

nv

NEW VISION IN BUSINESS

Size DOESN'T
MATTER

SMALL BUSINESSES
CAN COMPETE
WITH LARGE COMPANIES

SHOPPING ^{2.0}

NEW RETAIL TECHNOLOGIES WILL
CHANGE THE WAY YOU SHOP

DRESS FOR
Success

TIPS FOR BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL WARDROBE

Bigger Than
The Game

JAMES WORTHY & ISRAEL IDONIJÉ
REDEFINE THE PRO ATHLETE

THE
King
of
Beats

BEATS SALE TO APPLE ELEVATES DR. DRE
FROM MUSIC ICON TO BILLIONAIRE STATUS

NVMAGAZINE.COM

June, July 2k14

\$4.99 US :: \$5.99 CANADA

09 >



ISSUE 090

BIGGER THAN THE GAME

JAMES WORTHY & ISRAEL IDONIJE REDEFINE THE PRO ATHLETE

WORDS: BRITTNEY M. WALKER

Athletes are infamously known for epic multimillion-dollar salaries, "baller" spending habits and embarrassing bankruptcies. An overwhelming number of these players go completely broke within five years after retiring from their sports. Maybe it's mismanagement of money, too many bad investments, overspending, or splurging on friends and family. But whatever it is, the fall from the "lifestyles of the rich & famous" tends to overshadow those professionals retired or current who are using their celebrity to change lives and expand minds.





Israel Idonije



Israel Idonije - Project Africa



eteran NFL defensive end, Israel Idonije and retired NBA small forward, James Worthy, from the legendary “Showtime” Lakers are two celebrity athletes who have escaped the snares of the limelight. They embraced reality early to preserve their fortune and their futures but also had a clear sense that there was a bigger game to play. Just like a night in Las Vegas, these guys knew their athletic careers were going to be short, fun and rich. But at the end of the night, it’s about how you spend your spoils.

For Idonije, football was never going to be the end-all and be-all for his life. Instead, he planned for it to be a platform for bigger, more meaningful aspirations like building businesses and helping kids. In fact, when I asked a question that started off describing the brutality of football and eventually landed somewhere around “How does a big, mean athlete like you care so much about the emotional development of kids?” Idonije, seemingly a bit perturbed at the notion, politely interrupted the interview, then proudly explained that sports, particularly the NFL, is just one of many items on a long list of interests he has and he just happened to be fortunate enough

to play the game professionally. “Football is a very small aspect of what I do,” says Idonije calmly. “I look at the platform of sports and football as an opportunity. Before you know it, it’s gone. It’s about what you do with your platform.”

The former daycare teacher who stands at 6 ft. 6 in. and weighs about 275 lbs. may hit hard on the gridiron but with his bullhorn and soapbox he hits even harder. Idonije was born in Lagos, Nigeria where he was raised until the age of four when his family moved to Brandon, Manitoba a small town west of Winnipeg, Canada. That’s where his charitable parents who were also Christian missionaries built his foundation for giving back by sometimes using their home to distribute food to people in need. Idonije created his own foundation in 2007 to help underprivileged children in Chicago, Winnipeg, Canada and West Africa, basically all the places he has called home.

“We tell every kid in the program, ‘You have a gift. You have multiple abilities. You are a special and unique individual. You have a place in your social environment,’” shares Idonije.

The mission of the Israel Idonije Foundation (IIF) is to teach young people that they are responsible for their own futures. One of the major initiatives is the Social and Emotional Learning module that focuses on five main competencies: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making and effective communication.

The IIF’s programs are key to exercising these competencies and include: IZZYz KIDz an academic and recreational afterschool program for Chicago youth in partnership with the Salvation Army; the Youth Leadership Program, a summer internship that provides five weeks of workforce development; Shop With A Cop, which brings together 200 Chicago youth with 75 officers for a day of fun that includes a \$100 shopping spree; the All-Star Football and Cheerleading Camps where 350 kids build healthy peer relationships while building football or cheerleading skills; and Project Africa, which is an annual medical and community building mission to impoverished communities. In 2013, the IIF traveled to a Kobedi village in Ghana for the first time to provide a sustainable medical and youth empowerment program for a village of

1,700 people.

The IIF is funded by corporate and public donations, as well as, a handful of government grants. Since its inception it has affected the lives of 6,000 children and Idonije has personally donated over \$400,000. “We believe every person on this planet has a role to play to not only achieve personal dreams, but to also make our world better,” Idonije says of the foundation. “Together we succeed.”

Idonije’s roots in the church not only inspired his philanthropy but also his entrepreneurship. If you’re a church-going person, you know that Communion traditionally takes a long time, can be a little unsanitary and sometimes messy. Idonije was presented with the opportunity to make that process easier and hygienically safer with Blessed Communion Cups. The company provides individually sealed, dual chambered, recyclable cups pre-filled with a proprietary grape juice that are available with or without unleavened bread wafers.

Though some of his business advisors weren’t very excited about this investment, which

stumbled mightily when Idonije launched it in 2009, he recognized the potential for growth and the widespread need across religious institutions. According to Pew Forum statistics, about 72% of American Christians attend church regularly, which equates to close to that percentage taking part in a Communion ceremony at least once a month. Since being purchased in 2009, Blessed Communion has more than quadrupled sales in the past year in just the U.S. alone reaching approximately \$30 million in sales. Idonije says it’s due to a great focus, targeted marketing and quality product control. Distribution in both Canada and Africa is expected soon.

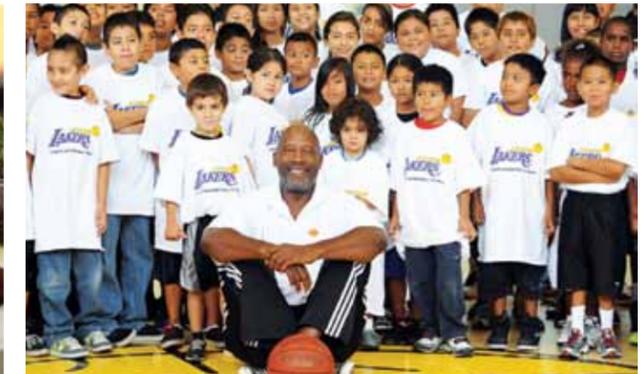
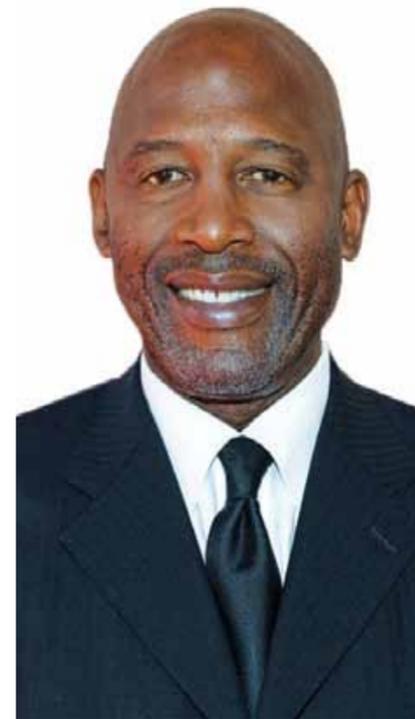
Idonije’s entrepreneurial interests don’t stop there. He’s also has a publishing venture called Athlitacomics. Like the name says, it’s a comic book company, combining athletes and superheroes. The vision came to him during NFL training camp in 2007. For most players camp is an intensive three to four week physical program where athletes only focus on workouts, learning plays and eating, but not for Idonije.

“It’s important to build something that adds value to your community”

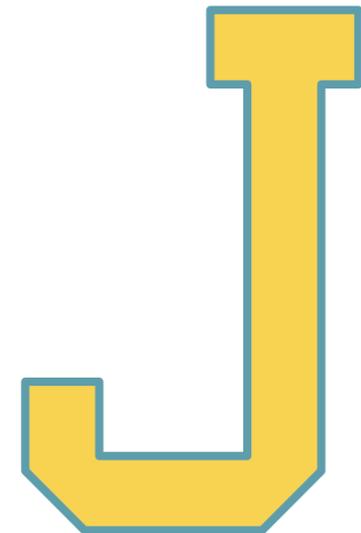
“I grew up writing, drawing and playing instruments and so in 2007 in training camp, I decided to create something,” he says. “I was set and wanted to tell a story. I wanted to tell the origin and mythology about athletics. [In the story], athletes have this great skill in their sports, but really that skill is a byproduct of a greater gift they were given to save humanity. That’s the story of The Protectors and that’s where it all started.”

The Protectors is the first series the company has in production and in April it celebrated the release of the 28-page issue #1, at the Chicago Comic and Entertainment Expo (C2E2), which is actually the second edition in the series. Idonije has a global distribution deal in the works and a children’s book series is also underway.

“It’s important to build something that adds value to your community,” shares Idonije. “It’s not about superficiality. At the end of the day, it’s about what did you do to add value to those around you. What will be left? What did you do with your time while you were here?”



James Worthy’s many ventures, including a sandwich from Legendary Eats



James Worthy naturally transitioned from his Hall of Fame career in basketball to entrepreneur and philanthropist by keeping his bank account in check and utilizing his experiences in the NBA to equip himself to be taken seriously in the corporate world. Known as “Big Game James,” one of the 50 greatest NBA players ever, and now for his cerebral assessments of NBA plays as a Time Warner Cable SportsNet analyst, Worthy’s success is much longer-lived off the court than on.

When he speaks, he delivers every word confidently with a calm, smooth Southern Californian drawl, the kind only found in the sunny parts of the state. “It really started with my parents,” Worthy says of his success, explaining that though his dad only had an eighth grade education, he was one of the smartest men he had known. His mother was an inspiration as well, who after graduating high school in the mid-forties, went back to college some 25 years later to become a nurse.

“I was always inspired. I really only played basketball because I was trying to get a schol-

arship,” says Worthy. “I heard the word ‘scholarship’ at the Boys Club. That’s when my thoughts changed regarding sports.” Radio was really what he wanted to do, but basketball set him up for college and eventually a very profitable career.

It was at the University of North Carolina where Worthy established his basketball legend, winning the 1982 NCAA Championship alongside his illustrious teammates Michael Jordan and Sam Perkins. Individually he earned Most Outstanding Player of the Final Four and shared national Player of the Year honors with Virginia’s Ralph Sampson. Chapel Hill also provided an early lesson for him when he broke his ankle in his freshman year and feared he wouldn’t regain his game. “It really made me wake up and expose myself to all kinds of people -- not confine myself to just basketball,” Worthy shares on his fan website. Yet after his junior year, realizing he was in high demand Worthy bounded for the NBA and was drafted first overall by the Lakers. However, without illusions about the stamina of his career, he eventually finished school taking one summer to complete his degree.

After hanging up that number 42 jersey, not only is he an analyst but he also runs his own consulting firm and gives back to the community in a big way. Worthy Enterprises spawned from his experiences as a pro baller. Being an NBA icon meant making endorsement deals, establishing a brand and developing self as an asset to corporations. The NBA was like life school and opportunity central. In the nineties when other players began incorporating themselves and establishing non-profits Worthy saw an opportunity to get in the mix. At his company, Worthy and his team act as liaisons between new and established businesses, basically helping small companies get noticed and garner connections with corporations with similar goals that may be sold on a great idea. The firm also provides sales and marketing initiatives, teamwork training, help with charitable fundraising and community relations.

Legendary Eats, a sandwich house created by renowned chef Malcolm Mitchell is one of Worthy’s latest ventures. In collaboration with a host of celebrities including Jeffrey Osborne, Sheila E., Penny Marshall and other legends, the goal is to bring delicious signature sandwiches and healthier food options

to sports arenas. Sandwiches are named after “legends” from entertainment and sports and when they are sold a portion of the proceeds is donated to their charity of choice. Currently sports fans can indulge in the tasty bites at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, Target Field in Minneapolis and First Energy Stadium in Cleveland.

Giving is part of Worthy’s legend and he willingly shares his wisdom with others. The James Worthy Foundation (JWF) is a multifaceted organization that works with a wide spectrum of community organizations. Based in Worthy’s hometown of Gastonia, N.C. at the Empowerment Center that bears his name it provides a valuable space in the impoverished Highland community to specifically impact the lives of “at-risk” youth and homeless women military veterans. Under the leadership of military veteran John Maddox, the JWF uses STEM training to uplift both groups it also provides nutrition and health care resources, creative arts, character-building, and family-oriented activities. Currently Worthy and his team are working on building a gym and expanding the JWF to service the national community.

Besides helping women soldiers reenter society JWF looks to prevent teenage pregnancy and keep youth from facing the justice system. “A lot of kids need to take care of their restitution,” says Worthy. “We try to do a lot with the magistrates and judges to help these kids who are trying to get back on their feet.”

James Worthy is bigger than the game and always planned to be. “I always knew [my career] was going to end and I knew I was going to be young and I always thought, ‘What next?’” says Worthy. “How am I going to take all my success, all that I have gained to use it for my advantage to do something in the business world, whether that’s public speaking or engaging in business opportunities or helping someone who has talent or product get to the next level.” So he encourages young aspiring athletes and others currently in the game to keep reality at the forefront of their mind and surround themselves with successful people.

For more info visit: israelidonije.org, www.blsd.com, athlitacomics.com, jamesworthy42.com, www.jamesworthyfoundation.org.