included Madison Scott, Mir McLean and Jakia Brown-Turner, all of whom were given five-star ratings by ESPN. **AALIYAH EDWARDS** WASHINGTON MYSTICS Aaliyah Edwards played high school basketball at Crestwood Preparatory College, in Toronto, Ontario, where she led her school to three championships. She played for the Canadian national U16, U17 and senior FIBA Cup teams. Recruited by UConn's Geno Auriemma and the Huskies, Edwards excelled in her last two seasons, both years appearing on NCAA women's All-America teams. As a junior, she averaged double-double of 18.3 points and 11 rebounds per game, an improvement from her sophomore season. The forward became the first UConn player with 20 points and 20 rebounds since Maya Moore in 2010. Edwards was selected first-team All-Big East and second-team All-America as a senior, a season in which UConn narrowly lost against lowa in the Final Four after playing to a record-breaking 14.4 million ESPN basketball viewers. CAITLIN CLARK INDIANA FEVER Clark grew up in an athletic family and played various sports. However, she eventually concentrated on basketball and was a phenom from a young age. By the time Clark was five years old, she could dribble a basketball and display great anticipation on the court. She showed the competitiveness and tenacity that are her trademarks. Clark was a standout

at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, Iowa. During her junior year in 2019, she scored 60 points in one game. That year she also helped the U.S. women's team win the gold medal in the under-19 world championship. When Clark graduated in 2020, she was one of the state's leading scorers in women's basketball, with 2,547 career points. She was named Miss Iowa Basketball that yea



KAMILLA CARDOSO

A native of Brazil, Cardoso played high school basketball in Tennessee and was selected to play in the McDonald's All-American Game and the Jordan Brand Classic. Rated the #5 player in her class by ESPN, she committed to Syracuse, and was the highest-rated recruit in program history. As a freshman, Cardoso was the starting center, becoming the first player in program history to win ACC Freshman of the Year. She shared ACC DPOY and was named first-team All-ACC. Following the season, Cardoso transferred to South Carolina. As a sophomore, she helped her team win the national championship. In her junior season, she was named SEC Sixth Woman of the Year and second-team All-SEC. In 2024, Cardoso was named the NCAA tournament MOP following a dominant performance in her team's national championship win



From New York to Indiana, Fever Rookie Celeste Taylor Talks Adjusting to the WNBA and Playing Against the Stars She's Always Admired

Deyscha Smith

The day before the 2024 WNBA Draft, future second-round pick Celeste Taylor was with us at SWiSH HQ, reminiscing about her childhood memories of going to New York Liberty games with her dad. It was during those moments when she got to see legends, champions and MVPs like Sugar Rodgers, Essence Carson, Cappie Pondexter and Tina Charles, and, as a ball girl, got the chance to rebound for Skylar

Diggins-Smith and Candace Parker when they came to

"I think that is a lot of where I found a love for the game," Taylor tells us. "Just seeing them compete and get after it every night-as I got older, [it was] Kelsey Plum, A'ja Wilson, Chelsea Gray. [I was] able to see women be really successful in their profession."

For Taylor, the reality that she's playing in the same League as those she's always admired is surreal. The former 2023 ACC Defensive Player of the Year-who averaged 10.1 points and 3.4 assists after transferring to Ohio State for her fifth year-knows she has a lot to learn if she wants to elevate her game at the next level. "The first thing that comes to mind is just how crazy it is, and how crazy it will be to see people that you saw playing when you were little right in front of you. To either be playing next to them or against them, I mean, it's just really exciting and cool, honestly."

When asked if she's ready to hold her own, Taylor doesn't hesitate. "I am."





We've got some new teammates

Official Auto Retailer of the NBA and WNBA







A'ja Wilson Takes Us Behind The Scenes of Gatorade's "Is It In You" Campaign

game becomes a battle of will, and you either have it to the late 90s, Gatorade in you or you don't. But A'ja Wilson didn't work this hard just to get this far. Even as a two-time WNBA Champion, there's still more to do, more to accomplish, more to win, more to work toward.

same question that fuels Gatorade's latest campaign, one that calls back to the heyday of the brand when Michael Jordan was drinking Citrus Cooler Gatorade from glass bottles. She's been tested, pushed and proven. She's come out on top, built a dynasty and become an icon. Those tests resonate deeply with A'ja's journey, those moments of clarity when you have to choose; dig deeper or be satisfied. And A'ja Wilson is never satisfied.

She points to the 2023 WNBA Finals as proof of the latter. "I think this past championship was something where IT was really tested a lot. You either got it, or you don't. Your preparation sets you up for this moment," Wilson tells SLAM.

That perspective was evident in mid-April when she was shooting the commercial that's

There are times when the being rolled out as you're reading this. Throwing it back has revived its "Is It In You?" campaign with a 60-second spot featuring A'ja alongside the brand's elite athlete roster.

When the brand presented her with the marketing deck that encapsulated the vibes and She's been faced with the energy of the revised concept, A'ja was more than hyped. She felt connected.

> "I can't even voice to you how I'm so excited that we're taking it back to the vintage, like the old school, the ones that we really grew up on," Wilson tells SLAM. "Being a 90s kid, growing up and seeing MJ, seeing all the other athletes, and now to finally be in it and be a part of a commercial that I used to watch, and now I'm going to be a part of the family as a whole, it's been super exciting."

We got the exclusive that

A'ja was joining Gatorade's

elite roster in early May.

With the brand's history of

fueling athletes for decades,

Wilson wants to showcase the

personable side of herself and her fellow athletes.

"I think when you look at

this roster and you look at the things that we do with Gatorade, it's kind of like 'yeah we grew up on this, but really we grew up on this. We really became adults on this one beverage and now here we are reppin' it and it's just truly amazing," A'ja tells SLAM. "There's a lot of people that see our roster and see the accolades and are like, oh my god they're the elite of the elite. But they may not see we have whole humans that navigate through the world. So yeah, just to see that human side of it, the kid side of it, the tweets of A'ja, like no, they're still human at the end of the day."

It's been nearly 30 years since Gatorade highlighted the IT within their athletes. As the landscape has changed, so has the brand's mission for its modernized campaign. Today's athlete journeys

By Jared Ebanks

through a barrage of external pressures and expectations; from social media to finding the perfect team or training situation in an ecosystem filled with endless opportunities.

For A'ja, her authenticity as an athlete-and a Black woman-is ever-present. It's what anchors her to her why. She's truthful, hilarious, and unapologetically herself. Through the years, she's navigated these moments with both grace and dominance. Her will has been tested questioned and praised, and as she explains her mindset and how she focuses on the constructive, the Las Vegas Aces' team slogan from last season reemerges.

Stay Poised Through the Noise.

"You can't really escape it, it's always going to be there. But the difference between good and great is how you can manage that noise, how you can stay poised through it,' A'ja explains. "What do you do in those moments? How can you be really in tune with yourself? And I think that's so key even when it comes to Gatorade. You have to be inside yourself, good and centered at where you are so then you can project that out to everyone else.'







Reese loves feeding into her "Barbie" branding. She won't take the floor before applying her feathery eyelashes and rouge blush, for heaven's sake. Yet she also thrives in playing the part of the "bad guy." Women's basketball's villain. The Anti-Caitlin. So, in an exaggerated, put-on way, she'll curl up one side of her lip and look like the meanest, baddest so-and-so in the WNBA. That stank face of hers will make highlight shows and drive up television ratings. Audiences can't get enough of the bad guy.

Problem is, she's just too good for that role.

Reese, the 6-foot-3 Chicago Sky rookie, set a WNBA record Sunday with her 13th consecutive double-double. Think about that. This league, nearly three decades old, has featured outstanding centers such as Sylvia Fowles and Lisa Leslie, chairwomen of the boards such as Tina Charles and Tamika Catchings, power forwards who could also get buckets such as Lauren Jackson and Candace Parker. And Reese needed just 20 games to accomplish something even those legends of the past could not. Though some might have believed the 2024 rookie of the year award was wrapped up the moment Caitlin Clark went No. 1 to the Indiana Fever, Reese has interrupted that coronation, barging in with her shiny tiara and snarling mean-mug.



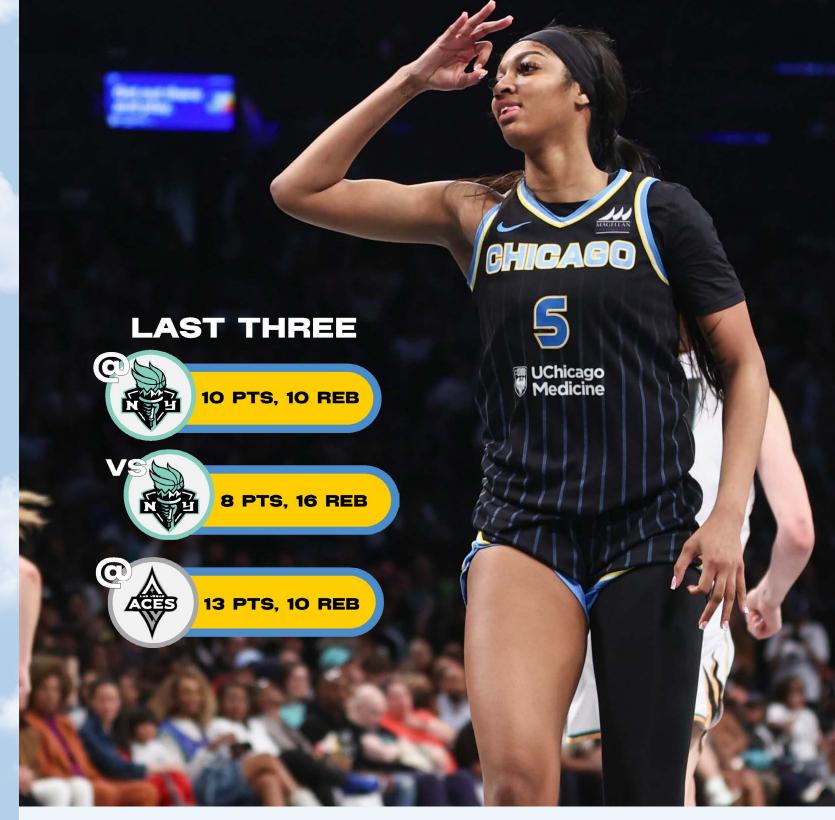
Reese's game proves her worth. She doesn't have to pretend to be the heel anymore.

Scrubs need that kind of shtick. Not all-stars who are among the top five vote-getters in the WNBA fan balloting. Certainly not a player who earned rookie of the month honors for June, a star who delivered the sound bite of the season in her walk-off interview following a big win over the Fever. When you're as talented as Reese, you should lean on the substance, not the sideshow.

For a while, this whole villain cosplay might have been necessary — and personally beneficial. Reese probably would not have graced magazine covers or won entertainment show awards without creating that viral moment with Clark at the end of the 2023 national championship game. Sure, Reese has been gobbling up double-doubles since her Baltimore prep days, but she doesn't reach celebrity status without imitating the "You can't see me" gesture and pointing to her ring finger to mock Clark in the closing moments of the title game. And ever since she trolled America's

sweetheart, Reese has become a target for one crowd that has dog-whistled its dislike and an icon for another group willing to rush to her defense.

Between the clashing camps, she was simultaneously called "classless" and "authentic." An enemy but also a cultural hero. Because the viewing public needs easily digestible narratives, during the year or so in which



Reese has blossomed into a household name, she has been pitted against Clark as the antihero. For all of its flaws and divisions, this story arc has grown the game.

When the Sky faces the Fever, the league's television partners enjoy a ratings bonanza. The first meeting June 1 — long sigh — when the Sky's Chennedy Carter committed a flagrant foul on Clark and Reese popped off the bench to applaud her teammate,

created a hysteria of hot takes. A few weeks later, the rematch generated an average of 2.25 million viewers. When the teams met for a third time June 23, that game toppled the previous record and averaged 2.3 million viewers, the most for a WNBA game in 23 years.

This is the playbook to get eyeballs. Good vs. evil— even if the so-called meanie is simply acting out the role. Savvy enough to recognize the audience's appetite and self-assured enough to handle any

negativity, Reese has willingly played to the perception. Last month, Reese allowed the audience a peek at the playbook.

"It all started from the national championship game, and I've been dealing with this for two years now," Reese said. "And understanding, like, yeah, negative things have probably been said about me, but honestly, I'll take that because look where women's basketball is. People are talking about women's basketball that you never would think would be talking about women's basketball. People are pulling up to games, we've got celebrities coming to games, sold-out arenas, just because of one single game. And just looking at that, I'll take that role. I'll take the bad guy role, and I'll continue to take that on and be that."

Although during that one episode in the national title game, Reese auditioned for and won the villain role, she should now abandon it. Equally important, the audience should let her. As WNBA viewership grows, hopefully attracting more serious fans wanting to watch actual basketball and fewer rubberneckers rooting for a car crash, Reese's reputation as a player can grow, too.

Possibly into the rookie of the year.

Clark has made history, too, becoming the first WNBA rookie to post a triple-double. And with the Fever recovering from a sluggish start to the season, Clark along with all-stars Kelsey Mitchell and Aliyah Boston — has helped Indiana leap up the standings. She has done little to remove herself as the frontrunner. However, Reese has entered the debate and should be considered Clark's biggest threat.

And there it is again. Clark vs. Reese. While circumstances have squeezed her into this limiting role — which Reese accepted for the good of the game, as well as to grow her own popularity — she should be something greater than Clark's foil. Barbies can snarl and wear makeup on the court, but Reese no longer needs to accessorize her persona with the black hat.





PLAYOFFS BEGIN SEPTEMBER 22



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Caitlin Clark, Angel Reese show they belong among elites in WNBA All-Star Game

Sabreena Merchant

All-star games don't usually resemble the regular season. With the elevated talent level, the different stakes and a more up-tempo flow, the skills that all-stars put on display with their own teams don't always shine in an exhibition showcase.

Don't tell that to the rookies.

The two rookies who have taken the WNBA by storm during the first half of the season did the same at the Footprint Center in the 2024 All-Star Game, helping Team WNBA capture its second win in this format, 117-109.

Angel Reese was the doubledouble queen during the first half of the season, setting a league record with 15 consecutive double-doubles. She added another such tally to her resume, posting 12 points and 11 rebounds in her All-Star debut. Her longtime adversary Caitlin Clark recently set the league's single-game assist record with 19, and the Indiana Fever guard followed with 10 in her first All-Star performance.

"Is it a surprise? I feel like I do this every night," Reese said. "The expectations are set and that's what I'm expected to do."

Against some of the best in the WNBA on Team

USA, Clark and Reese were unfazed by the moment. They each played within themselves and made meaningful contributions to the win.

Clark started alongside four multi-time All-Stars and comfortably ran the offense. Her 10 assists came alongside zero turnovers — the first time all season she hasn't given the ball away, even though it was against a USA squad trying to pressure her on defense.

to get the ball out and go. That's the way I view it, let's get the ball out, let's go, let's push.... I just want to set my teammates up for success ... and I take a lot of pride in that."

Clark's best assist of the night might have come during the third quarter when she was supposed to check into the game for Arike Ogunbowale. Instead, she walked back to the bench from the scorer's table as she recognized what



Clark was faster than Chelsea Gray and successfully used screens from her bigs, particularly her Indiana teammate Aliyah Boston, to navigate traps. Even though the 3-ball didn't fall for her, she was only the fourth player in All-Star history to post double-digit assists.

"I just love passing the basketball," Clark said. "Honestly, sometimes it works better almost when they score, they take a breath for a second. I want a heater her Team WNBA backcourt partner was on.

While Clark dazzled with her playmaking, her fellow rookie made her mark defensively and on the glass. Reese entered the game with 1:35 to play in the first quarter. Within 24 seconds, she made a steal. A minute later, she collected an offensive rebound — her first of five — as she scored on a putback to give Team WNBA its first lead.

The Olympians started sending multiple players to

the boards to box out Reese in the second half, which prevented her from getting any offensive rebounds, but she still had four defensive rebounds — the most on either team — and added eight points.

The basket that everyone came to see occurred with 6:36 to play. Clark forced Brittney Griner to step up on a drive to the basket. As Griner vacated the space underneath the rim, Clark bounced the ball to Reese, who finished the layup to put Team WNBA up nine.



It was the only time the two connected during the evening — though Reese did set a screen for Clark to set up a 3-pointer on the right wing that the Fever guard ultimately missed — and both players knew in the moment what they had produced.

"I know that bucket went viral, I haven't checked my phone yet, (but) my phone's blowing up," Reese said. "(Clark) even said on the bench, 'You know how many people are happy right now?' I was like, man, I already know. I'm already knowing, so I'm gonna go see that video everywhere."

Together, along with Aliyah Boston of Team WNBA, Reese and Clark represent the future of the league and basketball around the world. It's easy to envision them in four years wearing the jersey of the opposite team, trying to prepare for their own Olympic experience in Los Angeles.

Clark has spoken openly about wanting to play for Team USA in the future, and Reese elaborated on her own desire to represent the red, white, and blue.

"We were just talking about, hopefully (in) four years, we're on the other side being able to play with USA," Reese said. "I want to be going to the Olympics one day. That's my goal. To be an All-Star every year is the goal. To win championships is the goal. So I'm just excited, I'm just really blessed to just be here. I'm trying to embrace this

moment right now and not think too far ahead, but I'm really proud of myself for where I am right now."

Their teammates are equally proud of what they have accomplished and how that continued into Saturday's win. Kayla McBride spoke pregame about the grace the duo has demonstrated as rookies. Nneka Ogwumike complimented their ability to work together in the victory.

"I'm always impressed by the two of them," Ogwumike said. "It was also really fun to see them playing together tonight. They had some synergy. And the maturity that they have going in, not even just being here at All-Star, but managing all of the influx that they get as the two rookies that are really getting a lot of attention.

And then, of course, being celebrated, too. I would like to think that they had fun today, and I think that's the main goal, especially for first-time All-Stars, is to enjoy the experience.

"And they helped us win too."

For all their differences, the one major trait the longtime adversaries share is a desire to win. Both Clark and Reese were overjoyed about showcasing their skills and getting to do so while the team succeeded. It's what

they've done for the bulk of their careers, and what the public should continue to expect as they work through the growing pains of their rookie seasons.

Whatever their futures on the national team entail, the rookies should be fixtures in this midseason showcase for years to come. They've shown that they belong at this level time and again and that they can make room for their talents no matter the situation.

As Reese said afterward,

"Get used to it."



Today's WNBA Legends Are Shifting Sneaker Culture

By Jared Ebanks

The WNBA has long since been filled with stars, and if we're being completely real, these women could have been selling units in the sneaker space for years. Player Exclusive kicks on the court were cool, but not as accessible for the everyday fan like a signature shoe was.

So the brands adapted. With an impeccable roster headlined by Sue Bird, Diana Taurasi and Jewell Loyd, Nike began releasing their player's exclusive colorways to the public.

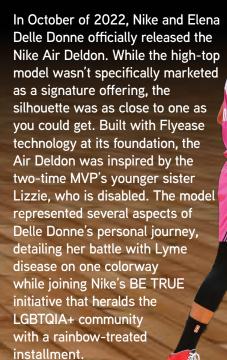


Bird and Loyd, each known for their affinity with Kyrie Irving's former Nike signature shoes, received a number of colorways in the marketplace, with Bird headlining the "Keep Sue Fresh" collection that spanned from the Kyrie 4 Low to the Kyrie Infinity.

Out in Phoenix, DT began repping 'Bron's signature series, from the LeBron 9 and LeBron X to the LeBron 19—she even had compiled an extensive Mercury-colored collection of LeBron PEs, including the LeBron 18 "La Cabra"—which translates to the GOAT in Spanish.



In Washington, six-time All-Star Elena Delle Donne was paying homage with her PE rotation, dawning a Swoopes I-inspired colorway of the Nike Hyperdunk 2017 alongside a steady influx of KD 12s. But at the tail end of the 2019 season, Delle Donne flipped the script, electing to wear a lace-less model, the Nike Air Zoom UNVRS. Constructed around the brand's newest technology, Flyease provided wearers with a hands-free, easy-access design geared toward those with disabilities. The latter would serve as a three year-long smoke signal of what was to come.







Then there's Sabrina Ionescu.



While standing on the shoulders of the legends that came before her, Nike announced lonescu would be the eighth women's signature athlete in Nike Basketball history. After 17 years, The Swoosh had returned in full to the women's game and they flooded Sabrina's business with support. An expansive marketing campaign, a full release schedule featuring more than a dozen colorways, a full unisex apparel collection and intricate storytelling that ran throughout the model.

Touted as the first-ever unisex signature basketball shoe, the **Nike Sabrina 1** sold

out the first handful of colorways during the late summer.

Then it took things to another level when the model was added to Nike's customizable Nike By You platform.

With layers of detailed fabrics, stitching and panels, the Sabrina 1 brought out the platforms' full potential, allowing fans of the already praised silhouette to create their own 1-of-1 versions.

Custom Nike Sabrina 1s engulfed social media in the following months, with creators drawing inspiration from their favorite colorways of past signature models like the "Bruce Lee" Kobe 5. Some designs even stuck and were replicated at mass, like the titular rendition dubbed the "What The" colorway—inspired by Nike Basketball's mid-2010s run of taking every colorway from one signature shoe and compiling it into one loud, expressive and surprisingly cohesive ensemble.

From the W and the NBA to men's and women's college basketball and the G-League, the Nike Sabrina 1 exploded in popularity. As soon as the 2023-24 season tipped, the low-top model quickly became a go-to for many Nike-endorsed NBA players with **Mikal Bridges**, Jalen Brunson, Tyler Herro and others customizing their own PEs at a frantic pace.

This time around, Sabrina's sneaker won't be a one-and-done: she confirmed during this year's New York Liberty training camp that her second signature is currently in the works.



And then there's the long awaited announcement of the Nike A'One. As the first Black woman to receive a signature shoe with the brand since Sheryl Swoopes, A'ja Wilson continues to cement her legacy as not only a great, but a player deserving of the utmost recognition and respect. After headlining the Nike Cosmic Unity last season and dawning a regal black and gold LeBron 21 PE during the 2023 Finals, two-time WNBA Champion and New York Times Best-Selling Author A'ja Wilson has been positioned for an insanely bright future, and arrival of the A'One in the Spring of 2025 was met with top-tier marketing: Wilson posted a flick of herself wearing an iconic hoodie that read, **Of Course I Have a Shoe Dot Com** with the caption: "The answer to the question." It was just as iconic as Wilson and her illustrious career.

Wilson and Nike aren't just only releasing a signature sneaker though—the two-time WNBA champion and MVP has been working for over a year now on a full apparel collection and signature slides, too. She's been heavily involved in each step of the process, consistently checking in with the brand and going as far as to suggest satin-lined hoods so women wouldn't have to wear a bonnet during travel days.



As for other stars, in the summer of 2021, Jordan Brand announced the largest women's roster in the brand's history, signing Dearica Hamby, Satou Sabally, Jordin Canada, Aerial Powers, Te'a Cooper, Crystal Dangerfield, Arella Guirantes and Chelsea Dungee. Joining an established core of Kia Nurse and Asia Durr, the Jumpman went out and put pen to paper with Rhyne Howard, Dana Evans, Isabelle Harrison and Gabby Williams over the next year and a half.

Picking up the legacy of the since-retired Moore, Jordan's revamped athlete roster has brought a fresh perspective to the brand's once-reserved approach to the ladies' side of the game. Player Exclusive colorways have flooded WNBA hardwoods as a result. Kia Nurse's Toronto

Raptors-treated **Tatum 1**, Satou Sabally's international-inspired **Air Jordan 37** and Isabelle Harrison's butterfly-coated **Jordan Luka 2**— in homage to her late sister—have each extrapolated a piece of the respective athletes' journeys. In turn, sneaker blogs and team social media accounts have begun to add another element of storytelling to the WNBA's atmosphere.

Even though signature silhouettes and exclusive colorways continue to draw headlines, both Nike and Jordan have been cultivating their next generation of partners in the backdrop through the new possibilities presented by NIL. Mirroring the selectivity of their signature lineup, Nike has signed reigning National Freshman of the Year Juju Watkins, former AP Player of the Year Paige Bueckers

and top high school sophomore Jerzy Williams to NIL deals.

In the same realm, Jordan Brand has signed Rutgers-bound guard Kiyomi McMiller, LSU's SEC Freshman of the Year Mikaylah Williams and UCLA point guard Kiki Rice.

While it's yet to be officially announced, Caitlin Clark has reportedly signed an endorsement deal with The Swoosh as well. Clark was one of the brand's first NIL signings before her senior year at lowa.

This is just the beginning, and with investment, attention to detail, and unwavering support for women's basketball, the renaissance continues.







Just Do It.



