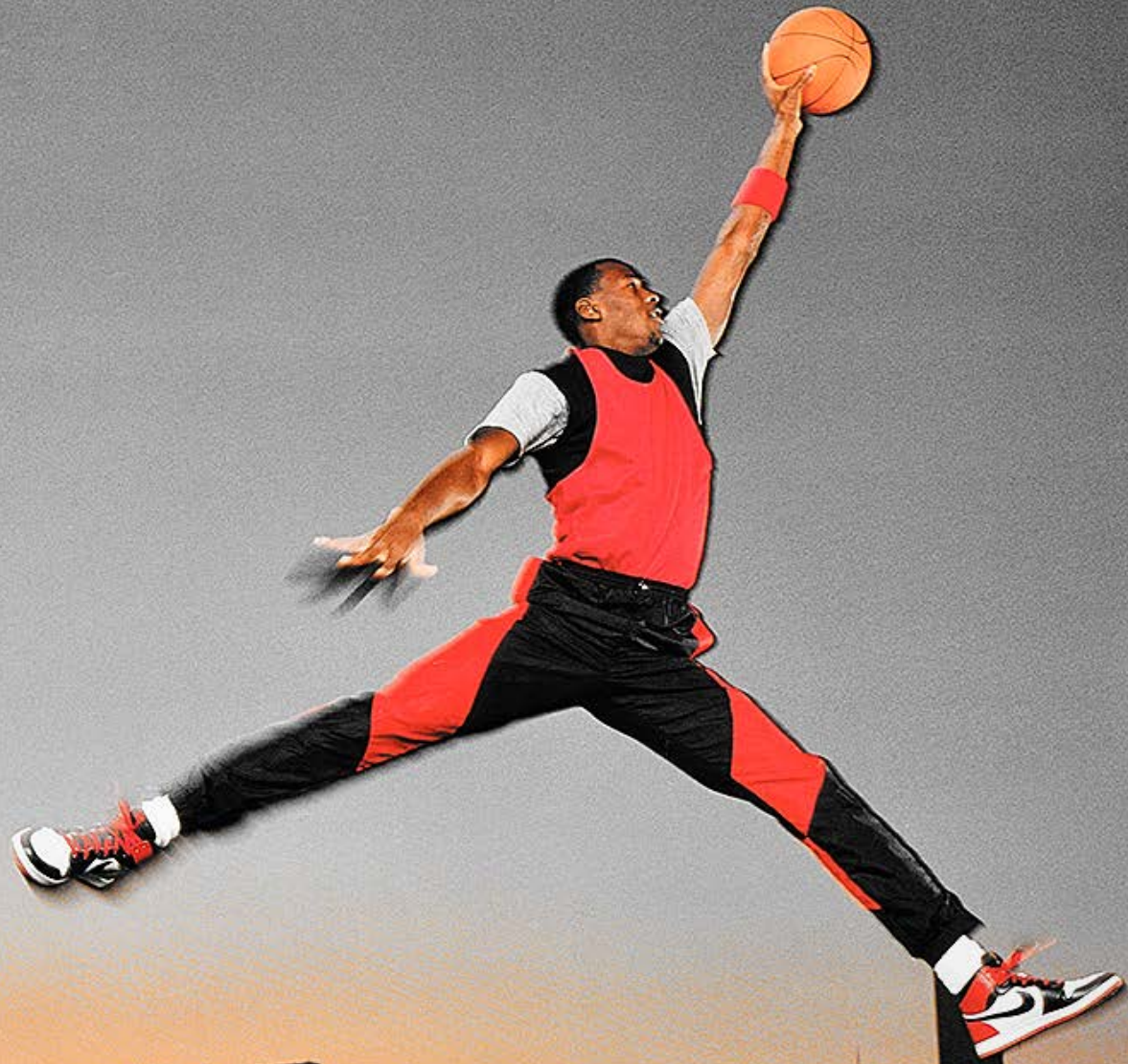


POSTER



POSTER

Past
Exhibition

Just Frame It

How Nike Turned Sports Stars into Superheroes

September 26, 2024–February 23, 2025

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Nike was hardly the powerhouse sports-apparel brand it is today. In fact, it was struggling to compete with more established rivals like Converse and Adidas. The company's fortunes, however, began to change when it embraced a distinctive marketing strategy that emphasized not just products but also specific ideals: irreverence, independence, and a willingness to break boundaries. *There Is No Finish Line*, introduced in 1977, was one of its earliest campaigns and it effected a powerful emotional response in consumers. The Nike brand was now about more than shoes and shorts—it was about playing to win. But this was only the tip of the creative iceberg.

Later, Nike began to capitalize on the larger-than-life personalities of emerging and established superstars in virtually every major sport. The posters in this exhibition—many of them conceived by Peter Moore, the late shoe designer and creative director of Nike (and then Adidas)—greatly contributed to the mythologizing of Michael Jordan, Bo Jackson, and countless other athletes. The images are often over the top, relying on playful humor and exaggerated hero worship—which was very much the point. In an era before the internet and social media, young fans lacked easy access to imagery of their favorite sports stars—a void Nike soon filled. Its creative team had the inspired idea to enable fans to buy amusing or idealized pictures of their favorite players at their local sporting-goods or sneaker shop and take it home to decorate their bedrooms, garages, offices, and other personal spaces. Nike posters effectively preserved these star athletes as fans would always want to remember them, establishing them as the idols of an era.

The unifying theme of these poster campaigns was the uniqueness of the subjects, an emphasis on what made each player special. While other brands were selling fitting in, Nike was selling standing out. At their height, Nike posters were so popular that some athletes reportedly demanded a clause in their contracts guaranteeing their appearance in one. They also inspired imitators, like the popular posters of sporting figures by the Costacos Brothers, and became a rite of passage for stars seeking pop-culture immortality. While the preeminent role of the sports poster in the fan world has long been displaced by the unlimited number of candid images available online, they nonetheless remain cherished collectors' items. The posters can also be appreciated for their hubris, their fearlessness, and their earnestness—qualities possessed by many of the athletes they featured.

This exhibition comes to Poster House through a generous loan from Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher. Unless otherwise noted, all items on display come from his personal collection.

This exhibition is not sponsored, endorsed, or affiliated with Nike.



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Mike Tiedy, former Nike
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Just Frame It Exhibition Poster

The Power of the Brand

While Nike recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, its ambition since its inception has been immortality. This was no small aspiration for a company (originally known as Blue Ribbon Sports) based in Beaverton, Oregon, initially known only for its running shoes. Nike's ethos is summed up in the slogan it adopted in 1988 and that ultimately came to define the firm: it "just did it." Nike embraced the notion of fearless risk-taking. In 1982, it backed the newly formed advertising agency now known as Wieden+Kennedy, which created hugely successful campaigns like "Bo Knows" for Nike cross-training shoes in 1989 and '90, featuring professional baseball and football player Bo Jackson. In addition, the company boldly presented HIV-positive long-distance runner, Ric Muñoz, in a 1995 campaign and launched Pro Hijab, a hijab line of sportswear in March 2017.

These posters also underscore Nike's efforts to maintain a dialogue with its consumers. In 1984, an internal memo made the case for "minimal copy with striking visuals." This approach was already represented in the exemplary work of its design team; it created popular posters available to fans in sporting-goods and shoe stores in which simple, direct messages were accompanied by photographs of star athletes. Nike's playful, colorful images captured its essence and appealed especially to young people whose enduring relationships with the brand often began with the acquisition of a Nike poster of one of their favorite athletes. In other words, the Nike poster on the bedroom wall effectively served

as a 24-hour advertisement, one that lived rent-free in the potential customer's home.

Nike relied on a stable of talented, creative photographers with a sense of humor, chief among them Bill Sumner, Chuck Kuhn, Gary Nolton, and Bob Peterson. Along with Nike's creative director Peter Moore and many other designers, they conceived posters that served as the ideal nexus between an athlete, their public persona, and a product. While occasionally this product might be a specific shoe, in many instances such posters were simply intended to market Nike itself. This approach was not only distinctive but also lucrative; Nike has been twice as valuable as its closest competitor, Adidas, for more than a decade. Today, Nike's posters are one of many flashpoints in the meteoric success story of a company whose cultural footprint extends well beyond the world of sports.

The Power of Stars

In 1974, Nike seized on something special when it signed up long-distance runner Steve Prefontaine as the first major athlete to represent the brand. He personified the values and vision that Phil Knight and Bill Bowerman, the company's cofounders, wanted it to convey: he was brash, self-possessed, determined, and, most importantly, singular. After this, Nike aligned itself repeatedly with athletes known for their authenticity and apparently effortless cool, continuously linking the brand with excellence in the minds of consumers.

This approach to advertising coincided with the rise of celebrity product endorsements within the sports industry, and Nike led the charge by signing with major talent like John McEnroe, Charles Barkley, and Bo Jackson. As it sought to differentiate itself from its competitors, Nike made every effort to land a once-in-a-generation basketball player who had yet to play a single professional game: Michael Jordan. The company ultimately signed a contract with him in 1984. The risk it took—giving Jordan a then-unprecedented share of the profits from his signature shoe, the Air Jordan—came to define Nike's innovative approach to its business relationships with celebrities.

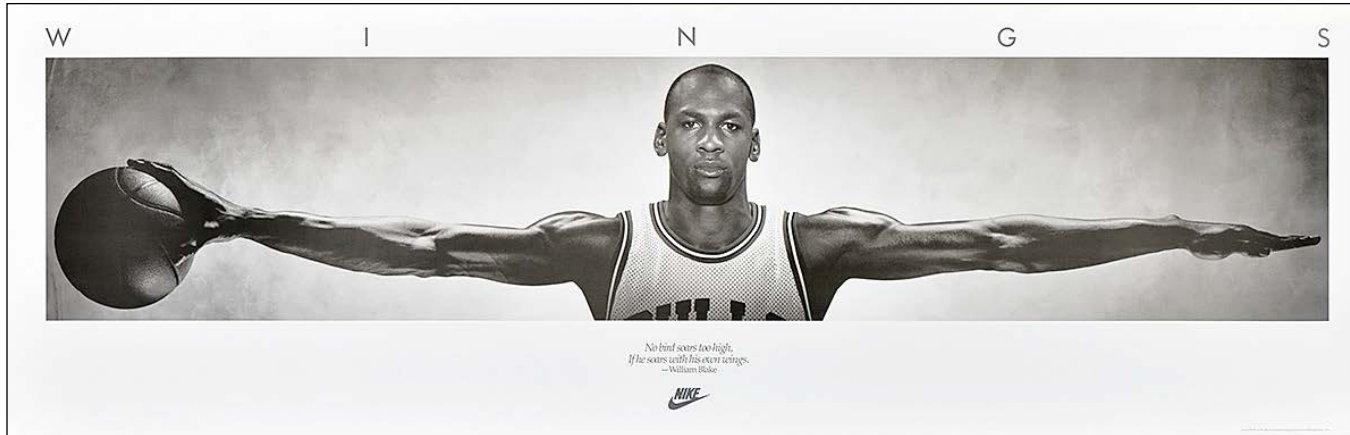
Today, the biggest sports icons naturally gravitate toward Nike because it has an established and unmatched track record of sustained, popular relevance in an oversaturated media marketplace.

The Power of Representation

Nike has played a crucial role in elevating several women and people of color to iconic status in sports and business. Figures like Tiger Woods, Serena Williams, and, of course, Michael Jordan owe some of their mystique and global popularity to the campaigns Nike built around them in television, advertising, magazines, billboards, retail stores, and posters. Additionally, the company has publicly aligned itself with movements for equality and social justice—most recently with its endorsement of quarterback-turned-activist, Colin Kaepernick.

The predominantly white creative team behind these posters contributed something positive to the mainstream image of Black masculinity. In Nike posters, Black men were frequently the protagonists and heroes; they took center stage as judges, executives, pilots, doctors, and other figures of authority and power. In many instances, such roles had been occupied historically by people outside of the Black experience; Black people have typically had to overcome the obstacles inherent to institutionalized racism to realize these positions for themselves. For consumers, especially young fans of color, these images might not seem merely entertaining but also aspirational.

Like many sports brands, Nike's relationship to and representation of women evolved slowly. It was not until the 1990s that the company began to consistently feature female athletes as the chief subjects of its poster campaigns. The brand has since made some efforts to address the male-dominated orientation of its business and internal criticism about its own workplace culture—most notably by appointing ex-NBA executive Sarah Mensah as the first Black, female head of the Air Jordan division in 2023.



Wings/Michael Jordan, 1989

Photographer: Gary Nolton (b. 1958)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- In order to make this hugely popular image of Michael Jordan in Nike's first oversize poster, the photographer sat the athlete in a director's chair with a basketball propped up on apple boxes supported by gaffer tape. The boxes were removed in postproduction, creating the illusion that Jordan was effortlessly holding the ball in this unlikely position.
- The poster includes a quote from the English Romantic poet and artist William Blake—"No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings." While some have interpreted this as an ode to individualism, others see it as acknowledging the necessity of teammates.
- The poster did not originally incorporate the Blake quote, and was conceived with the photo bleeding out of each side of the frame. But once a white border had been added to enhance the impact of the image, creative director Mike Tiedy suggested including a quote to provide proportional balance. He picked Blake's line from several offered by a Nike copywriter.
- This poster established the image of an almost otherworldly Jordan soaring over his competition. In 2016, Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) star Maya Moore—the first woman to sign with Air Jordan—paid tribute to the poster by recreating the athlete's pose on a billboard in Minneapolis, where she played for the Minnesota Lynx.

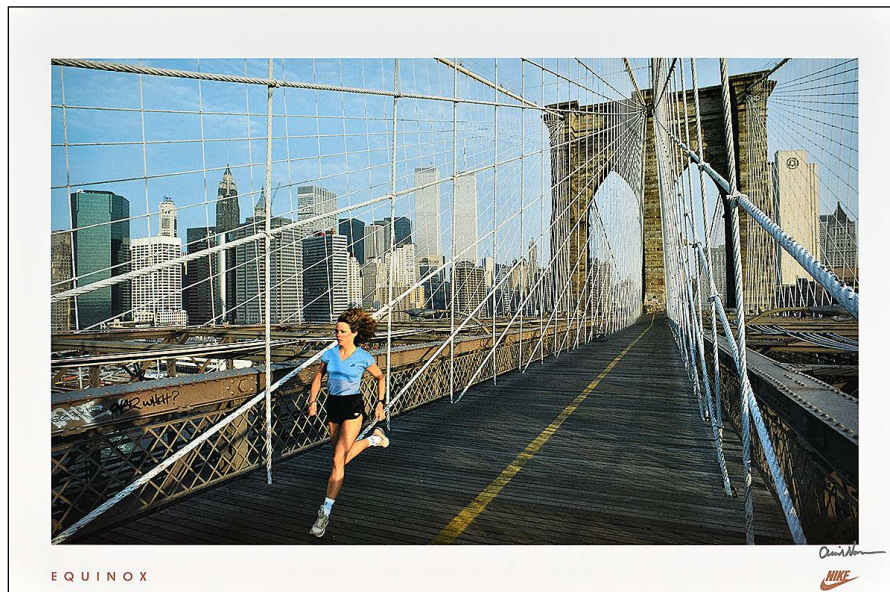


Man Vs Machine, 1978

Photographer: Bob Peterson (1941–2022)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This striking image captures an unidentified, solitary female runner in bright clothing that stands out in the gray uniformity of the commuter traffic on the Evergreen Point Floating Bridge in Washington state. It reflects Nike's continuing promotion of rugged individualism and exceptionalism.
- A magazine advertisement featuring the same image was released at the same time as the poster but it was accompanied by lengthy motivational copy decrying man's reliance on machines and acknowledging the growing popularity of running. This campaign, intended to promote Nike specifically to runners, included the observation that "runners are bringing this country back to life again...To some of us, running is a way of life. Nobody understands that better than Nike...when we design shoes, we don't go to computers, we go to runners."
- Shot by frequent collaborator Bob Peterson, the simplicity and scale of this photograph echoes that of *There Is No Finish Line*, another of his posters in this exhibition. When asked if he had ever anticipated the wider cultural impact of these images, Peterson replied, "No, I was just trying to get the shot."
- Nike benefited enormously from the increasing popularity of running as a leisure sport throughout the 1970s, with profits topping \$100 million for the first time the year after this poster was released. That number, however, seems almost quaint when compared to the money generated since then by its basketball shoes.

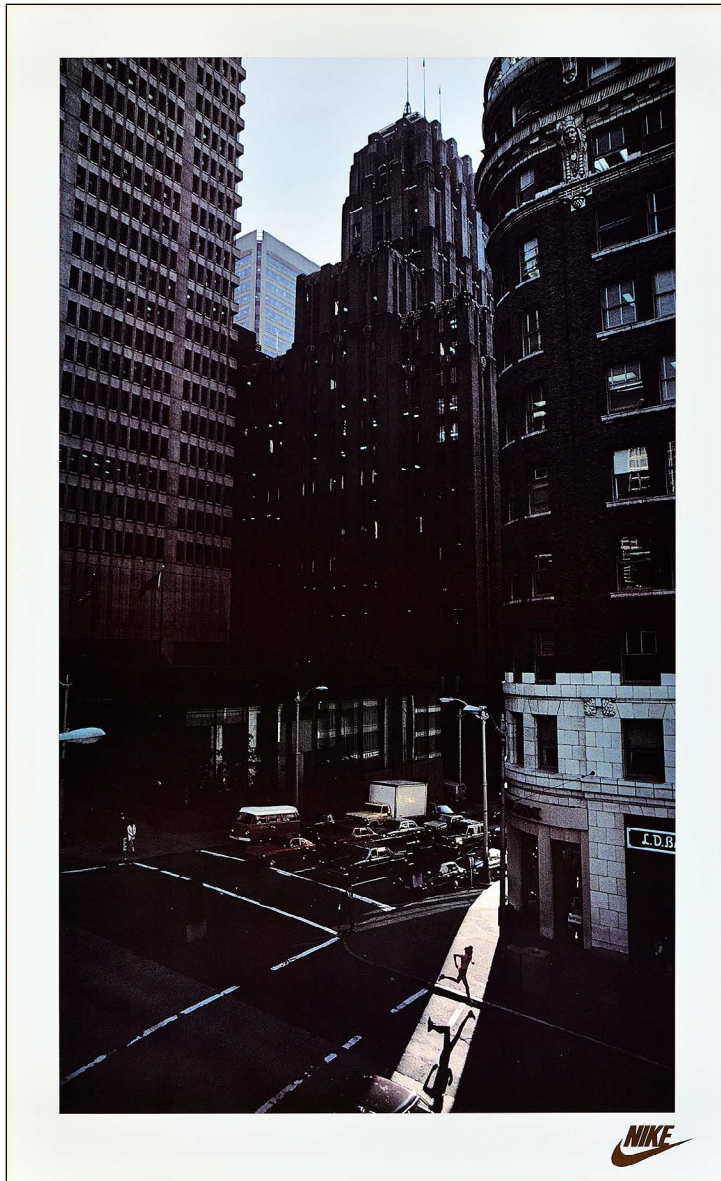


Equinox, 1984

Photographer: Ancil Nance (b. 1941)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This poster presents a beautiful view of the New York City skyline as it was before September 11, 2001, with the World Trade Center's iconic Twin Towers serving as a glorious backdrop. In the foreground, a lone female runner crosses the Brooklyn Bridge.
- Photographer Ancil Nance is an avid runner himself and especially adept at capturing athletes in motion. Nike hired him for a variety of projects in the late 1970s after seeing his work in the *Oregon Times*. According to Nance, the brand "seemed to understand my style of shooting more than any other art directors I worked with." He signed both this and the *Moonrunner* poster in the lower-right margin.
- When he photographs runners, Nance typically starts with a stunning location; the runner serves merely as "frosting on the cake" within the composition. This particular image was actually an outtake from the shoot.

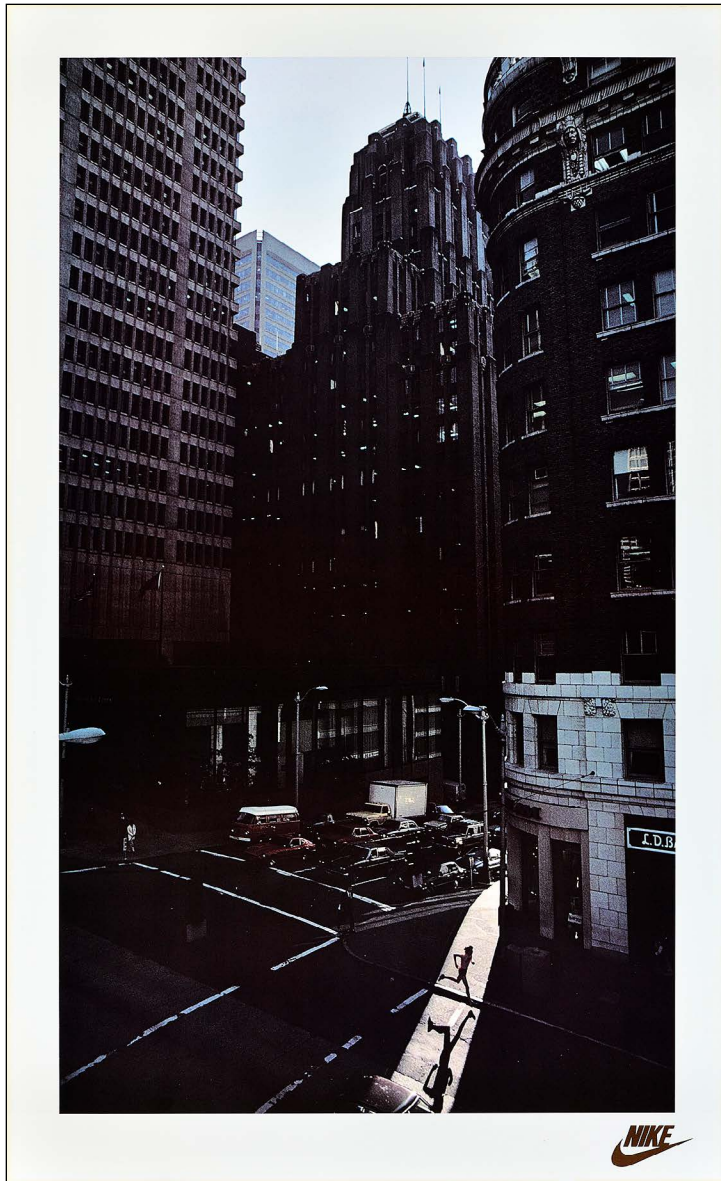


Urban Runner, 1983

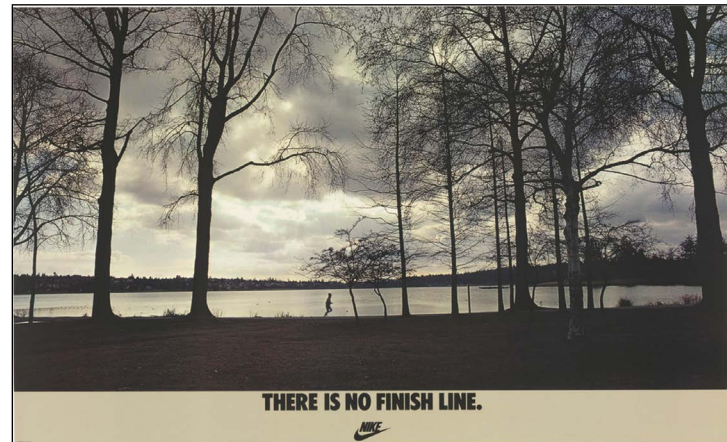
Photographer: John Terence Turner (1940–2010)

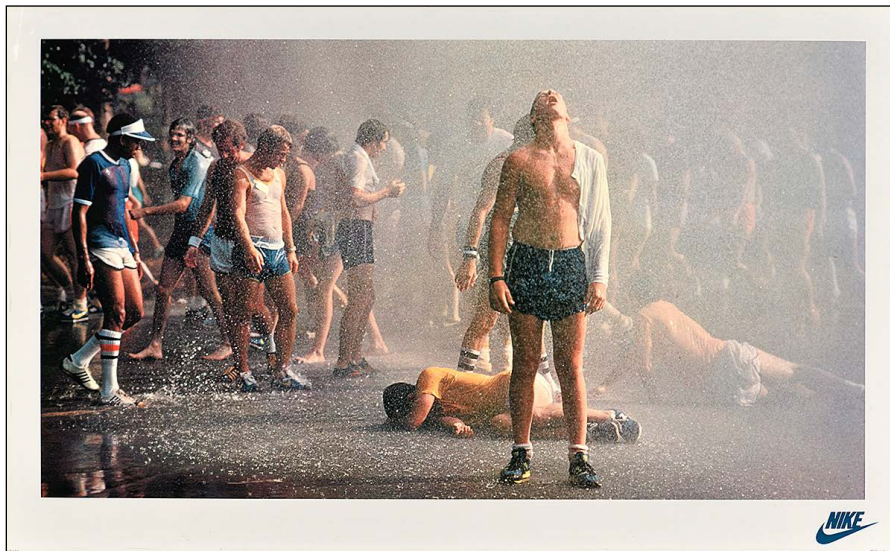
Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Shot in downtown Seattle, the image literally highlights the individual, anonymous athlete in an overwhelming, bleak cityscape. Photographer John Terence Turner instructed the model not to bother showing off while in the shade but to focus instead on taking full strides in the sunlight. Traffic was held up as he took multiple quick shots, fully aware that this particular shaft of light would shortly disappear.
- The Nike Swoosh, which is meant to evoke motion and power and is the brand's most recognizable motif, was created by graphic designer Carolyn Davidson. She was originally paid only \$35 for her work but was properly compensated by company CEO Phil Knight decades later when he gave her highly valuable Nike shares.



- Nike also released this poster the following year with the title *Most Heroes Are Anonymous*—an interesting choice at a time when the brand was embracing celebrities as the stars of its advertising campaigns. Early work like this emphasized Nike’s commitment to elevating the Everyman to celebrity status.
- Turner had been an accomplished sports photographer since the 1970s. In addition to this photograph, he was also responsible for one of the earliest images in Nike’s *There Is No Finish Line* poster series, first issued in 1977.



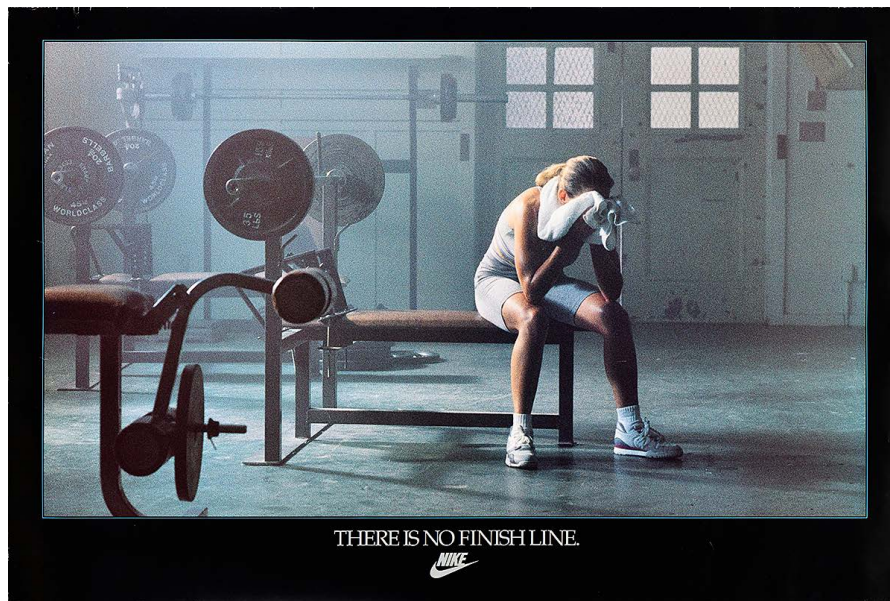


Battle of Atlanta, 1979

Photographer: Chuck Rogers (b. 1931)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- The title of this poster refers to an important 1864 battle of the American Civil War that ultimately resulted in the fall of Atlanta. It is meant to convey the exhausting yet exhilarating aftermath of what has become an annual Fourth of July tradition in the city: the Peachtree Road Race. Typically held in extremely humid weather, this 10-kilometer race gained widespread attention around the same time that long-distance jogging was becoming increasingly popular.
- The photograph first appeared on the cover of an issue of *The Runner* magazine. Nike licensed it and produced an initial run of twenty-five thousand posters. Additional print runs were released as well as full-size billboards. The photographer has since noted that this was the most profitable photograph of his career.
- Although Chuck Rogers took 36 photographs of the race, in the era of physical film this was the only clear image that came back from the developer. Rumor has it that he quibbled with Peter Moore about being credited on the poster, so in one reprinting the small copyright name was changed to "Chuck U Rogers" as a deliberate snub.
- According to urban legend, one of the exhausted men seen here on the ground later died but this has never been proven. The figure in the foreground—16-year-old Tim Wilkinson—did collapse due to the extreme heat shortly after this picture was taken; however, he survived.



There Is No Finish Line/Joanne Ernst, 1985

Photographer: Bob Peterson (1941–2022)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- Prior to the advent of the famous “Just Do It” slogan in 1988, Nike used the phrase “There Is No Finish Line” on many of its advertisements. Developed in 1977 by the advertising firm of John Brown & Partners, the message was particularly resonant with runners. It would make a comeback in later years.
- Nike cofounders Phil Knight and Bill Bowerman were both avid runners, and Bowerman had actually been Knight’s coach at the University of Oregon. Bowerman played a pivotal role in the popularization of jogging in the United States, cowriting a widely circulated pamphlet about the sport in 1966 and a best-selling book, *Jogging*, the following year.
- The poster shows the gold-medal-winning triathlete Joanne Ernst. A 1986 issue of *The Runner* magazine rhetorically asked on its cover if she was “the fittest woman in America?” Triathlons require tremendous skill at swimming, running, and biking, and Ernst perfected all three, remaining competitive even after she survived being hit by a car in 1987.
- While Ernst was one of the first female athletes to represent the “Just Do It” slogan in an advertising campaign, she was also given a woefully misogynistic tagline: “and it wouldn’t hurt to stop eating like a pig either.” The resulting backlash led Nike to hire more women for its marketing team, and it subsequently designed more positive advertisements aimed at female consumers.

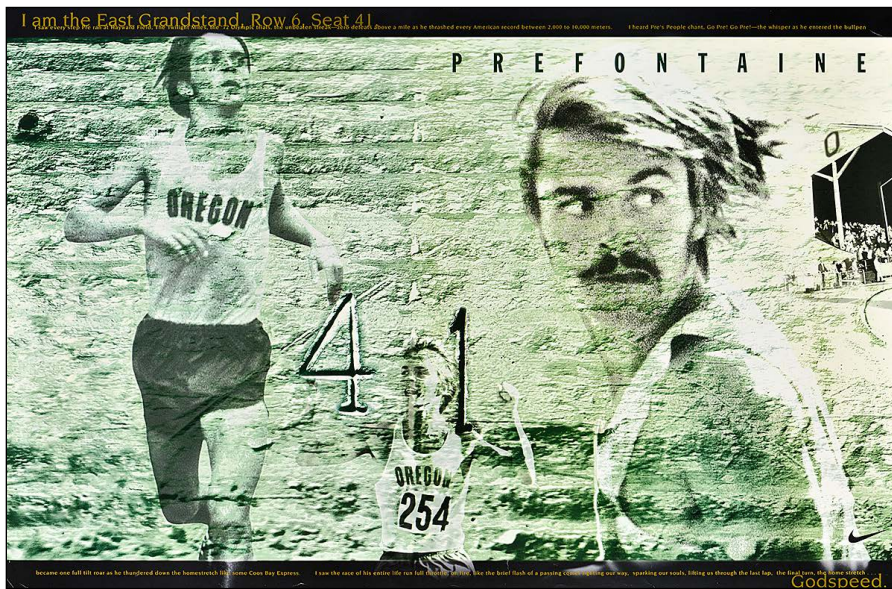


There Are Clubs You Can't Belong To..., 1991

Photographer: Harry De Zitter (b. 1949)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This poster depicts a female runner in an open field near a lone church in another example of the brand's promotion of personal independence. The accompanying quote suggests that while society may put up barriers the "roads are always open."
- The image originally ran as a magazine advertisement before it appeared in poster form. According to former Nike creative director Mike Tiedy, Nike only did this occasionally and with little advance planning.
- Created by longtime Nike partner Wieden+Kennedy, the poster was a Silver Pencil winner at The One Show, the prestigious annual award competition for excellence in advertising. .
- It presumably promotes the 1991 launch of the Nike Air Huarache, a classic running shoe with a minimal silhouette that did not feature the brand's famous Swoosh. While reviews were initially mixed, the model's comfort ultimately made it a favorite among marathon runners.



Steve Prefontaine, 1997

Photographer Unknown

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This poster is a posthumous tribute to long-distance running legend Steve Prefontaine (popularly known as “Pre”), who, in 1974, became the first major star athlete to sign an endorsement deal with Nike. It was released 22 years after his early death in 1975, around the same time as two biopics on the athlete, one of which starred Jared Leto.
- Prefontaine was a protégé of former University of Oregon running coach and Nike cofounder, Bill Bowerman. Prefontaine’s decision to promote Nike running shoes when the company (originally known as Blue Ribbon Sports) was still in its infancy proved to be incredibly fortuitous for the brand. His success as a runner in the early 1970s (he had competed in the 1972 Olympic Games) enhanced Nike’s status, and he helped turn his signature green-and-yellow Nike “waffle” shoes into a collectors’ item.
- The poster shows Prefontaine competing at the legendary Hayward Field track and field stadium in Eugene, Oregon— which played a pivotal role in Nike’s founding. Various images of the runner over the years are surrounded by imagined quotes from an anthropomorphized seat (#41) at the venue describing his great performances and likening him to a “passing comet.” An annual track and field meet held at Hayward has since been named “The Prefontaine Classic” and is one of the most renowned events of its kind in the world.
- Prefontaine never lived to see Nike become a global sports phenomenon. Tragically, he died in a car accident in 1975 at the age of 24. At the time, he was preparing for the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal.



Moonrunner, 1984

Photographer: Ancil Nance (b. 1941)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This evocative image shows a lone figure running along Cannon Beach in Oregon at dusk. Like so many of Nike's running posters, it conveys a strong sense of rugged individualism.
- Photographer Ancil Nance did not edit this image in postproduction but instead timed the shoot to a day on the lunar calendar when the full moon would appear perfectly next to the beach's Pinnacle Rocks.
- Rather than hire a model, he stood in as the runner in the image himself, setting his infrared camera on a timer to capture the shot.
- While this picture was not commissioned by Nike, Nance shot it in the hope of selling it to the company for use in a poster. When creative director Peter Moore first saw the photograph, he had to be reassured that it was not faked or retouched in any way.



Rebel with a Cause/John McEnroe, 1986

Photographer: Bill Sumner (1943–2022)

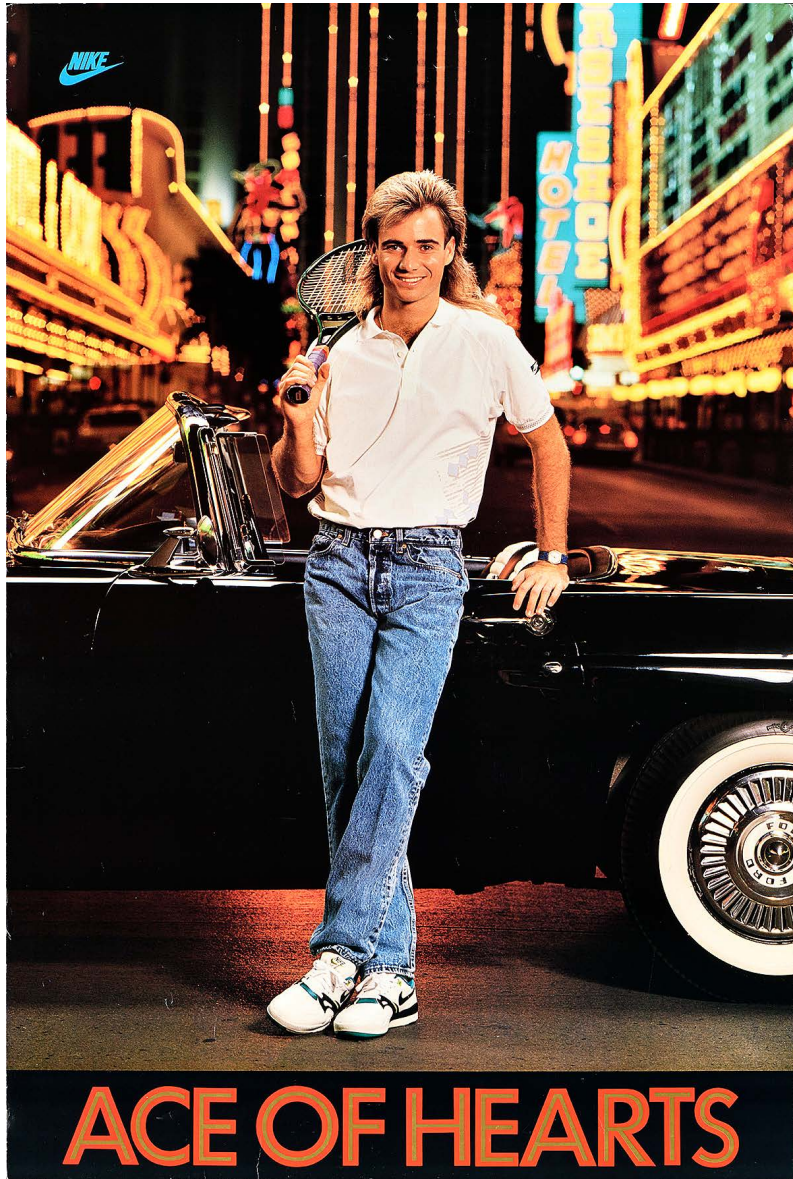
Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- This black-and-white poster featuring the bad boy of tennis, John McEnroe, is a homage to one of photojournalist Dennis Stock’s moody 1955 photographs of James Dean (star of *Rebel Without A Cause*) for *LIFE* magazine. In both images, the “rebels” amble through Times Square in the rain. The photograph was repurposed for McEnroe’s 2002 autobiography *You Cannot Be Serious* (cowritten with James Kaplan).
- After the concept had been accepted, photographer Bill Sumner had to wait for a rainy day in New York City to hold the shoot. The picture was then enhanced by some very early computer-generated effects. The finished typeface looked a little too polished, so creative director Ron Dumas used Wite-Out correction fluid to rough up the edges.



- When McEnroe first signed with Nike back in 1978, the brash young tennis star told CEO Phil Knight that he thought the “Just Do It” slogan was “terrible.” Sports fans also questioned this professional relationship, many finding McEnroe’s behavior distasteful if not outright offensive.
- Known for his explosive temper, McEnroe certainly earned the “rebel” designation in an otherwise largely civilized sport. He also became the first and only player to date to be simultaneously ranked number one in both singles and doubles, and his historic 1984 season led to the highest percentage of wins ever in singles games.





Ace of Hearts/Andre Agassi, 1990

Photographer: Gary Nolton (b. 1958)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- In addition to being a celebrated tennis player, Andre Agassi was seen as a charming heartthrob by his female fans—thus the “Ace of Hearts” tagline on this poster. His many high-profile relationships, including romances with Barbra Streisand and Brooke Shields, were frequently commented on in the press.
- The poster also highlights the original part of the Strip, referencing Agassi’s Las Vegas origins. Rather than recreating it in a studio, however, the producer obtained a permit and enlisted the help of local police to close off two blocks of Fremont Street to get the shot in the actual location.
- While Agassi had just won nearly \$500,000 in the Volvo Open Tournament, photographer Gary Nolton recalled that the sports star openly wondered if he would ever be able to afford a car like the vintage T-Bird the crew had rented for the photoshoot.
- Agassi enjoyed a 17-year association with Nike but in 2005 he signed with Adidas for eight years because of its commitment to his charitable foundation, one that provides educational opportunities for underserved youth. He returned to Nike in 2013.

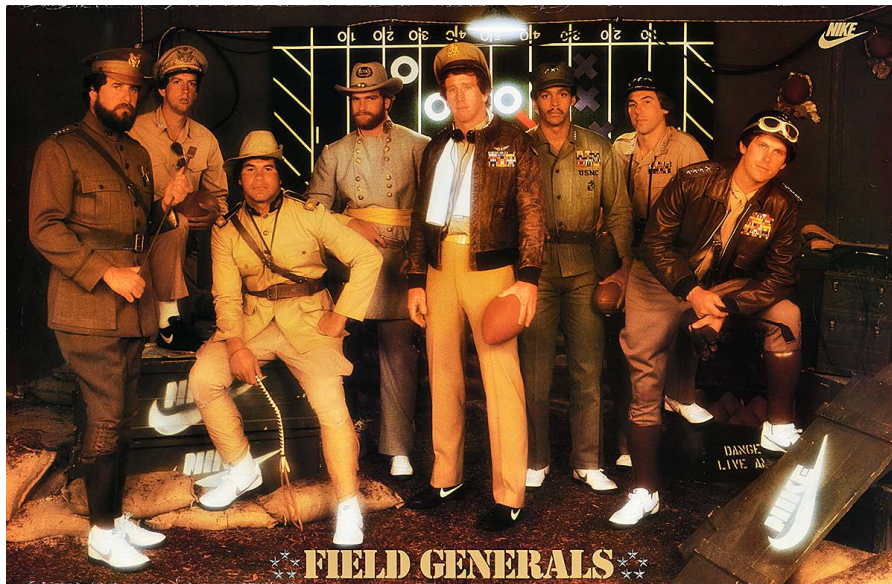


Long May She Reign/Billie Jean King, c. 1980

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- Billie Jean King is one of the most successful female tennis players of all time, winning every major tournament in her career, including six Wimbledon singles championships. She was also a trailblazer off the court, where she stoked controversy by campaigning for pay equity in tennis. In 1973, partly because of her efforts, the U.S. Open became the first major tournament to offer equal prize money to men and women.
- In this poster, two children present King with apples, indicating that she is a teacher for future generations. The tagline and her gracious pose as she bends to receive the gifts also play on her regal surname and her sovereignty over the game. This was demonstrated not least in her legendary 1973 “Battle of the Sexes” match against an aging and openly misogynistic Bobby Riggs in which she defeated him in three sets. This victory represented a pivotal moment both for women’s sports in general and for the women’s movement of that era.
- King also made history in the early 1970s during her association with Adidas when she wore blue-suede sneakers on the court, becoming the first player to wear non-white tennis shoes in a professional match. This was a watershed moment for sneaker companies, with many brands, including Nike, rushing to produce colorful shoes.
- Despite the feel-good message of this poster, it was produced just before King and Nike had a bitter falling-out after she publicly came out as a lesbian. In her 2021 memoir *All In*, she noted that while the company promised to support her, it simultaneously slashed her endorsement deal.

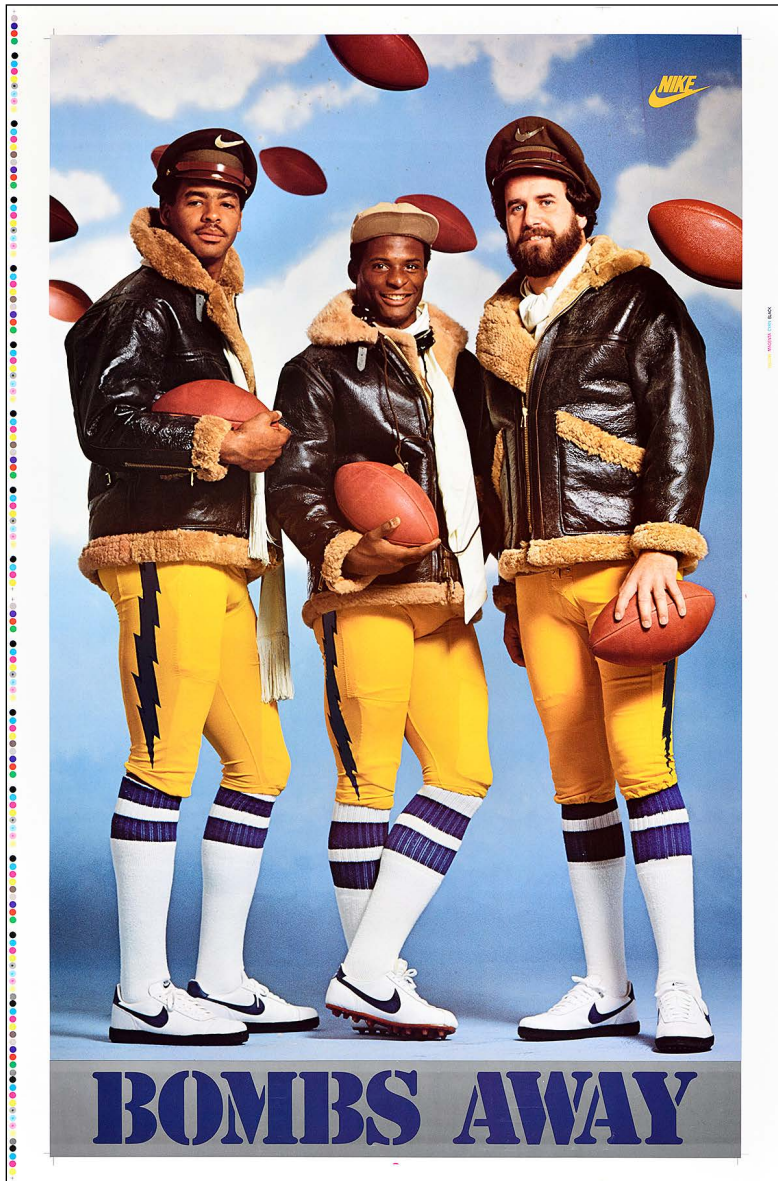


Field Generals, 1982

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- This elaborate poster was created to promote the release of the Field General, a turf shoe designed for football, and shows eight popular 1980s quarterbacks (from left): Dan Fouts of the San Diego Chargers, Marc Wilson and Jim Plunkett of the Los Angeles Raiders, Eric Hipple of the Detroit Lions, Archie Manning of the New Orleans Saints, Vince Evans of the Chicago Bears, Jim Zorn of the Seattle Seahawks, and Bert Jones of the Los Angeles Rams.
- Each player wears a military uniform from a different historical conflict, including the Civil War and both World Wars, as well as later ones.
- It is notable that Vince Evans (pictured here third from the right) was the only Black starting quarterback in the NFL at the time. For many years, the racist notion persisted that Black players could not excel in that position, although that viewpoint has dramatically shifted over time.

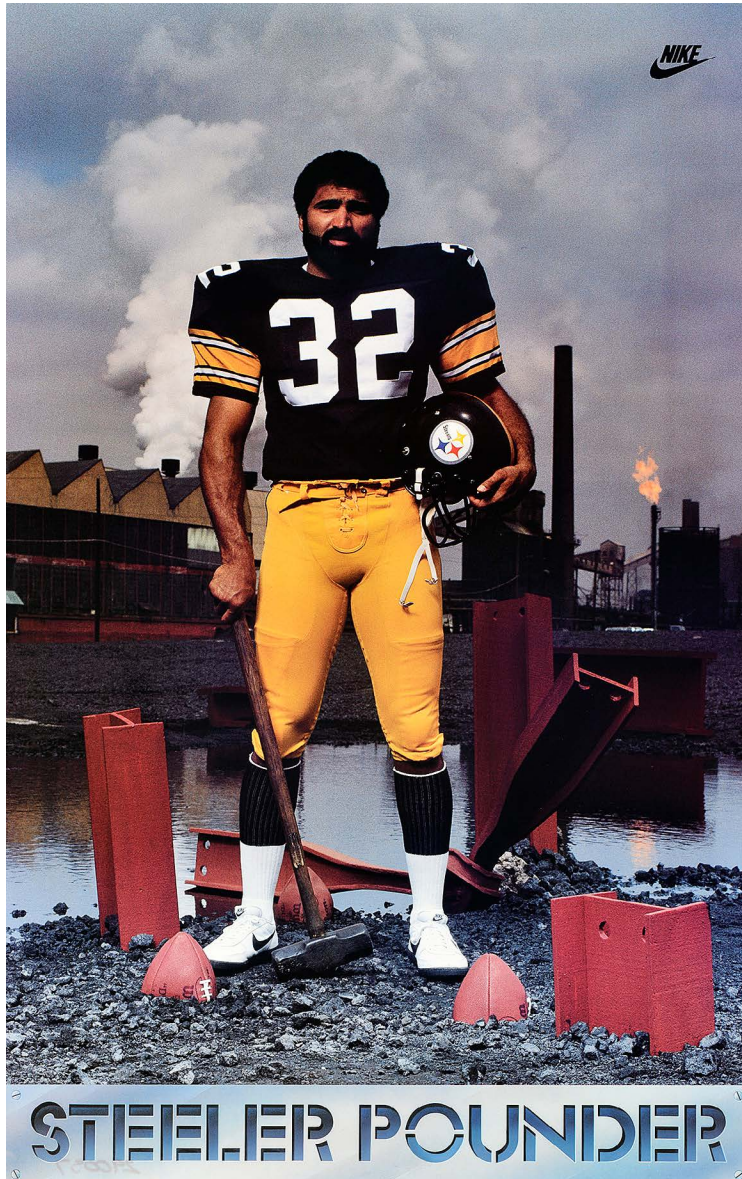


**Bombs Away/Dan Fouts, Kellen Winslow,
& John Jefferson, 1979**

Photographer Unknown

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This poster features the linchpins of one of the most explosive offenses in National Football League (NFL) history (from right): the San Diego Chargers' quarterback Dan Fouts, wide receiver John Jefferson, and tight end Kellen Winslow.
- Despite leading the league in several offensive categories during a historic four-year stretch between 1979 and 1982, the Chargers never made it to a Super Bowl during that time.
- The Air Force theme of this poster refers to the high-flying, pass-heavy style of offense conceived by coach Don Coryell that came to be known as "Air Coryell." This kind of play is widely credited with creating the modern passing game in football that includes spread-out offenses with wide receivers in motion at all times.
- Nike recalled this poster because it had failed to obtain permission from the San Diego Chargers to show the team's lightning-bolt logo on the legs of the players' uniforms. This version is a printer's proof, complete with color bar on the left edge, that was never circulated.

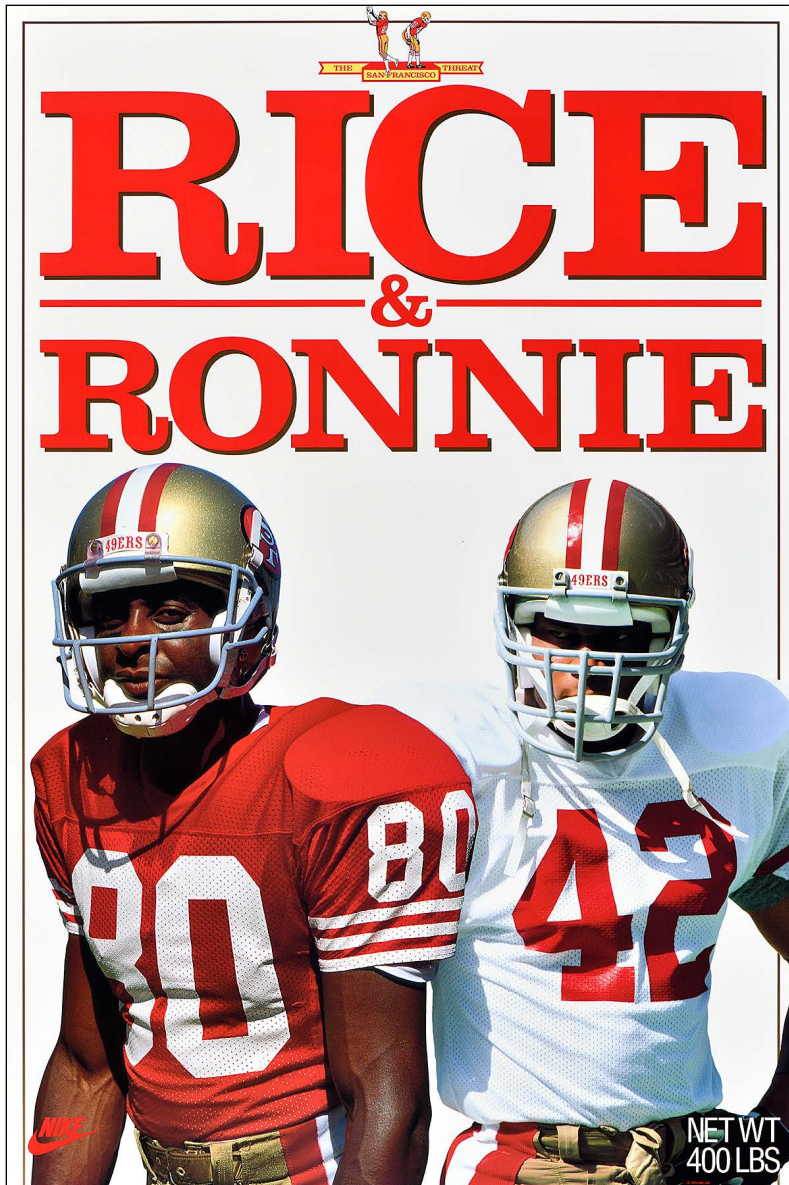


Steeler Pounder/Franco Harris, 1983

Photographer: Bill Sumner (1943–2022)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Pittsburgh Steeler star Franco Harris is shown here holding a sledgehammer and surrounded by twisted and broken steel beams. The beams were actually made of Styrofoam, while the footballs, which appear to be partially buried, had simply been cut in half and placed on the ground.
- Photographer Bill Sumner described the making of this poster as a "guerilla shoot." He and his crew scouted several industrial sites before settling on the Edgar Thomson Steel Works in Braddock, Pennsylvania. The smoke and flames in the background were neither staged nor retouched.
- While Harris had a storied career as a physically dominant running back for the Pittsburgh Steelers (hence "the Steeler Pounder" moniker), he is best remembered for a legendary play in a 1972 playoff game against the Oakland Raiders that was later described as "The Immaculate Reception." Harris had scooped up a ball that appeared to have been deflected off the player on the opposing team, and then scored a game-winning touchdown. To this day, NFL fans disagree about whether or not the ball hit the ground before Harris grabbed it, reinforcing the bitter rivalry between the two teams. A statue of Harris recreating this play is on view at Pittsburgh International Airport.
- Harris, who was biracial, remains a local hero not just because of his athletic skills but also as a result of his political activism. In 1997, for example, he staged a one-man sit-in protest against the Ku Klux Klan at the City-County Building in Pittsburgh.

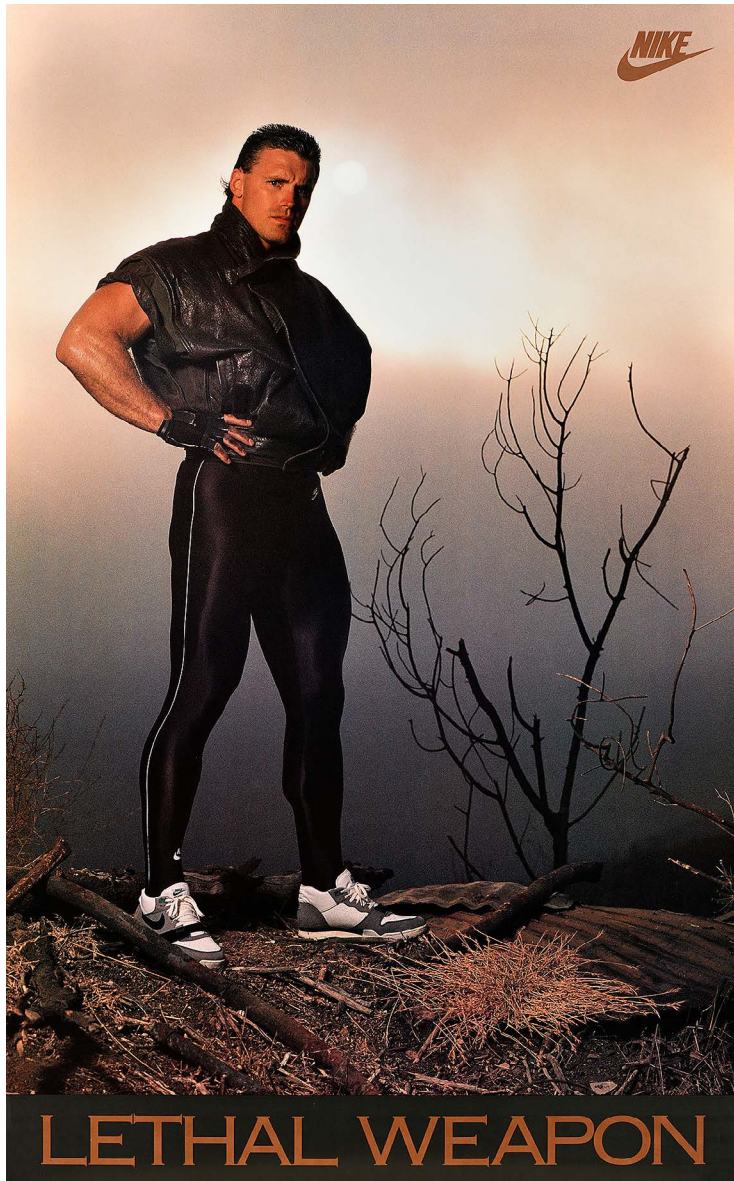


**The San Francisco Threat/Rice
& Ronnie/Jerry Rice & Ronnie Lott, 1990**

Photographer Unknown

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Wide receiver Jerry Rice and safety Ronnie Lott, both Hall of Famers, were critical players in the great, dynastic San Francisco 49ers teams of the 1980s and early '90s. Both were uniquely dominant in their positions and are widely considered to be among the greatest football players in history.
- The wording of this poster is a tongue-in-cheek riff on the popular Rice-A-Roni advertisements that described the product as "The San Francisco Treat"—here "The San Francisco Threat." The typeface is also similar to the one on the box, while "net wt. 400 lbs" at lower right is a humorous reference to the muscular power of the two men.
- These images were also used on other memorabilia, especially collectible cards. A three-dimensional version of this design resembling an actual food box was also produced at the same time; however, Rice-A-Roni sued Nike and the product was recalled.
- Before this image was released, Rice and Lott each had their own Nike posters with similarly comic taglines. Less elaborate than the examples on display in this exhibition, these individual images point to the gradual evolution (and decline) of Nike's poster designs.



Lethal Weapon/Howie Long, 1987

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Before becoming an affable pitchman for brands like Radio Shack and a key figure in Fox Sports' football coverage, Howie Long was one of the most feared defensive ends in the NFL.
- Long spent his entire 12-year career with the Raiders, doing stints in both Oakland and Los Angeles. In 2020, the team returned to Oakland before making Las Vegas its new "permanent" home.
- This poster promotes the debut of the Nike Air Trainer 1, the brand's first athletic cross-training shoe. Designer Tinker Hatfield was inspired to develop it after noticing that people used separate pairs of sneakers for running and weightlifting at the gym.
- The composition references a dramatic moment in the hit 1987 action film *Lethal Weapon* in which the main characters are involved in a tense shoot-out in the desert. Ironically, Long had planned to make his big-screen debut in a cameo in that very movie but had been forced to bow out due to scheduling conflicts. Since then, he has appeared in numerous television shows and movies, most notably the 1996 film *Broken Arrow*.

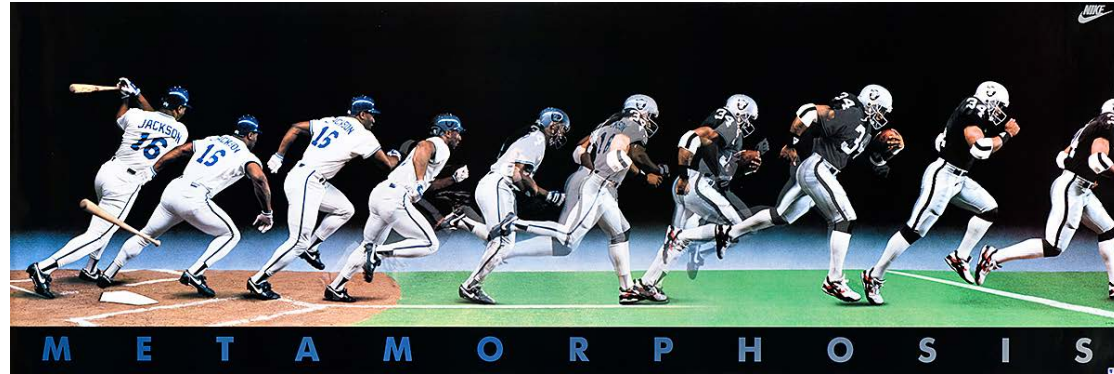


Bo Knows Diddley/Bo Jackson, 1990

Photographer: Bill Sumner (1943–2022)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- This photograph featuring Bo Jackson and legendary rhythm and blues performer Bo Diddley was shot during the filming of a wildly popular commercial in which Jackson attempted to play the guitar. His performance was so remarkably bad that the musician quipped, “Bo, you don’t know Diddley!”
- Several other sports stars affiliated with Nike, including John McEnroe and Wayne Gretzky, also made cameos in the “Bo Knows” advertisements, each asserting (and sometimes doubting) that Jackson “knows” how to dominate in their particular sport—a testament to the company’s influence and its ability to leverage its star talent.
- The original concept for the shoot was vague at best; both Jackson and Diddley were encouraged to ad lib most of their routine in the hope that they would reveal something genuine and interesting.
- After Diddley’s contract with Nike ended in 1991, the relationship between him and the brand soured. In 2000, he sued Nike for continuing to use his name and likeness on its memorabilia. The two parties reached a settlement the same year.

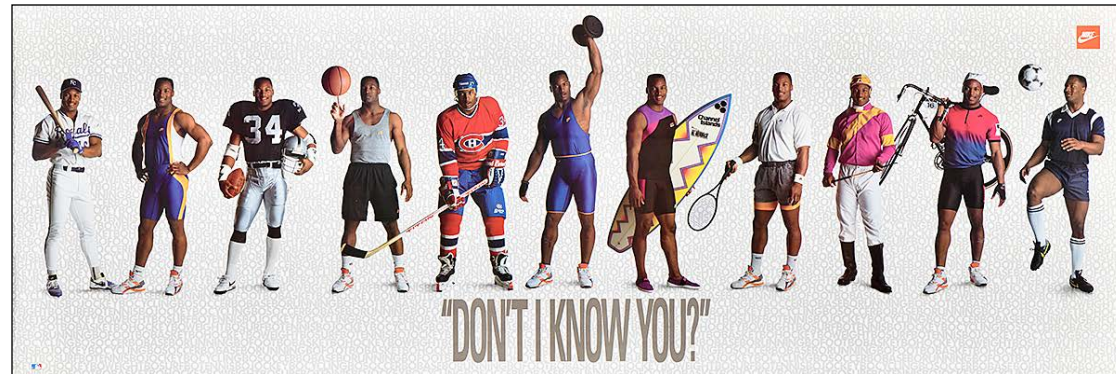


Metamorphosis/Bo Jackson, 1991

Photographer: Gary Nolton (b. 1958)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This poster highlights Bo Jackson's apparently seamless transition between two sports: baseball and football; he was a star player for the Kansas City Royals and the Los Angeles Raiders respectively.
- Photographer Gary Nolton created this image by using a technique he had learned as a film major in college. He set up a still camera on a dolly and had two men propel it parallel to Jackson as the athlete ran at a quarter of his normal speed along a 50-yard stretch of Astroturf. Jackson wore two different uniforms and this process was repeated many times so that Nolton could capture the necessary number of images.
- As a student athlete at the University of Auburn in 1986, Jackson had reportedly run the fastest pre-NFL draft 40-yard dash in recorded history, with a time of 4.13 seconds.
- A hip dislocation during a 1991 NFL playoff game (Jackson claimed to have popped the hip back in place himself while on the field) prematurely ended his football career. He played baseball for a few more years with a replacement hip but never with the same explosive energy. In spite of the brevity of his career, Jackson holds the record for most career rushing yards per attempt for a running back since 1950, with at least five hundred carries.



Don't I Know You?/Bo Jackson, 1989

Photographer Unknown

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Bo Jackson, a reserved man who had stuttered in his youth, was not the most obvious candidate to be a Nike pitchman, but his ability to excel at multiple sports—although nowhere near as many as suggested by this poster—made him irresistible. While he only played football and baseball professionally, he had won two statewide championships as a decathlete in high school.
- Nike's promotional campaigns featuring Jackson were designed to promote its cross-training shoe, the Air Trainer. Nike cofounder and CEO, Phil Knight, considered the campaign the second most important in the brand's history after that for the Air Jordan.
- Nike invested heavily in running "Bo Knows" advertisements during the 1989 MLB All-Star Game in which Jackson hit a home run, stole a base, and took home the MVP award.
- This poster (the second oversize poster produced by Nike after that for Jordan's *Wings*) and the corresponding advertising campaign spoof Jackson's brief ubiquity as a sports icon. They were released amid a fiercely competitive battle between Reebok and Nike; Bill Zeitz, Nike's advertising manager at the time, credited the Jackson commercials with the company's ultimate dominance of this part of the market.



The Supreme Court, 1979

Photographer: Bob Peterson (1941–2022)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- This poster, now part of the Smithsonian’s permanent collection, shows members of Nike’s now-defunct Pro Club. All of them are shown wearing judges’ robes and white Nike Blazers—the first Nike shoe that caught the attention of basketball fans.
- Shown from left are players Phil Chenier, Campy Russell, Dennis “DJ” Johnson, Truck Robinson, Lionel Hollins, Elvin Hayes, John Drew, Artis Gilmore, Phil Smith, Bernard King, Gus Williams, Alvan Adams, Calvin Murphy, George “Iceman” Gervin, Paul Westphal, Maurice Lucas, and Austin Carr, many of whom also feature in other posters in this exhibition.
- Quite a few of these photoshoots were done on a low budget. For this poster, the photographer rented the judges’ robes himself and asked his wife to take out the hems to make them long enough for the players. The cloudy sky is not a professional backdrop but reflects the actual overcast weather in Reno, Nevada on that day.
- This poster was produced in the same year that the Supreme Court heard a case on the legality of affirmative action. At the time this photograph was taken, Thurgood Marshall was the only Black person ever to have served on the U.S. Supreme Court; he had joined it in 1967.



Board Room, 1982

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- This poster features 28 of the best rebounders in the NBA during the early 1980s, all shown dressed in business attire around a conference table and wearing identical Nike Blazer sneakers. The image, playing on the term “board”—slang for “rebound” in basketball—shows off the NBA’s “board room.”
- This was one of several posters included by artist Jeff Koons in his 1985 landmark exhibition *Equilibrium*. The show featured basketballs floating in tanks as well as other NBA-related objects and images. Such memorabilia was meant to reflect how athletics was seen as a means of social mobility, particularly for Black Americans, while also indicating that success in that field is largely unattainable.
- The image of a group of predominantly Black players in business suits can be seen as a symbolic reversal of the power dynamic between athletes and corporate executives. At the time, there had never been a single Black owner of an NBA team.
- All the players pictured here belonged to Nike’s Pro Club. The club was founded in 1975 to expand the brand’s appeal to NBA players; membership meant generous royalty checks based on the annual share of shoe sales in addition to lavish perks. For instance, after this shoot, all the players were treated to a vacation in Majorca, Spain. Ironically, the high cost of securing Michael Jordan’s endorsement in 1984 dealt a fatal blow to the Pro Club, and put an end to such extravagant compensation.



Air Force 1, 1982

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- Printed in its inaugural year, this was the first poster to promote the Air Force 1, one of Nike’s most enduring shoes. It made such an impression that 25 years later, the Japanese toy company Medicom created action figures of the athletes here.
- The players shown wearing flight suits as they stand in front of a helicopter at Long Beach Airport in California are (from left): Michael Cooper of the Los Angeles Lakers, Moses Malone of the Philadelphia 76ers, Calvin Natt of the Portland Trail Blazers, Jamaal Wilkes of the Golden State Warriors, Bobby Jones of the Philadelphia 76ers, and Mychal Thompson of the Portland Trail Blazers. Each man was well-known for his strong defensive skills.
- Designed by Bruce Kilgore, the Air Force 1 (which has since been released in a variety of special editions and styles, and remains the company’s best-selling sneaker) is defined, in part, by its velcro Nike strap. While the shoe was originally designed to prevent high-ankle sprains (it did not), it has nonetheless become a favorite of sneakerheads.

- The Air Force 1 also features in hip-hop culture, and is frequently referenced in hip-hop lyrics, most notably in rapper Nelly's 2002 hit "Air Force Ones." Megastars Eminem and Jay-Z also had their own exclusive versions of the sneaker. And, of course, it also shares its name with the iconic jet modified exclusively for use by American presidents since 1962.





It's a Whole New Ball Game/Seattle Sea Baskets, c. 1980

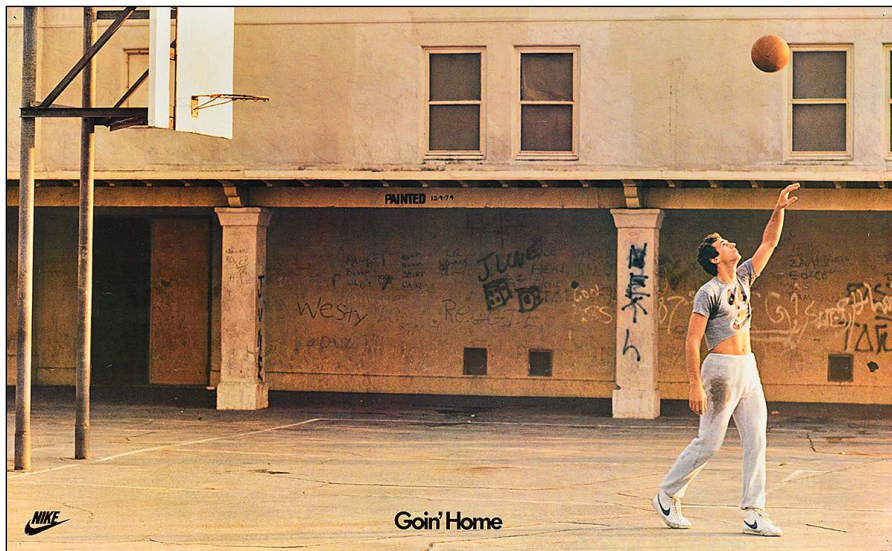
Photographer: Bob Peterson (1941–2022)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Title IX legislation, which prohibited sex discrimination in sports programs, was passed in 1972. Overall, however, sports brands were slow to embrace women's athletics. Women were featured in a handful of Nike's early posters, and by the late 1970s, the company had instituted Nike Women, a female-focused business arm.
- The Seattle Sea Baskets (a precursor to the WNBA's Seattle Storm) was one of the most storied franchises in women's basketball during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The team played in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), one of the only options at the time for women who wanted to play the sport professionally.
- An alternative version of this image was released as a magazine advertisement featuring a less diverse array of female players against an identical backdrop. While the team's colors remained red and white, its name was also different: the Dante's (there is no evidence that this team ever existed).

- Both advertisements were created to promote the Lady Bruin (now known as the Women's Bruin), a basketball shoe designed for female players. It is not clear why two variants of the image exist, each with slightly different copy. The most plausible answer is that Nike was unable to reach an agreement with the Sea Baskets around the licensing of their name for commercial purposes.



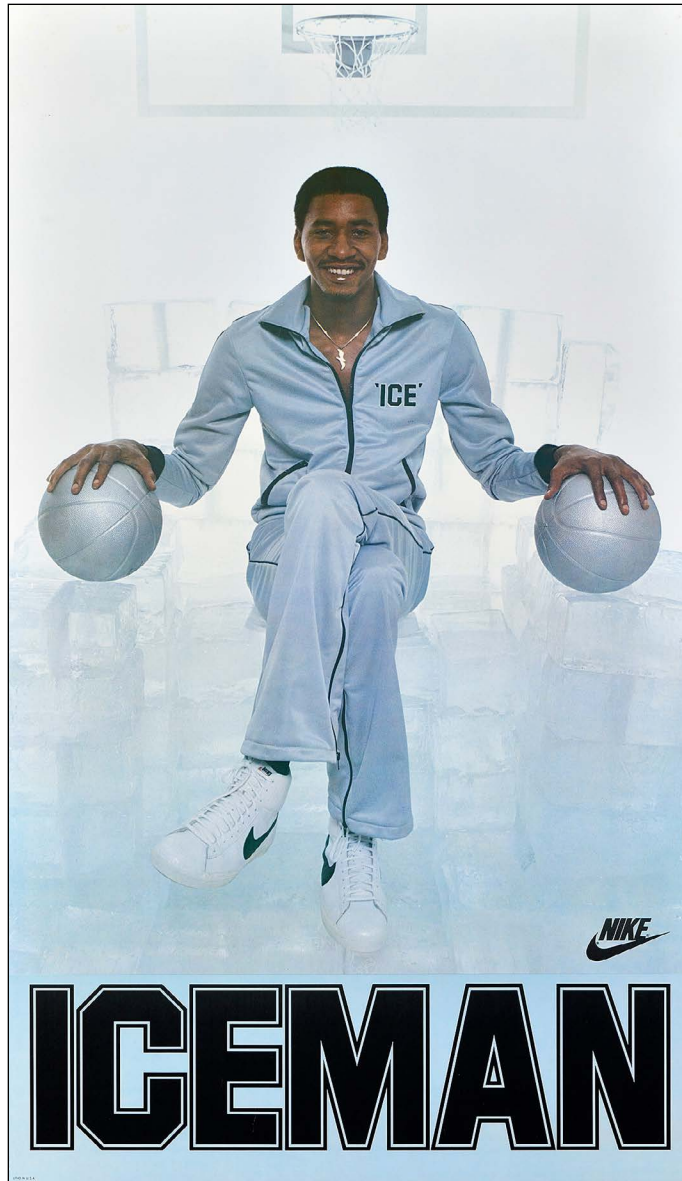


Goin' Home/Paul Westphal, 1981

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Paul Westphal was a five-time All-Star player and the breakout headliner for the Phoenix Suns in the 1970s. He was among the first Nike-sponsored NBA players with a shoe deal. This wistful image shows him playing basketball not far from where he grew up in Torrance, California.
- Westphal played a pivotal role in what has been called “the greatest game ever played”—a triple overtime affair in Game 5 of the 1976 Finals. The Phoenix Suns, however, were ultimately defeated by the Boston Celtics.
- To help with later lighting adjustments, photographer Chuck Kuhn took Polaroids during this shoot at an urban basketball court in Los Angeles. Local children gathered to watch, and Westphal ended up giving away autographed images in what the photographer later described as a “wow moment” for his young fans.
- Westphal was one of the first athletes to receive his own dedicated Nike poster. Its popularity was due in part to his relaxed, casual clothing and the manufactured intimacy of the moment. Fans could relate to the pleasure of a solitary game of basketball even if they were not themselves Hall of Famers.



Iceman/George Gervin, 1978

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- George Gervin’s relationship with Nike began in 1978, when the National Basketball Association (NBA) All-Star and eventual four-time scoring champion became a spokesman for the Nike Blazer, the brand’s first basketball shoe, created in 1973. He later became the first athlete for whom Nike made an exclusive sneaker not available on the market—with his “Iceman” trademark on the back heel instead of the brand’s logo.
- Most basketball stars had originally been linked with Converse and Adidas, making Gervin (who earned the nickname “Iceman” for being cool under pressure on the court) one of Nike’s first big NBA clients. This relationship paved the way for Michael Jordan’s even more influential association with the brand.
- The chair used in this photoshoot was carved out of real ice. Protected by a plastic sheet so that he would not get wet as the ice melted, Gervin once claimed he had been seated on the prop for about five hours.
- Soon after the posters were printed, Nike dispatched Gervin with boxes full of them to hand out to fans around San Antonio, Texas. At one away game at Golden State, ten thousand *Iceman* posters are thought to have been given away.

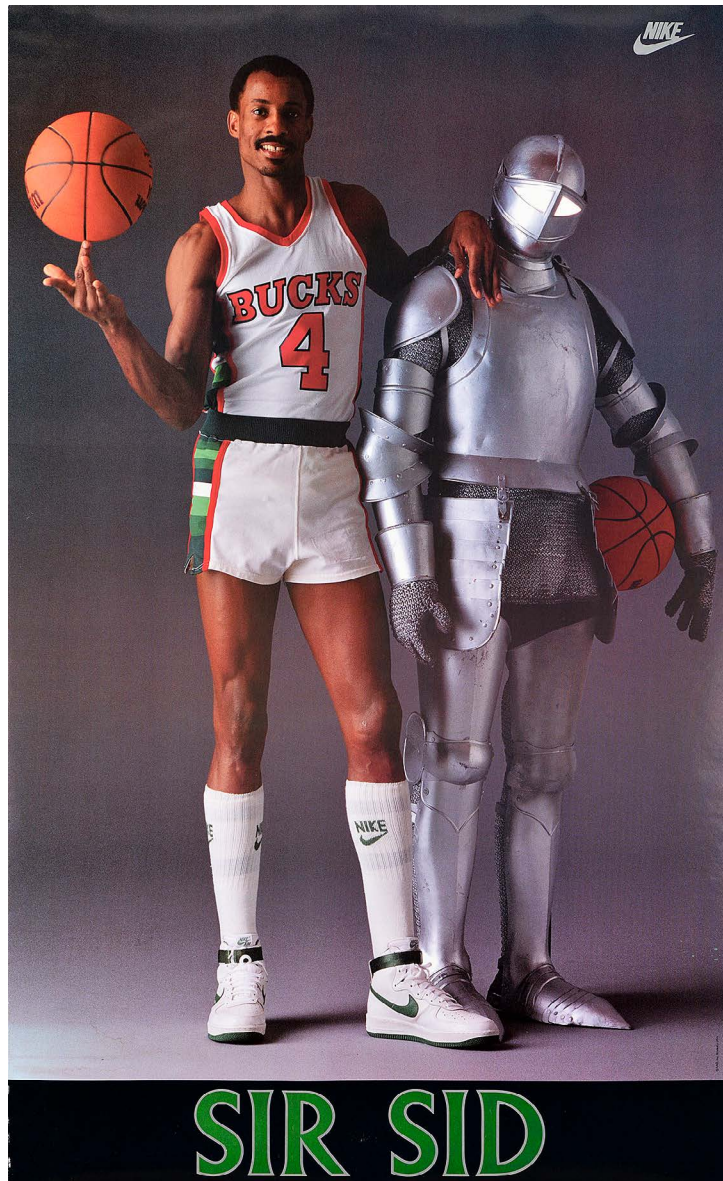


D.J. & Gus, 1979

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- Before the 1980s, when he played a major role in the Boston Celtics dynasty, NBA Hall of Famer Dennis Johnson became a breakout star playing for the now-defunct Seattle SuperSonics alongside fellow guard Gus Williams. Together, they helped lead the SuperSonics to their first and only NBA championship in 1979.
- Johnson was one of the most fearsome defenders of his era, while Williams was nicknamed “The Wizard” due to his offensive prowess.
- Sportswriter and poster aficionado Scoop Jackson has noted that “this is secretly one of the dopest posters Nike ever did. They personified West Coast, non-New York basketball. Outside of the Lakers, there weren’t as many teams kicking up a storm. The casualness of it all—Gus Williams’s gym shoes; they were tied backward. That was hood shit!”
- Johnson and Williams are wearing updated versions of the Nike Blazer popularized by George Gervin. Like Gervin, Williams was given an exclusive shoe, in his case one adorned with “#1,” his jersey number.

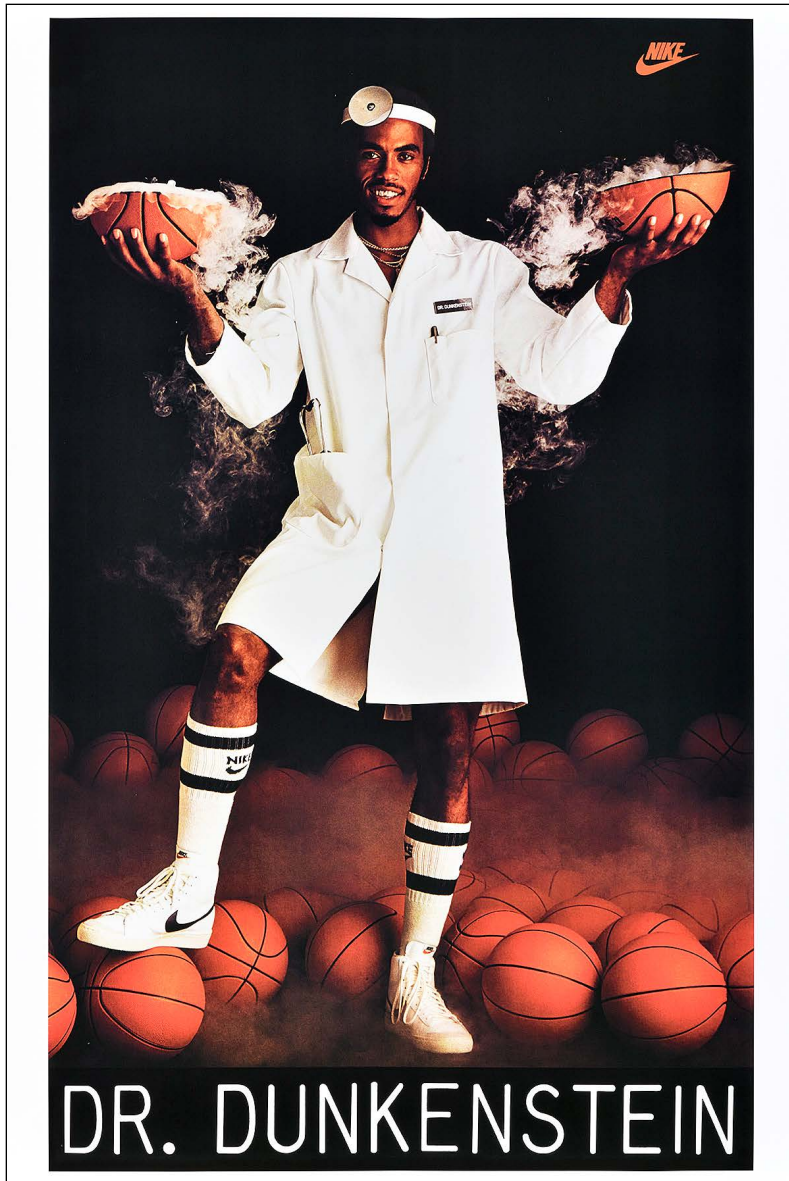


Sir Sid/Sidney Moncrief, 1982

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- Hall of Famer Sidney Moncrief was one of several dozen highly accomplished NBA players whose careers were consistently overshadowed during the 1980s by the star power and success of Larry Bird’s Boston Celtics and Magic Johnson’s Los Angeles Lakers. Moncrief’s Milwaukee Bucks, however, still held the third-best winning percentage of that decade.
- An elite defender, Moncrief won Defensive Player of the Year in both 1983 and 1984. He never had the opportunity, however, to compete for a championship in the NBA Finals.
- Here, Moncrief promotes the original hi-top version of the Air Force 1 shoe in a green version representing the Bucks’ colors. Although the shoe eventually became a bestseller around the country, during its initial run between 1982 and 1984 it was specifically marketed to inner-city stores, presumably because Nike had underestimated its wider appeal.
- Nike was especially effective at fixing preexisting nicknames for star athletes in the minds of fans. “Sir Sid” was just one of several names given to Moncrief during his career—he was also known as “Sid the Squid,” “Super Sid,” and “El Sid.”

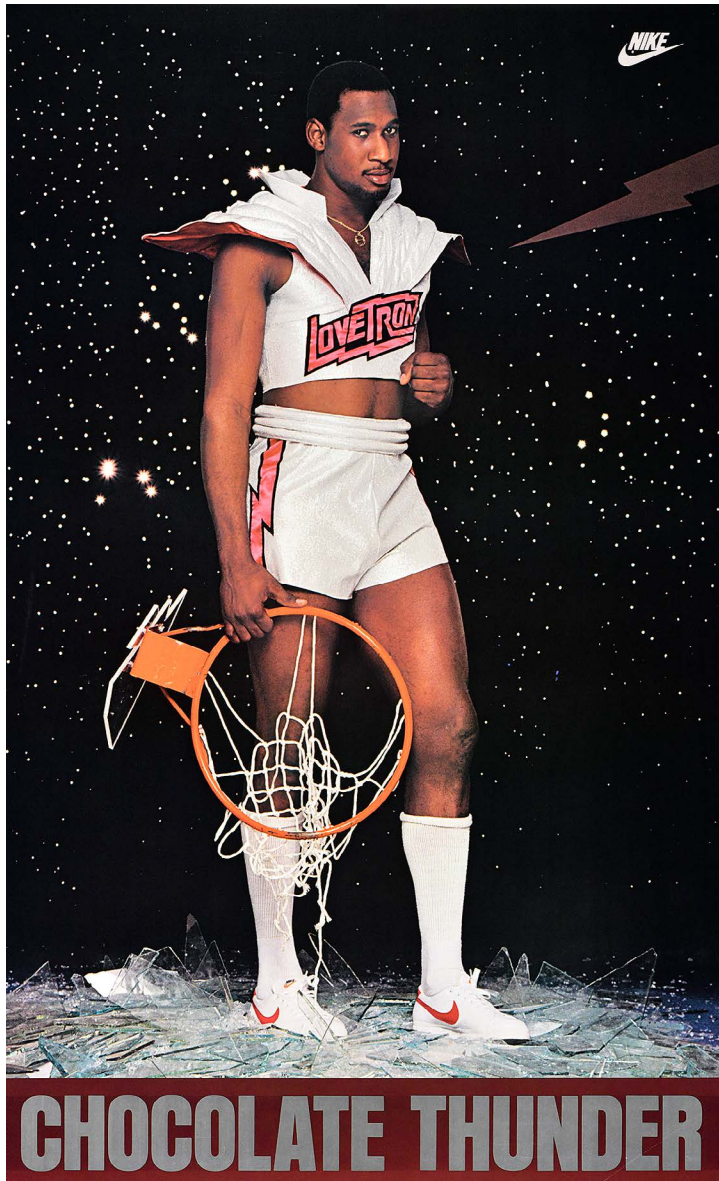


Dr. Dunkenstein/Darrell Griffith, 1980

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Darrell Griffith was a high-energy shooting guard who stayed with the New Orleans Jazz team when it made its improbable move in 1979 to Salt Lake City, becoming the Utah Jazz. He quickly became a fan favorite thanks to his acrobatic dunks. He was also a very talented outside shooter, at one time setting a league record for the most three-pointers in a single season.
- Griffith's nickname pays homage to George Clinton, the legendary frontman of the funk band Parliament. One of Clinton's alter egos was a character called Dr. Funkenstein.
- Inspired by Griffith's colorful nickname, Nike approached him with an idea for a poster in which he would play a mad scientist, holding basketballs instead of beakers. The smoky effect here was created with dry ice. In 1985, Jeff Koons included this image in his *Equilibrium* exhibition.
- Griffith's career was eventually sidetracked by repeated injuries or, as he described it, "Dr. Dunkenstein was paying his toll." He was ultimately replaced by John Stockton and Karl Malone as the marquee stars of the Utah Jazz.

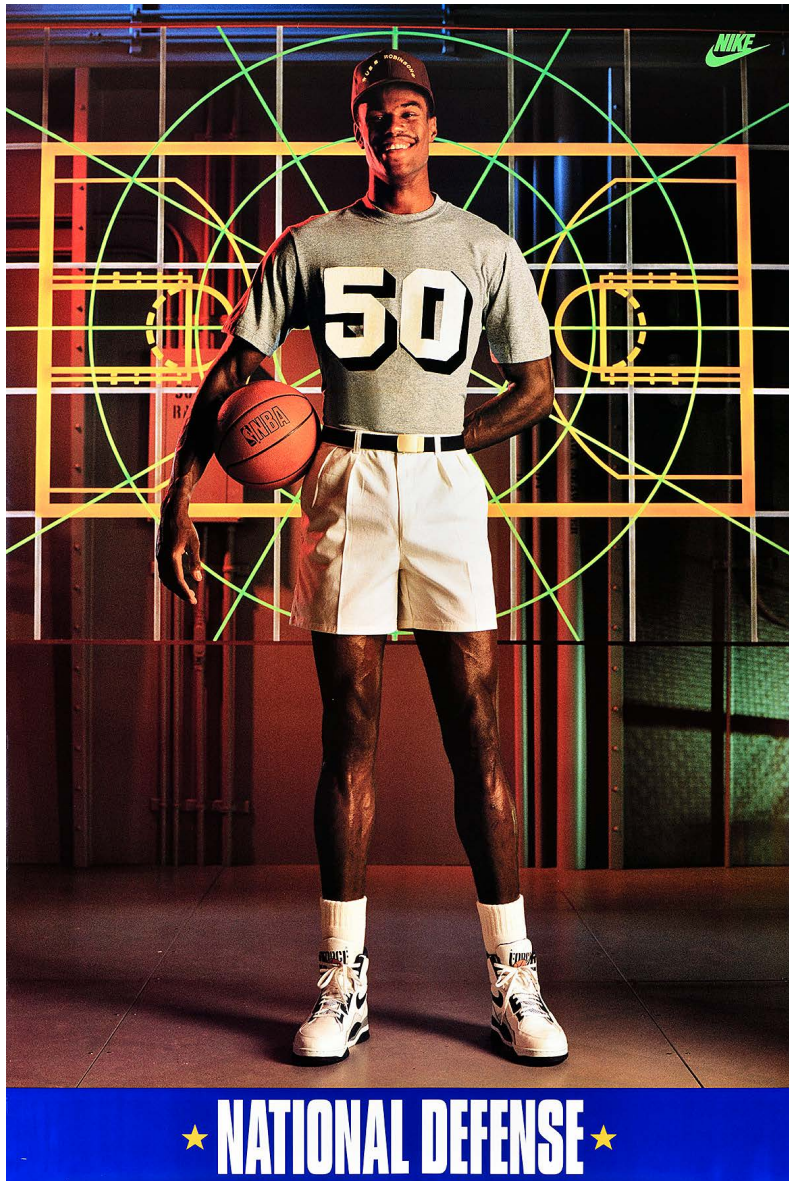


Chocolate Thunder/Darryl Dawkins, 1982

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- One of the most lively NBA players of his era, Darryl Dawkins famously gave himself nicknames, including "Sir Slam" and "Double Stick of Dynamite." He claimed that the moniker "Chocolate Thunder" was the brainchild of legendary singer-songwriter Stevie Wonder.
- Dawkins's outfit in this poster references the fact that he once announced that he came from a planet called Lovetron where he practiced "interplanetary funk." Dawkins also gave nicknames to his various dunks, including "the Go-Rilla," "the Look Out Below," "the In-Your-Face Disgrace," "the Cover Your Head," "the Yo-Mama," "the Spine-Chiller Supreme," and "the Greyhound Special."
- The image alludes to Dawkins's penchant for slamming the ball so hard that on two occasions he actually broke the backboard of the hoop. Following these antics, the NBA threatened suspension and a fine for anyone who smashed the backboard.
- While Dawkins signed with Nike in 1980, he violated the contract two years later by wearing a pair of PONY brand sneakers as a publicity stunt during a playoff game. Nike subsequently sued Dawkins, claiming that it was left with twenty thousand copies of this poster as a result of his breach of contract. It is now a rare collectors' item.



National Defense/David Robinson, 1989

Photographer: Gary Nolton (b. 1958)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- When photographer Gary Nolton saw the initial hand-drawn layout for this poster, he was inspired to design the set himself. The background alludes to the fact that David Robinson had served in the U.S. Navy and is intended to suggest that he is in the command center of a military ship.
- As there was a limited budget for the shoot, the background was made to look like the interior of a ship through the incorporation of a few panels and PVC pipes, all painted battleship gray. Norton also lit the set in various washes of color to achieve this effect.
- The centerpiece of the composition is intended to resemble the control screen of a battleship; the designers produced it by covering a large piece of Plexiglas with colored strips of adhesive vinyl to define both vector lines and the outline of a basketball court.
- Nicknamed "The Admiral," Robinson was the greatest basketball player ever to come out of the U.S. Navy—although here he is promoting Nike's Air Force STS sneakers.

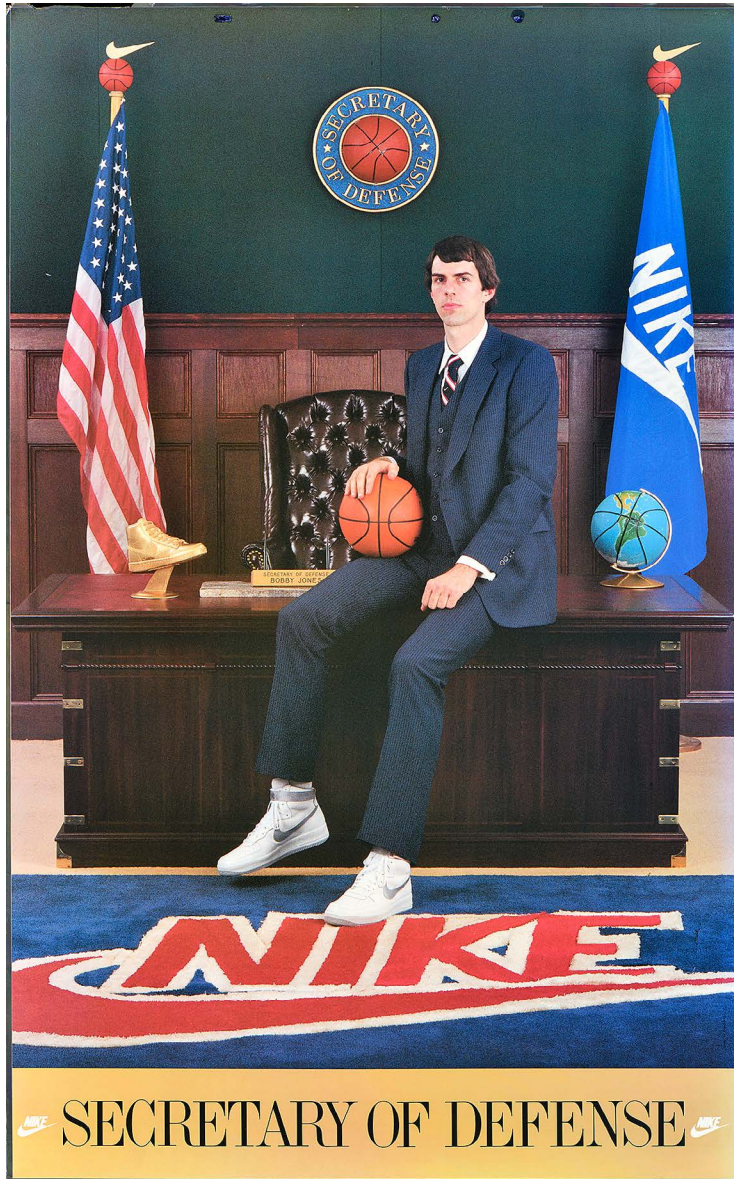


The Williams', 1983

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- NBA-star brothers Ray and Gus Williams are represented here alongside their mother, Rosanne, in the style of an early American family portrait. Their vaguely 18th-century clothing and Rosanne's stitching of her sons' names on a sampler is probably a reference to their hometown of Mount Vernon, New York, which took its name from George Washington's Virginia plantation.
- During the mid-20th century, Mount Vernon was a popular destination for Black Americans migrating from the South in search of employment. Now a mostly Black community, in 1985 it became the first city in the state to elect a Black mayor, and was also home to several Black celebrities, including Denzel Washington (who was born there), Sidney Poitier, Ossie Davis, and Ruby Dee.
- Rosanne raised her six children on a maid's salary after their father died when Gus was six years old. She remained closely involved in her children's lives, and was also a friend and mentor to other neighborhood kids.
- All three figures are wearing the Nike Legend sneakers, released the same year as this poster. The shoe came in high- and low-top versions, and was designed specifically for "heavyweight" basketball players; it was the preferred shoe of New York Knicks legend Patrick Ewing when he played college basketball at Georgetown University.



Secretary of Defense/Bobby Jones, 1983

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This poster celebrates Bobby Jones, the Philadelphia 76ers star and future Hall of Famer, who earned the nickname "Secretary of Defense" for his stellar efforts as a defender on the court.
- Jones, whose clean-cut looks and stern expression might have allowed him to pass as a generic government official, was well-known for his aversion to drugs, alcohol, cursing, and sparring with referees.
- Both Nike cofounders had military experience: Bill Bowerman was a United States Army veteran who had served in World War II, and Phil Knight had served in the Army Reserve. During his subsequent studies for an MBA at Stanford, he became interested in Japanese footwear. This later led to a distribution deal with the Japanese-based Onitsuka Tiger brand—a business venture that eventually allowed him to raise enough capital to create Nike.
- Among the humorous details in this poster are the basketballs that serve not only as the globe and as part of the government seal, but also as finials on top of the flagpoles (along with the Nike Swoosh). The brand's name also appears on the rug and the flags, while a gold shoe decorates Jones's desk. Jones is also wearing Air Force 1 sneakers in another jokey evocation of official authority.



Moses/Moses Malone, 1984

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- This poster depicts Moses Malone parting a sea of basketballs with a staff in the shape of the Nike Swoosh. In addition to the name of his biblical antecedent, the image alludes to the fact that after several close calls, Malone finally led the Philadelphia 76ers to the promised land of an NBA championship in 1983—their only title in more than 50 years.
- While Malone was one of the most dominant centers in NBA history, he was also a decidedly unflashy superstar, often seen with the same unruffled expression he wears in this poster. As a result, he was often underrated, especially in comparison to his more animated colleagues. Still, Nike used him as one of the first players to promote Air Force 1 sneakers (he is pictured here wearing the low-top version), enhancing their popularity, particularly among Philadelphians.
- In 1974, Malone had been the first modern professional basketball player to be drafted directly out of high school (he was followed in this by legends like Kevin Garnett and LeBron James). He once said that the Lord created him to be a great basketball player.
- A star in both the NBA and the now-defunct American Basketball Association, Malone famously predicted that his team would defeat all its opponents in the 1983 playoffs (going “fo fo fo,” or winning the four games needed to advance in a best-of-seven series). He was almost right: the Philadelphia 76ers won every game but one in their historic championship run. In 2018, Nike released a special Air Force 1 Low “Fo Fi Fo” sneaker to honor Malone while acknowledging that he had slightly missed the mark with his prediction.

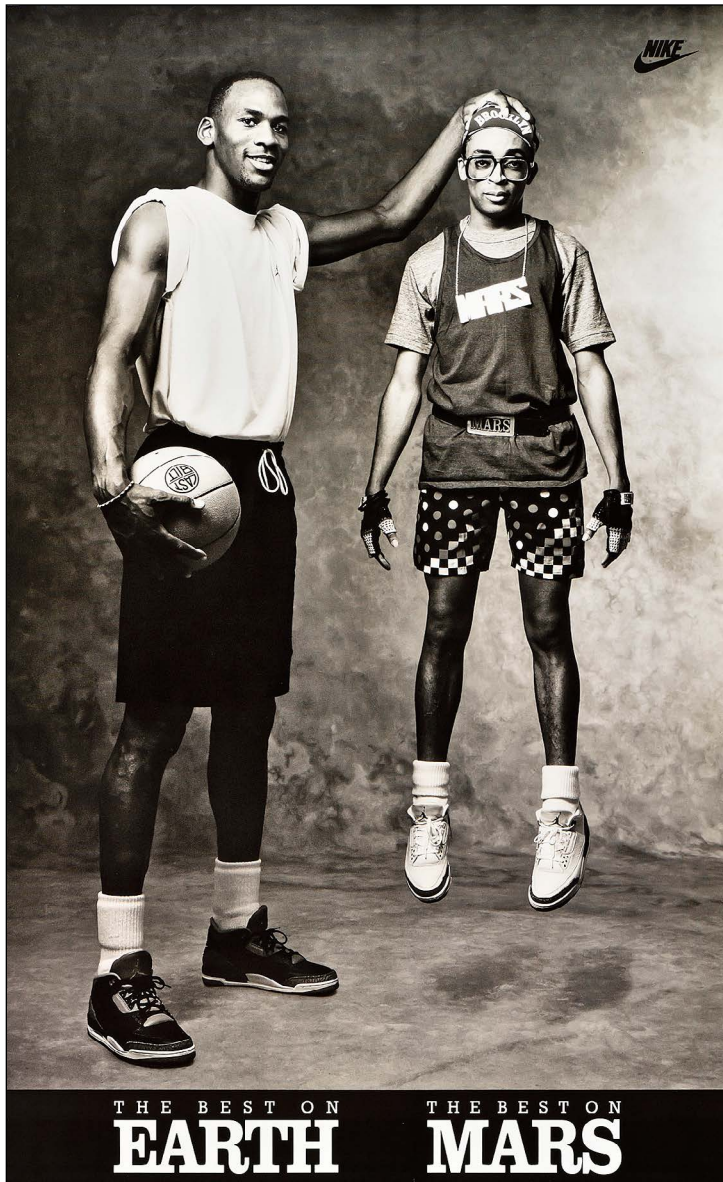


Silk/Jamaal Wilkes, 1983

Photographer: Bob Peterson (1941–2022)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- Although he won Rookie of the Year honors, four NBA titles, and was a three-time All-Star, Jamaal Wilkes was frequently overshadowed by his peers in the Los Angeles Lakers: James Worthy, Magic Johnson, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Early in his career, Wilkes, like Kareem, converted to Islam, and legally changed his name to Jamaal Abdul-Lateef but retained the professional name Jamaal Wilkes.
- Wilkes was first courted by Nike in the mid-1970s when he was a young forward playing for the Golden State Warriors. At the time, Nike was struggling to recruit stars to represent its brand; promoter John Phillips would even show up to Warriors practices and hand out sneakers from the trunk of his car. “He was begging guys to try the shoe,” Wilkes said later.
- Wilkes was most famous for an especially difficult jump shot that Lakers announcer Chick Hearn referred to as a “20-foot layup.” He was nicknamed “Silk” because of his smooth moves on the court. The license plate and winding “silk” road are intended to suggest Wilkes “driving” down the “lane” on the basketball court.
- For Black audiences, Wilkes was also beloved because of his role in the 1975 Blaxploitation classic *Cornbread, Earl and Me* in which he played Nathaniel “Cornbread” Hamilton opposite a young Laurence Fishburne in his first movie role.

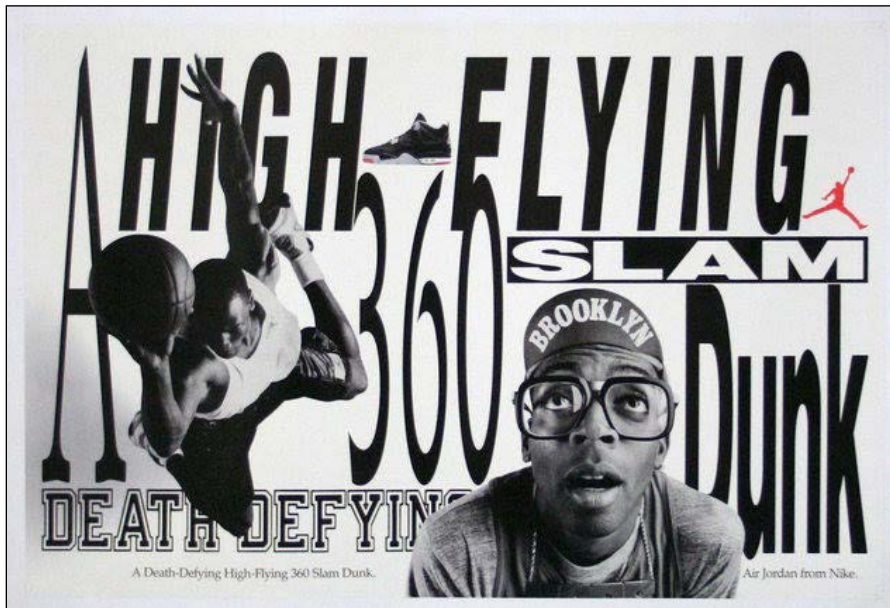


The Best on Earth/The Best on Mars/ Michael Jordan & Spike Lee, 1989

Photographer: Jean Moss (1945–2003)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- This image was created by the agency Wieden+Kennedy for one of the most memorable Nike advertising campaigns of the 1980s, starring and directed by a then up-and-coming Spike Lee alongside Michael Jordan, who was quickly becoming the biggest star in the NBA.
- The campaign features Lee appearing as his motor-mouthed character, Mars Blackmon, from his acclaimed first feature-length indie film, *She’s Gotta Have It* (1986). Due to budget constraints, Lee was forced to play the character himself. Representatives from Wieden+Kennedy noticed that the Blackmon character wore Air Jordan sneakers and were inspired to create the campaign.
- According to Lee, Jordan had never heard of him (few had at the time, apart from film buffs), but he agreed to the collaboration. Years later, at an All-Star Weekend, Lee asked the NBA legend why he had agreed to team up with an unknown director. Jordan allegedly responded, “Motherf*cker, you were wearing my shoes.”
- Lee’s catchphrase in the commercial—“it’s gotta be the shoes”—and the astonishing contrast in height between the two men, distinguished the black-and-white campaign for the Air Jordan 3. In 2022, Lee reunited with Nike for the “Seen It All” campaign that celebrated its 50 years as a sports brand. Lee once again appears as the incorrigible Mars Blackmon—this time just a little older, if not much wiser.



A Death Defying High-Flying 360 Slam Dunk, 1989

Photographer: Pete Stone (b. 1954)

From the Spike and Tonya Lee Collection

- Although Michael Jordan was a breathtaking athlete in many ways (to date, he is the only player in NBA history to win Most Valuable Player (MVP), the scoring title, the Slam Dunk contest, Defensive Player of the Year, Finals MVP, and the championship in the same season), it was his high-flying dunks that really captured the popular imagination at the height of his career.
- This poster was released after the successful launch of the Air Jordan 3, in anticipation of the Air Jordan 4. The theme behind that line was “Taking Flight,” hence the emphasis on an airborne Jordan.
- There have been 38 different iterations of the Air Jordan sneaker so far, with the highly anticipated Air Jordan 39 expected to arrive sometime in the fourth quarter of 2024.
- This poster, loaned to the exhibition by director Spike Lee, is signed by Jordan. The legendary Hall of Famer, infamous for offering only faint praise to his collaborators, writes: “Once again, you did a great job.”



Air Jordan/Genie, 1991

Photographer: Pete Stone (b. 1954)

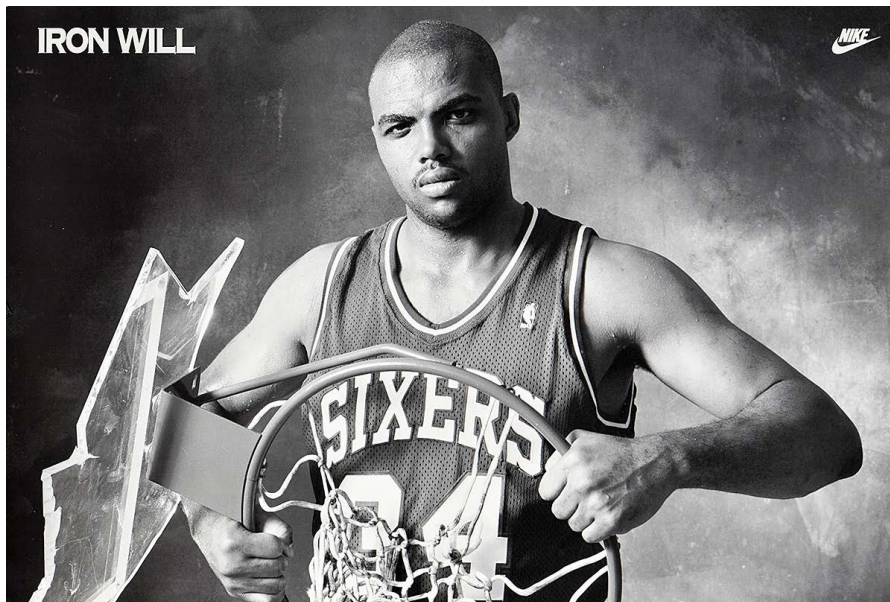
From the Spike and Tonya Lee Collection

- This poster coincided with another Spike Lee/Mars Blackmon television commercial that cast rock 'n' roll legend Little Richard as a genie conjured up to grant the shoe-obsessed character anything he desires. The punchline of the advertisement: Blackmon wishes to be turned into his idol, Michael Jordan.
- This same wish-fulfillment concept was released around the same time as a separate, wildly popular advertising campaign for Gatorade that was built around the premise that young basketball fans aspire to "Be Like Mike."
- This poster, loaned to the exhibition by Lee and signed by Jordan, represents a period of resurgence for Richard after a long self-imposed exile from the music business. He became a pop-culture fixture in the 1990s and 2000s, appearing in advertisements not only for Nike but also for Taco Bell, GEICO, and alongside an improbably singing Cindy Crawford for the perfume Charlie. Lee paid tribute to Richard when the musician succumbed to bone cancer in 2020, tweeting a link to the 1991 commercial that inspired this poster.



- In 1991, Little Richard appeared courtside at a Charlotte Hornets game showing off custom Nikes resembling stereotypical genie shoes.





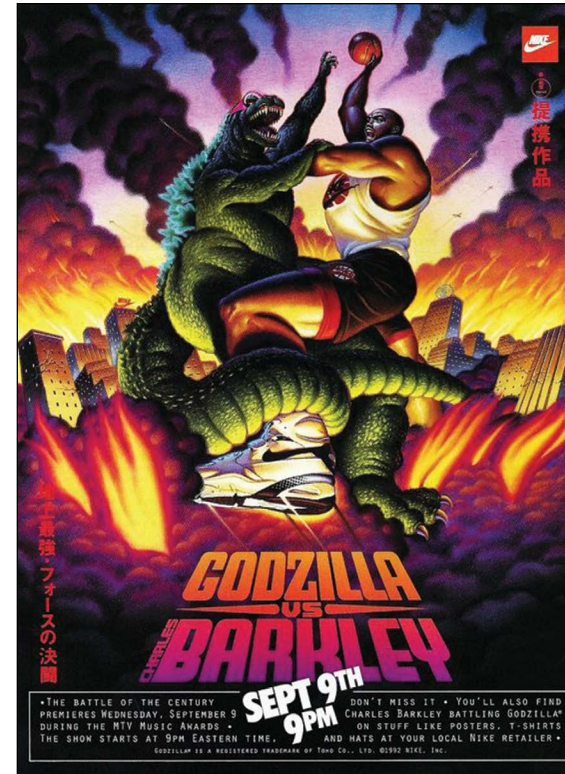
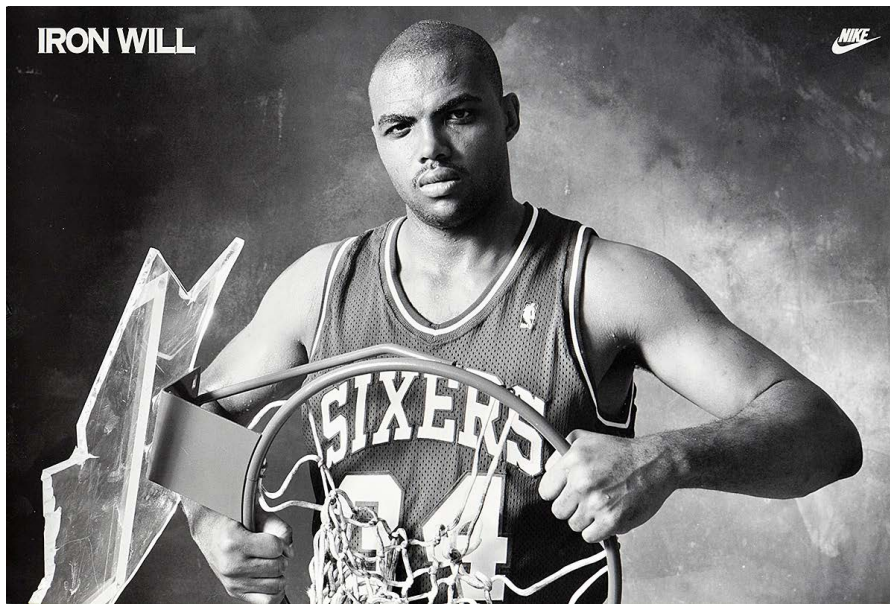
Iron Will/Charles Barkley, 1989

Photographer: Bill Sumner (1943–2022)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Long before Charles Barkley made his many self-deprecating appearances on *Saturday Night Live* and became a lovably cantankerous analyst on *Inside the NBA*, he was one of the most fearsome and polarizing players of his generation. This poster captures Barkley in his early years with the Philadelphia 76ers. He was such a persistent presence "in the paint" (an insider term used to describe the area closest to the basket) that he became known as "the Round Mound of Rebound."
- One of Barkley's most famous collaborations with Nike was a television advertisement produced by Wieden+Kennedy and designed in the stark black-and-white style of this poster. In it, he declared, "I am not a role model"—a reference to the fact that he often made headlines for his off-color remarks and behavior both on and off the court.
- Other Nike campaigns featuring Barkley showed him battling with Godzilla (like many other television advertisements, it also inspired a popular poster) as well as hosting a fake late-night talk show alongside hip-hop legend Humpty Hump of Digital Underground.

- Nike television commercials and their corresponding posters were not always released simultaneously. For advertisements that ran for at least a year—like Michael Jordan’s work with Spike Lee, and, later, with Bugs Bunny—there was enough time to arrange a coordinated release. In most instances, however, they would reach the market at different times.





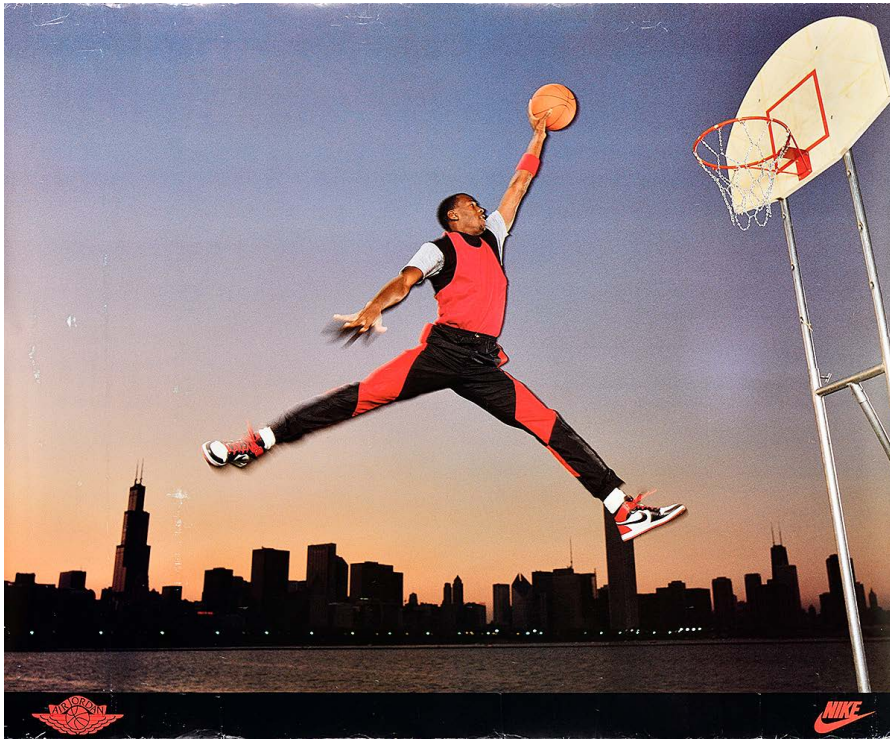
Jumpman/Michael Jordan, 1985

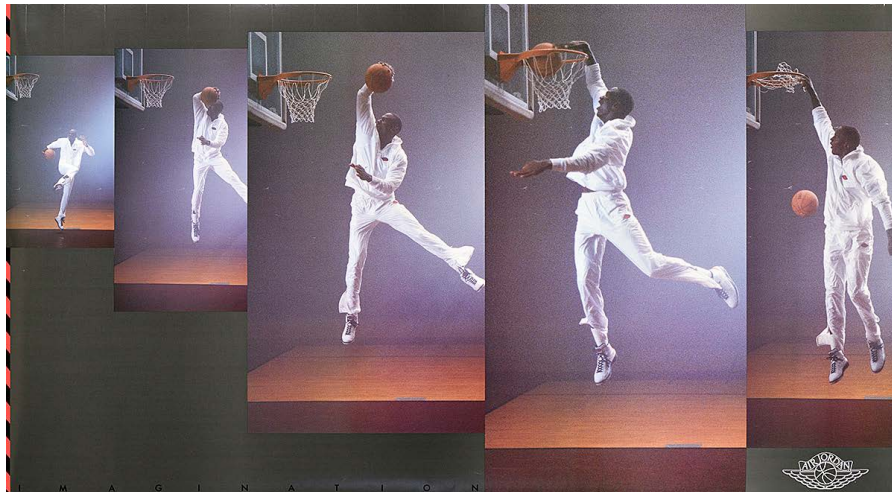
Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This image of Michael Jordan against the Chicago skyline was part of the 1985 promotional campaign for the Air Jordan 1, the first of many shoes that built a multibillion-dollar business under that label. The black and red reference the colors of Jordan's team, the Chicago Bulls.
- Michael Jordan is not shown dunking here but performing what he refers to as a "ballet move" in which he jumps elegantly without a running start.
- In 1984, Jordan had posed for a remarkably similar photograph by Jacobus Rentmeester for *LIFE* magazine in a promotion for that year's Olympics in which he competed for Team USA. Ironically, Jordan was wearing New Balance sneakers in that shot. Rentmeester sued Nike in 2015 for infringement of copyright but his case was ultimately dismissed.

- Jordan was allegedly underwhelmed by the first two iterations of his signature shoe. For the Air Jordan 3, Nike incorporated the athlete's now-iconic silhouette from this photograph on the tongue of the shoe. The motif subsequently became known as "Jumpman" and more than three decades later, it remains one of the most recognizable logos in the world.



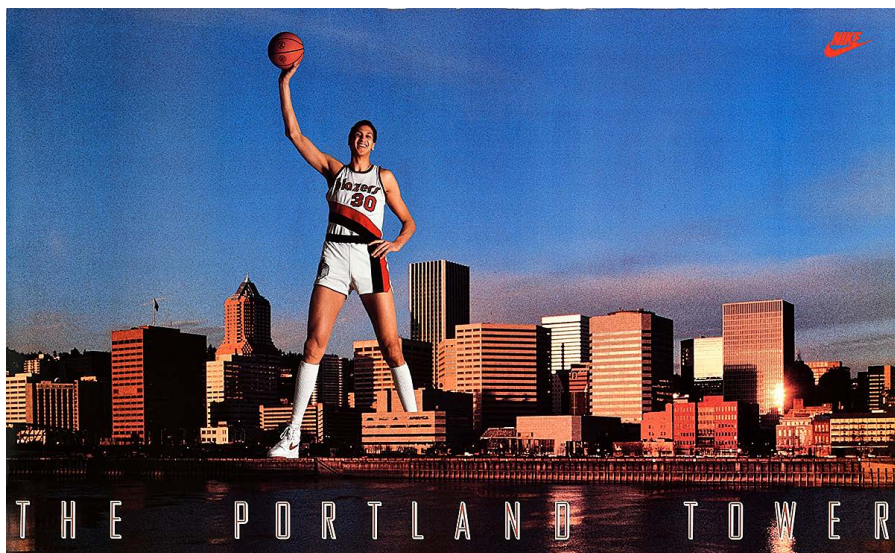


Imagination/Michael Jordan, 1986

Photographer: Bob Peterson (1941–2022)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- This poster, featuring five stop-action images of Michael Jordan completing one of his signature dunks, advertises the release of the Air Jordan 2. The Air Jordan 1, launched the previous year, had already made \$130 million for the company.
- Before Michael Jordan signed as a rookie with the Chicago Bulls or played a single NBA game, he was being courted by several major sports labels for a shoe deal. While he initially preferred Adidas, whose shoes he wore regularly, Nike was the only brand willing to give him his own line—ultimately known as “Air Jordan.” That accommodation established one of the greatest brand partnerships of all time.
- While Jordan’s agent, David Falk, wanted the shoe simply to be called “Michael Jordan,” Nike did not think the player’s name alone would be enough to sell the product. Given Jordan’s high-flying style of play and the fact that Nike’s new running shoe incorporated air technology that cushioned the wearer’s feet, the name Air Jordan was ultimately chosen.
- Peter Moore, Nike’s creative director, came up with the original logo for the new shoe: a basketball with wings, as displayed in the lower-right corner of this poster. It would be retired from use soon after the poster’s publication. Moore was later responsible for making Jordan’s “Jumpman” silhouette (drawn from another poster featured in this exhibition) that became the official logo of the Air Jordan brand, starting with the release of the Air Jordan 3.



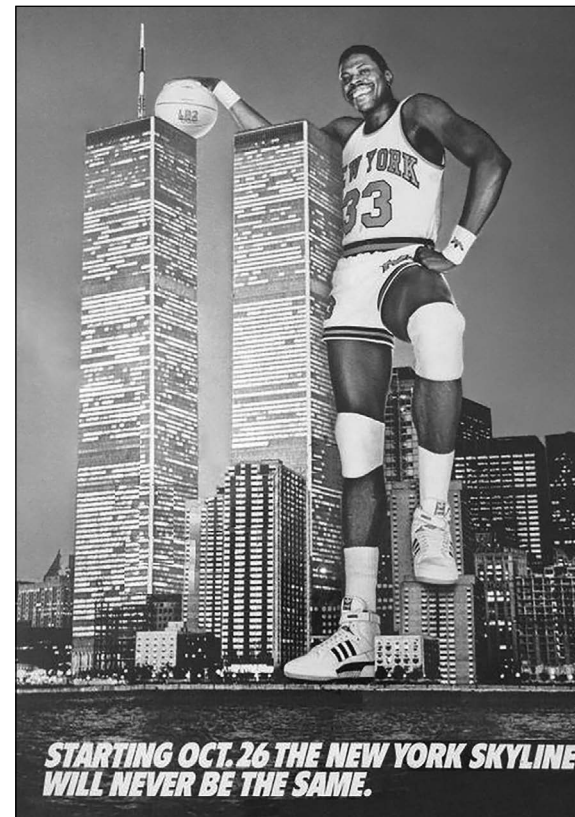
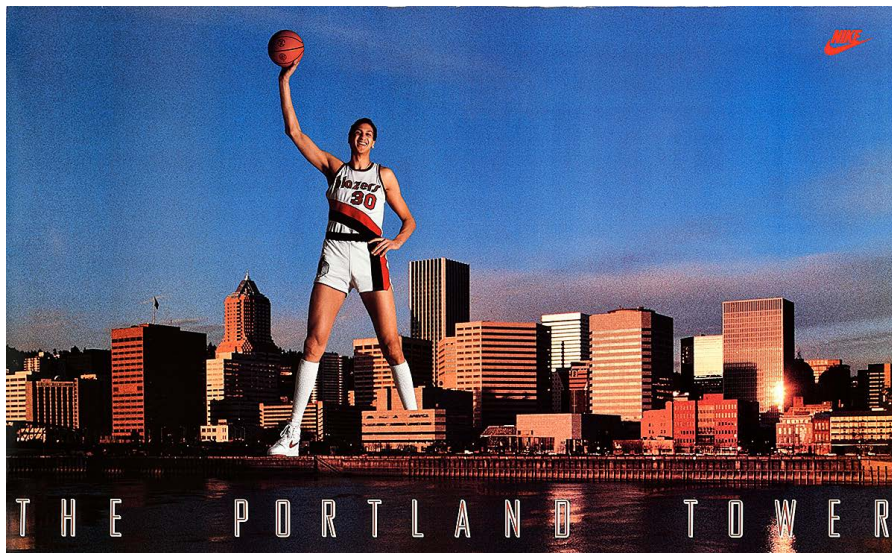
The Portland Tower/Sam Bowie, 1985

Photographer Unknown

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Sam Bowie may have been seven feet tall, but his NBA career was marred by the fact that the Portland Trail Blazers selected him in the 1984 draft instead of Michael Jordan, who would go on to win six championships and be considered the greatest NBA player of all time. That draft class also included future Hall of Famers John Stockton and Charles Barkley, both of whom were also selected after Bowie.
- The Blazers picked Bowie partly because they regretted signing but then trading center Moses Malone back in 1976 before he had ever played a game for the team.
- As the Trail Blazers had already drafted a guard—future All-Star and Hall of Famer Clyde Drexler—Bowie filled a need within the team's lineup. His success both in college and with Team USA in 1980 (amid an Olympics boycott) further suggested that he would be a major asset. Unfortunately, despite brief flurries of greatness, Bowie's career was hindered by repeated leg injuries (he missed 265 regular-season games in the four years following his rookie season) and he never realized his full potential. The Trail Blazers have not won an NBA championship since 1977.

- The composition plays with Bowie's "towering" stature against the Portland skyline. It was common to liken the tallest players on a team to its city's skyscrapers, as seen in an advertisement for the New York Knicks featuring Patrick Ewing released the same year.





The Flight Brothers/Ron Harper & Larry Nance, 1989

Photographer: Bill Sumner (1943–2022)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- Before LeBron James brought his celebrity status to the Cleveland Cavaliers in the early 2000s, the team achieved great success with Larry Nance and Ron Harper. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Cavaliers were consistent playoff contenders but were frequently bounced out in the first round by the Chicago Bulls led by Michael Jordan. Harper would go on to join the Bulls in 1994, winning three straight championships between 1996 and 1998.
- This poster was created to announce Nike’s new Flight line of sneakers, similar in construction to the Air Jordan 4. The image plays on the name, referencing the pioneering aviators, the Wright Brothers.
- Nance in particular was well-known for his high-flying dunks, upsetting Dr. J (Julius Erving) of the Philadelphia 76ers to win the 1984 Slam Dunk Contest, which established the event as an All-Star Weekend staple.
- Although Nike typically went above and beyond for its shoots, the company was unable to procure a replica of an original Wright Brothers plane for this shoot at a small Las Vegas airfield. Instead, a World War I-era British Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5. fighter plane was landed by a pilot and rolled to the side of the runway.



Say Your Prayers/Jim Abbott & Mark Langston, 1990

Photographer: Gary Nolton (b. 1958)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- During the team's largely lackluster seasons in the early 1990s, pitchers Jim Abbott and Mark Langston together represented a silver lining for the California Angels (known today as the Los Angeles Angels).
- The poster, showing the two Angels pitchers standing under a beam of light, suggests that they have been heaven-sent to deliver the team from its perpetual position at the bottom of the standings. The font of the slogan resembles the Fraktur typeface used in early German printed Bibles, thus reinforcing the sense of divine intervention.
- Langston, who received a huge contract in 1990 (\$16 million over five years), briefly making him the highest-paid player in baseball, was initially considered a bust, winning only 10 games and losing 17 in his debut season with the Angels. He managed, however, to become an All-Star the following year.
- Although Abbott was considered a journeyman ballplayer, he was admired by millions of fans for his ability to pitch successfully in the Major Leagues, especially because he had been born without a right hand.



Fingers & Sutter/Rollie Fingers & Bruce Sutter, 1982

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- Ace reliever pitchers Rollie Fingers of the Milwaukee Brewers and Bruce Sutter of the St. Louis Cardinals (pictured here as firemen because, in baseball parlance, they “threw heat”) were highly effective “closers” (a relief pitcher dispatched in the final innings to help put a game away for the winning team), a role that became a staple of the sport in the 1970s.
- Both players were also known for their elaborate facial hair, which is emphasized in this photograph. In 1986, Fingers allegedly turned down an offer to join the Cincinnati Reds because they were going to force him to shave off his extravagant mustache; the team did not permit players to have facial hair at the time.
- Sutter was considered to be a pioneer of the split-fingered fastball—an off-speed pitch that fools a batter into thinking it is a traditional fastball until it dips. A pitcher achieves this by putting his index and middle fingers on opposite sides of the ball.
- Sutter retired in 1988 as the third all-time leader in saves behind fellow Hall of Famers Fingers and Goose Gossage. Since then, saves have become such a big part of the game that he is now merely tied for 30th place in this category.



Tigerrr Catcher/Lance Parrish, 1983

Photographer: Bill Sumner (1943–2022)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- The basic idea for this poster is rather obvious: Lance Parrish was a catcher for the Detroit Tigers between 1977 and 1986.
- Toward the end of the photoshoot, Parrish had a close call with his seven-hundred-pound feline costar when the animal suddenly growled at him.
- The tiger, also one of the two official Exxon mascots, was plied with steaks throughout the shoot to make sure it was never hungry. Sumner even claimed that the big creature wandered off the set at one point and startled a nearby drunk, although this may have been an exaggeration.
- The poster presents Parrish himself as the formidable specimen he was, notorious throughout the league for his preoccupation with weightlifting; he frequently clashed with his manager, Sparky Anderson, about this early in his tenure with the Tigers. Anderson believed that a beefy build was antithetical to good ball playing but Parrish’s nearly 20-year career clearly disproved this theory.



Frankie “Sweet Music” Viola, 1988

Photographer: Bill Sumner (1943–2022)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- Frank Viola’s greatest successes came early in his career with the Minnesota Twins, with whom he won a World Series in 1987. He would go on to play for the New York Mets, the Boston Red Sox, the Cincinnati Reds, and the Toronto Blue Jays.
- This poster pays homage to Viola’s nickname, “Sweet Music,” given to him by a local sports writer. It is a play on the fact that his last name is spelled like that of the string instrument (but pronounced VI-ola instead of vee-OLA) and also alludes to the convivial vibe in the stadium whenever he pitched. Twins fans often rolled out a banner featuring this nickname whenever Viola played at home.
- The photograph was shot in the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome in Minneapolis, a domed stadium that was home to multiple sports teams, including the Minnesota Vikings. It was demolished in 2014.
- In addition to income made through endorsements, Viola benefited from the dramatic spike in players’ salaries during the late 1980s. In April 1989, he became the highest-paid athlete in baseball (with a \$7.9 million contract over three years), only to be usurped seven months later by fellow pitcher Bret Saberhagen of the Kansas City Royals (who signed an \$8.9 million contract over three years).



Cream of the Crop/Darryl Strawberry, 1989

Photographer: Gary Nolton (b. 1958)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This photograph was taken while Darryl Strawberry, one of the most popular New York Mets players of all time, was on the road with the team during the 1989 MLB season. The shoot predated the widespread use of Photoshop, so a sky backdrop had to be sourced from New York City in advance of the power hitter's arrival while artists built the set and hand-painted baseballs to look like strawberries.
- Nike's prominent setting of the team's distinctive name and logo here represented considerable effort. Nike had to negotiate with each team for the rights to show its trademarks, which required them to sign off on the creative direction of the posters as well as of the athletes.
- This poster captures "The Straw's" intimidating six-foot-six-inch form, one that struck fear into many pitchers in his heyday. His lanky look and signature swing often drew comparisons to those of Boston Red Sox Hall of Famer, Ted Williams.
- Strawberry is wearing his own signature Nike Air baseball cleats with his Mets #18 on the heel. Signed Nike cleats once used by Strawberry and other 1980s baseball legends have become popular at auction.



Fee Fi Home Run/Kevin Mitchell, 1990

Photographer: Gary Nolton (b. 1958)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- A journeyman left fielder, Kevin Mitchell played for eight different franchises during his career. He is most fondly remembered, however, by New York Mets fans for a pivotal hit that kept the team's World Series hopes alive in 1986.
- This poster shows Mitchell at the height of his career when he became an All-Star and won the MVP award with the San Francisco Giants. The association with the team is reinforced by the fairytale setting of the composition in which Mitchell is dressed as the giant from *Jack and the Beanstalk*, as well as by its title, as a riff on the giant's catchphrase: "Fee-fi-fo-fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman."
- His most celebrated play was a miraculous bare-handed catch of a ball hit deep into left field by future Hall of Famer Ozzie Smith of the St. Louis Cardinals.
- Mitchell's career was somewhat undermined by personal problems. He was suspended and arrested more than once for assault and eventually enrolled in an anger-management program.

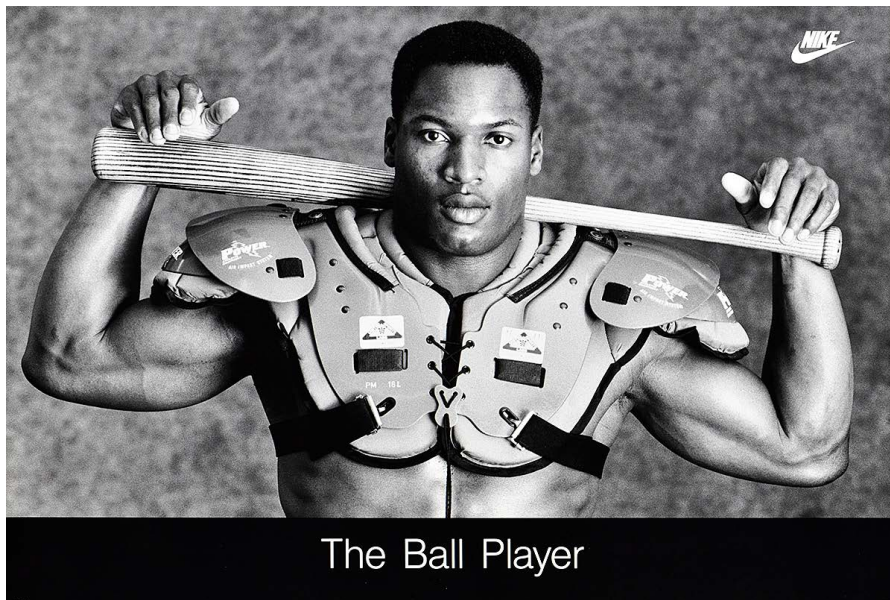


MVP & Cy/Mike Schmidt & Steve Carlton, 1982

Photographer: Bill Sumner (1943–2022)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Produced after the Philadelphia Phillies' winning season in the 1980 World Series, this poster features Mike Schmidt, the winner of the National League's Most Valuable Player (MVP) award, and Steve Carlton, winner of the Cy Young Award (which honors the best pitchers in the league).
- The slightly stunned expressions of these star players reportedly represent their genuine reactions as they held objects that were actually on fire.
- The effect was achieved by drilling holes into the bat and ball and inserting metal cups filled with cotton and alcohol.
- While both Schmidt and Carlton are shown wearing Nike-branded Pro Red cleats, the poster is not necessarily a promotion for those particular shoes. As is the case with some of the other posters, the athletes' association with the brand is the selling point here rather than a specific product.



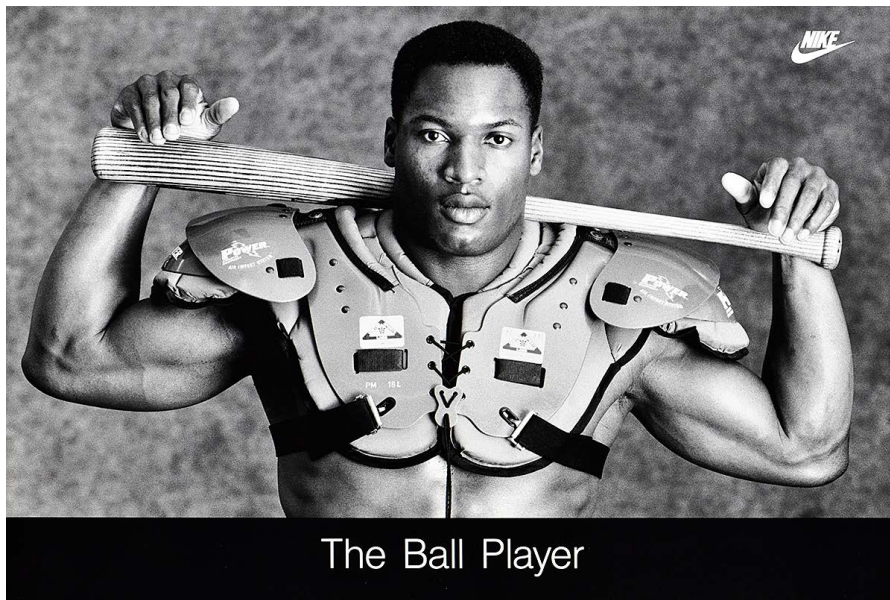
The Ball Player/Bo Jackson, 1987

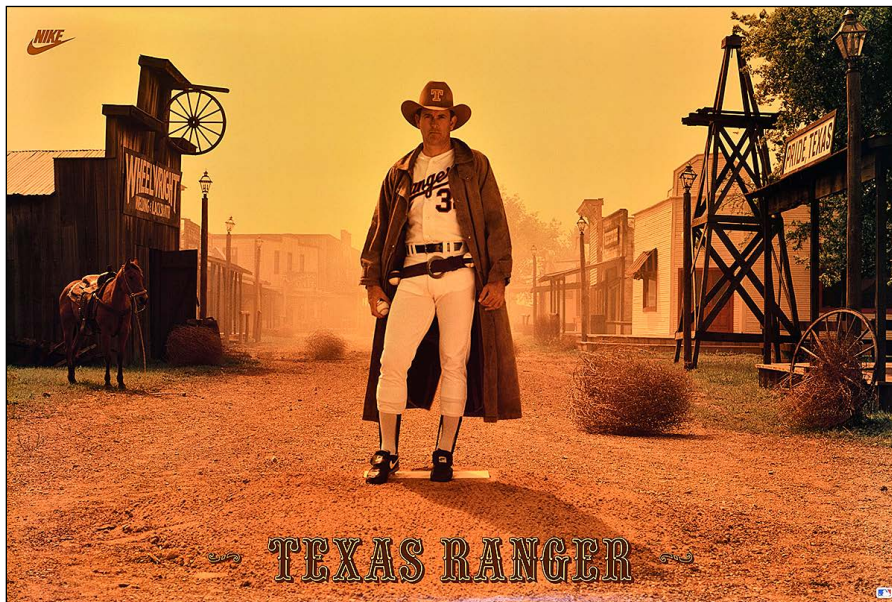
Photographer: Richard Noble (b. 1943)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- Bo Jackson's physical power and athletic precision are legendary, with some sources claiming he could bench press several hundred pounds, leap over cars—and had once killed an entire pen of pigs with his bare hands. He was also one of the first modern athletes to play professional baseball and football in the same year, a fact referenced in this portrait by the bat and the shoulder padding.
- Produced by the advertising agency Wieden+Kennedy, this poster helped to establish Jackson's reputation as a genuine superhero, and has since become not only one of the best-known images of him during his career but also one of the most famous baseball portraits of all time.
- Wieden+Kennedy created numerous campaigns for Nike over the years, many of which were dramatically shot in black and white. This relationship continues today, most notably with the 2019 "Dream Crazy" campaign featuring Colin Kaepernick.

- The photograph became a source of conflict when photographer Richard Noble sued Nike and other memorabilia companies for selling and repurposing the image without his permission, most notably in the 1989 “Bo Knows” campaign. Out of respect for Noble, Jackson stopped autographing copies of this image until the photographer reached a settlement with Nike in 2013.



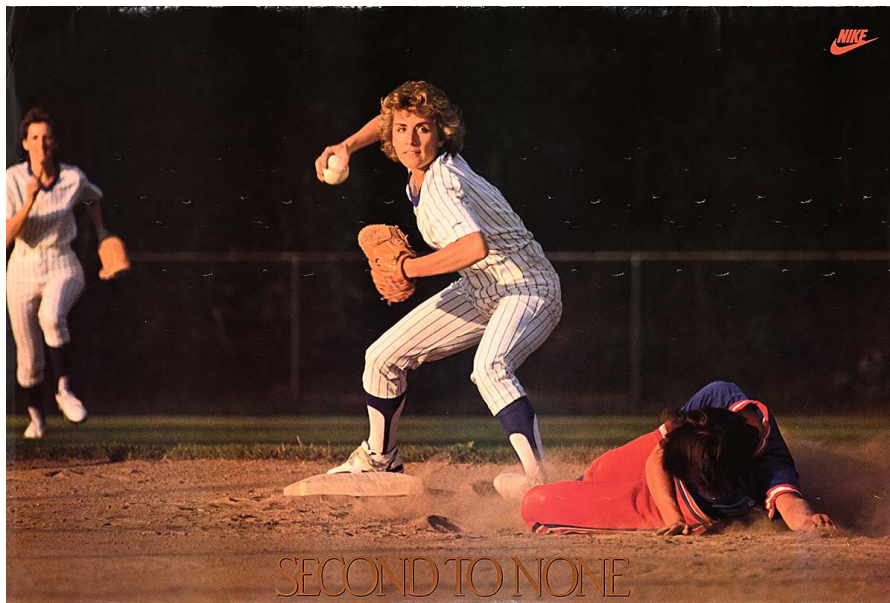


Texas Ranger/Nolan Ryan, 1989

Photographer: Bill Sumner (1943–2022)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- First signing with the Texas Rangers at the age of 42, Ryan went on to have an improbably productive career with the team. Perhaps his most infamous moment with the Rangers—besides throwing two no-hitters—was when he manhandled Ryan Ventura, a player 20 years his junior, during an on-field brawl before his final Major League Baseball (MLB) season in 1993. In 2009, Ryan purchased the Rangers with other investors and served as CEO until 2013.
- Inspired by both the team's name and the fact that Ryan had actually been a rancher, this poster presents him as a Wild West sheriff, using the "gun" of his arm to deliver justice. The photograph was shot in an old amusement park designed to look like a West Texas ghost town. This was a distinctly low-budget affair: photographer Bill Sumner brought his own tumbleweeds to the set because none could be procured there.
- Ryan's nearly 30-year career in the Major Leagues was both record-setting and remarkable. He remains the all-time leader in strikeouts and no-hitters. He is also one of only three MLB players to have his number retired by three different teams—ironically, however, not by the New York Mets, with whom he won a World Series.
- While Ryan had endorsement deals with brands as diverse as Advil, Wrangler Jeans, and Southwest Airlines, his most enduring partnership was probably with Nike, starting in the late 1970s. In 1993, the company named one of its office buildings in Beaverton, Oregon, after him.

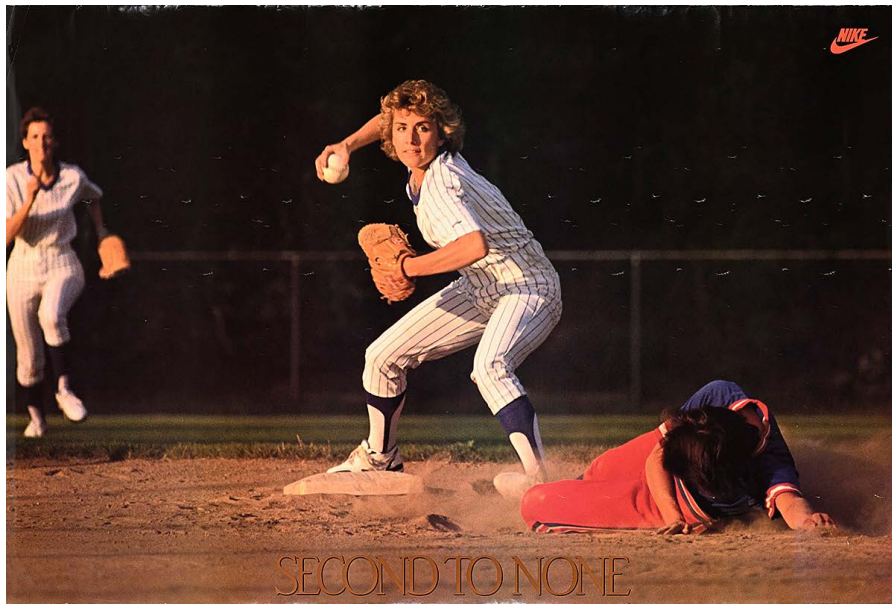


Second To None/Rosie Adams, 1989

Photographer Unknown

Poster House Permanent Collection

- In 1965, at the age of 14, Rosie Adams rose to prominence as the youngest woman to play in the Amateur Softball Association's Women's Major Fast Pitch National Championship. Twenty-two years later, she was inducted into the National Softball Hall of Fame.
- Adams's career spanned the evolution of softball as a professional sport. Although U.S.A. Softball was established in 1933, it gained the most popularity after Title IX was passed in 1972, banning gender discrimination in sports and leading to an expansion of women's participation in all types of athletics. In 1990, softball officially became part of the Olympic Games.
- As a professional, Adams played on four consecutive national championship teams, as well as on two U.S. teams that won international softball titles in 1970 and 1974. After she retired in 1991, women's softball continued to grow in popularity, with the Women's College World Series Final repeatedly earning higher viewing ratings than the men's in recent years.



- While women’s softball was becoming increasingly popular, by the late 1980s there was still a significant gender-based wage gap in sports. The first milestone in the fight for equal wages had occurred in 1973, when the U.S. Open offered equal prize money to women players after Billie Jean King threatened to boycott the event.
- Today, the salaries of professional women softball players are still drastically lower than those of their male counterparts in Major League Baseball. Monica Abbott, the highest-paid professional softball player, signed a six-year contract worth \$1 million in 2016—at the time, a record in women’s sports. This year, however, the Los Angeles Dodgers committed \$700 million over a 10-year period to two-time MVP, Shohei Ohtani, a male player.



Stickball/Dale Murphy & Dwight Gooden, 1985

Photographer Unknown

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This poster shows a friendly game of street baseball between slugger Dale Murphy of the Atlanta Braves and pitcher Dwight Gooden of the New York Mets, with the Brooklyn Bridge and the Manhattan skyline clearly visible in the background. Given the intense rivalry between the two National League teams, the pairing is somewhat ironic.
- The contrast between Murphy and Gooden's off-field personas could not have been more stark. A devout Mormon, Murphy did not drink and would not allow himself to be photographed with women. Gooden, on the other hand, ultimately derailed his career after winning Rookie of the Year in 1985 due to his drug and alcohol addictions.
- Once the Mets and the Braves became division opponents in the 1990s, their rivalry became one of the most bitter in the sport. This mutual hatred reached its peak in 1999, when Braves pitcher John Roker infamously disparaged Mets fans with a stream of racist, homophobic, and sexist insults in a *Sports Illustrated* interview.
- Stickball is a broadly used term for any form of improvised street baseball. The most common version features a makeshift bat—often a broomstick or a mop handle—and a small rubber ball. It is not uncommon for a manhole cover to stand in for a base pad.



1996 Olympics, 1996

Photographer: Cliff Watts (Dates Unknown)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- This poster was produced by Nike in the lead-up to the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. It was the first time the Games had been held in the United States since 1984.
- In 1996, Nike took over a three-story parking lot and car-repair garage to create "Nike Park," a walk-through experience and retail store in Atlanta to coincide with the Games. It included a 25-foot Swoosh dangling above a parking building.
- Nike was not an official sponsor of the 1996 Olympics, although Nike Park was located near the Olympic Village in downtown Atlanta. It was also completely open to the public throughout the Games.
- The mosaic-style design features many Nike-sponsored athletes, including tennis stars Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi, Monica Seles, and Mary Joe Fernández; basketball players Reggie Miller, Scottie Pippen, Sheryl Swoopes, Charles Barkley, and Dawn Staley; track and field athletes Carl Lewis, Michael Johnson, and Gail Devers; and soccer legend Mia Hamm.



I Love L.A./Wayne Gretzky, 1988

Photographer: Chuck Kuhn (1945–2020)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- In 1988, hockey superstar Wayne Gretzky was traded by the Edmonton Oilers in Canada to the Los Angeles Kings in the United States. As he had already won four Stanley Cup championships, this move was considered a major boon to American hockey, one so monumental, in fact, that it was simply dubbed “The Trade.” Interest in the sport immediately surged, especially among West Coast fans, as a result of Gretzky’s arrival.
- This poster celebrates Gretzky’s move to Los Angeles, clearly courting support and admiration from American fans. Meanwhile, Canadian fans were deeply upset about the trade; some called on the government to prevent it while others even burned an effigy of the owner of the Oilers outside the stadium.
- An alternative version of this poster replaces “I Love L.A.” with “Hockey Night in California.” While Gretzky was not able to deliver a championship for the West Coast team, he did lead the Kings to their first ever division title in 1991 and to a place in the Stanley Cup Final in 1993.
- The tagline also references Randy Newman’s popular 1983 anthem for the city, “I Love L.A.” It includes the lyrics, “Look at the mountain, look at those trees. Look at the bum over there, man. He’s down on his knees.”



Back to Back/Curtis Strange, 1989

Photographer: Gary Nolton (b. 1958)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- One of the most popular and successful golfers of the 1980s, Curtis Strange is one of only three professionals to win the U.S. Open golf tournament twice in a row (in 1988 and 1989). The "Back to Back" tagline here references that unusual feat, and the dates and locations of the tournaments are noted inside the "C"s.
- While Curtis Strange actually has an identical twin brother, Allan, it is not clear if this image was made by photographing both men or by merging two images of Curtis in postproduction. As Photoshop and similar software programs were in their infancy at this date, this would have been difficult but not impossible to achieve.
- In 1990, Strange appeared alongside fellow professional golfer, Peter Jacobsen, in the first Nike golf commercial. Three years later, Strange and Nike would collaborate on an Air Apparent golf shoe featuring permanent ceramic-tipped metal spikes.
- In 1996, Nike began a long and lucrative collaboration with golf megastar Tiger Woods. In spite of the many reversals that have characterized the athlete's career and personal life, he has successfully maintained his relationship with the brand and helped to change the face of the sport.



Dig, Set, & Kill/Gabrielle Reece, 1995

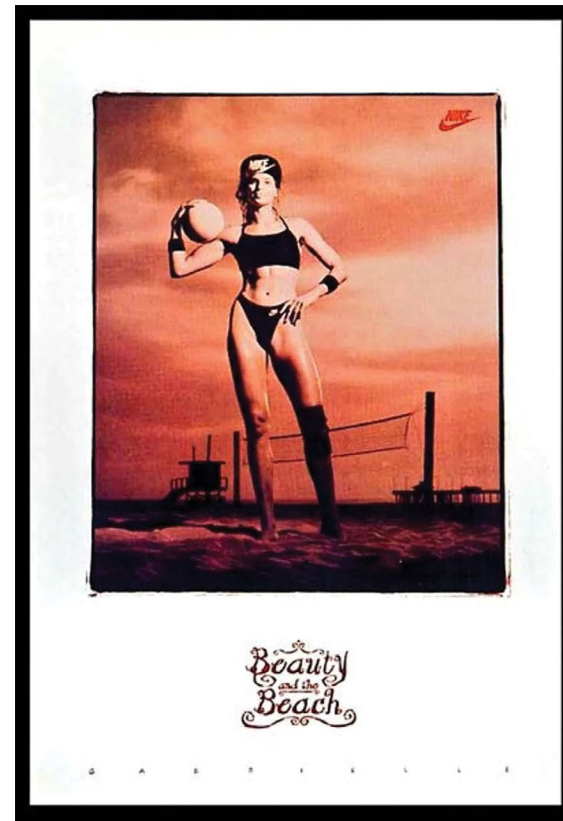
Photographer: Peggy Sirota (b. 1965)

Collection of Bruce "ImaPaqRat" Fisher

- In the 1990s, Gabrielle Reece became a household name as both a professional volleyball player and as a model, appearing on the covers of magazines like *Elle* as well as on those of various sports publications. Nike emphasized her sex-symbol status by flaunting her scantily clad athletic form in several posters, including two featuring the slogans “Beauty and the Beach” and “If Looks Could Kill.”
- This poster riffs on the classic volleyball drill—“dig, set, spike”—in which a player hits the ball to a teammate in a scooping or digging motion. That player then uses two palms to position the ball so it can be slammed over the net by the spiker. The admonition to “go play checkers” at lower left is directed at viewers unfamiliar with the reference.
- In 1994, Reece teamed up with designer Tinker Hatfield to become the first female athlete to create a signature shoe for Nike. Hatfield had already designed many lines of Air Jordan sneakers as well as Michael Keaton’s boots in both *Batman* movies. Reece had originally asked Nike for a black shoe, partly because she wanted to make her size 12 feet look smaller, but was told that the company did not make black shoes for women. Her Air Trainers changed that.



- In 1997, Reece married surfing star and fellow Nike-affiliated athlete Laird Hamilton. In 2013, she upended her fiercely feminist image when she publicly defended her role as a “submissive wife.”





An International Kick in the Grass/ Tampa Bay Rowdies, 1982

Photographer: Bill Sumner (1943–2022)

Collection of Bruce “ImaPaqRat” Fisher

- The Tampa Bay Rowdies were based in St. Petersburg, Florida. They began in 1975 as a new franchise in the North American Soccer League (NASL), which was founded in 1968 and folded in 1984. The team was resurrected in 2008 under new ownership in a rebooted (but also short-lived) incarnation of the NASL.
- This photograph was taken during the Rowdies’ incredibly successful run during the 1980–81 season. The team won three indoor-play titles during the 1976, 1980, and 1983 seasons. While professional soccer had not yet caught on in the United States, Nike saw the value in an association with one of the more popular homegrown teams that embodied the brand’s attitude.
- The team’s original name was the result of a name-the-team contest. Other options included “The Tampa Bay Toes” and “The Tampa Bay Windows.” Since then, it has undergone various makeovers and iterations. Due to a dispute with Classic Ink, a Dallas-based apparel company, over the rights to the Rowdies name in 2009, the team went by the name of “FC Tampa Bay” for a couple of years. In 2011, it gained full rights to the Rowdies name.
- This poster pays homage to both the team’s theme song, “Kick in the Grass,” and the international nature of the squad; the players are shown here dressed in outfits inspired by those of their countries of origin. From left are Jan van der Veen (Netherlands), Óscar Fabbiani (Argentina), Keith Peacock (England), Steve Wegerle (South Africa), Gordon Jago (England), Dave Taber (United States), Wes McLeod (Canada), and John Gorman (Scotland).





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