PERSONS WHO EXCEL IN SPORTS

**USAIN BOLT** was born in Jamaica in 1986. He is a Jamaican Sprinter and has set all the records for 100meter and 200meter events. He holds 3 World Records and is also a 6-time Olympic Gold Medalist. He has won 8 World Championships and was knighted by the Order of Jamaica in 2009.

He may be the fastest man in the world, but that doesn't mean he's immune from enjoying the joys of a more sedentary lifestyle. Bolt is a serious gamer who has been known to waste an afternoon or two playing Call of Duty: Black Ops.

**BILLIE JEAN KING** – She was a champion American tennis player winning a total of 39 grand slam titles in an illustrious career.

An early advocate of equality for women, she won the famous tennis “battle of the sexes” against Bobby Riggs in 1973, who was a former number one tennis player and said that a woman couldn’t beat him.

She took up the challenge at Houston Astrodome in Texas. The game was watched by a crowd of over 30,000 fans and up to 50 million on TV. It was a media sensation, and she proved the winner, beating Bobby Riggs 6-4, 6-3, 6-3

Throughout her career, she campaigned for better pay and recognition for female tennis players.

Since her retirement, she has worked for GBLT and is an active promoter of Gay and Lesbian rights in America. She also serves on the Women’s Sports Foundation and the Elton John AIDS campaign.

**JESSE OWENS** - Originally known as J.C., he was the youngest of ten children born on September 12,1913 and was the grandson of a slave. At the age of 9, he and his family moved from Alabama to Cleveland, Ohio, to find better opportunities.

He attributed the success of his athletic career to the encouragement of Charles Riley, his junior high school track coach at Fairmount Junior High School.

He was a Track and Field star, winning 4 gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, helping to break Hitler’s pride. Despite suffering discrimination in his own country, he remained a great ambassador for the sport.

The picture on the right side shows Owens saluting the American flag after winning the long jump at the 1936 Summer Olympic, in Germany.

33 year old **HOPE SOLO** is a soccer player representing America. She plays in the position of the goalkeeper for the national team of the US since 2000. She is also on the Seattle Reign FC team in the National Women’s Soccer League.

She has won the Olympic Games gold medal twice and was featured on Dancing with the Stars, has been on many magazines, and endorses several big brands, like Nike, Blackberry, and Ubisoft.
DEION SANDERS, SR. He was born in Fort Myers, Florida in 1967 and is a former American football and baseball player, who works as an analyst for CBS Sports and the NFL Network. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame on August 6, 2011.

He and his wife, Pilar, founded the Sanders Claus charity in 2009, which works to provide opportunities for Dallas/Fort Worth children in need. In 1994, he released a rap album and CD which peaked at No. 70 on the U.S. hip-hop list and had a mild hit in “Must Be The Money,” which he performed on Saturday Night Live.

He once hit an MLB homerun and scored an NFL touchdown in the same week and is the only person to ever accomplish this. He is also the only athlete to ever compete in both the World Series and a Super Bowl.

HULK HOGAN was born in Georgia in 1953. He is a retired American professional wrestler, actor, and famous for his time with World Wrestling Federation and World Championship Wrestling.

He is a 12-times World Heavyweight Champion and headlined both WrestleMania and Starrcade on multiple different occasions. He is regarded as one of the greatest wrestlers in the history of professional wrestling.

Aside from pursuing a music career, a banking job, and a possible movie role, Hulk Hogan was also once considered to become a baseball player - he was once scouted by the New York Yankees and Cincinnati Reds as a pitcher.

He has also been quite involved in helping make other people’s wishes come true through the Make-A-Wish Foundation and has already granted over 200 wishes for children.

JEREMY SHU-HOW LIN is an American professional basketball player for the Brooklyn Nets of the National Basketball Association (NBA). He Lin was born in Los Angeles County in the city of Torrance, California.

He unexpectedly led a winning turnaround with the New York Knicks in 2012, which generated a global craze known as "Linsanity". He is the first American of Chinese or Taiwanese descent to play in the NBA, and one of the few Asian Americans to play in the league overall.

In August 2019, he left the NBA and signed with the Beijing Ducks, where he became an All-Star in the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA).

JACQUELINE JOYNER-KERSEE (born March 3, 1962) is a retired American track and field athlete, ranked among the all-time greatest athletes in the heptathlon as well as long jump. Sports Illustrated for Women magazine voted her as the Greatest Female Athlete of All-Time.

She Won three gold, one silver, and two bronze Olympic medals in those two events at four different Olympic Games.

She Is an active philanthropist in children's education, racial equality and women's rights and the founder of the Jackie Joyner-Kersee Foundation, which encourages young people in East St. Louis, to pursue athletics and academics.

She is also one of the most famous athletes to have overcome severe asthma.
PAVEL DATSYUK - He is a Russian professional ice hockey player and was nicknamed the "Magic Man" honoring his incredible stick handling and creativity with the puck. His name inspires an adjective - amazing plays became "Datsyukian", and the word "Datsyukian" even earned a place on UrbanDictionary.com.

The original Datsyuk, of course, performed his wizardry on the ice sheets of the National Hockey League, not at the disco, and what he did with pucks, sticks, skating and vision made you distrust your own eyesight.

Like nearly all players that come to the NHL from Eastern Europe, Red Wings center Pavel Datsyuk didn't speak a word of English when he first arrived in the U.S. When he went out to dinner with his teammates early in his career, Datsyuk would close his eyes and point to something random on the menu to select his meal.

SKYLAR DIGGINS – She was born on August 2, 1990 in South Bend, Indiana. The former Notre Dame basketball star didn't have to travel very far to attend college—one of the most prestigious universities in the country just so happened to be conveniently located in her hometown.

After college, she played on the Tulsa Shock team, in the Women’s National Basketball Association.

In early 2012 she told the New York Times that she was already making plans for a life after basketball, with an internship at espnW.

She is also an actress, with acting in several movies. She has been married to Daniel Smith since May 2, 2017 and they have one child.

PELE - He is the most iconic “football” player of the Twentieth Century. He has showed the flair, joy and passion that the Brazilians bought to the game.

(The game in England and many other countries is called football but soccer is still the main term for the game in countries where they also play football, such as the USA, Canada, and Australia).

He was born Edson Arantes do Nascimento on October 23rd, 1940 in Minas Gerais, Brazil. In his childhood, he gained the nickname ‘Pele’. At first, he didn't like it and complained, but the more he complained, the more it stuck.

He grew up in poverty in São Paulo. He was taught to play soccer by his father (who used to also play), but he often had to practice with a sock stuffed with newspapers because he could not afford to buy a real ball. He also worked as a waiter in local tea shops.

By the age of 16, he was the top scorer in the Brazilian league and received a call up for the Brazilian national side. The Brazilian President declared Pele a “national treasure” to prevent him from being bought by foreign clubs such as Manchester United, in England.

In 1999 he was named Athlete of the Century by the International Olympic Committee and was included in the Time magazine list of the 100 most important people of the 20th century. In 2000, he was voted World Player of the Century by the International Federation of Football History & Statistics (IFFHS).
He is credited with the great phrase about soccer: “The beautiful game”.

**SALLY FITZGIBBONS** was born on December 19th, 1990 and grew up on one of the prettiest stretches of coast on the planet, in Gerroa, on the south coast of New South Wales, Australia.

She played soccer and touch football, ran cross-country, and ended up a national champion middle distance runner in High School, but ultimately, her love for surfing is what won out.

She is an Australian professional surfer on the Association of Surfing Professionals World Tour (2009–2013) and in June, 2019, she was ranked No. 1 in the world for women's surfing, after winning the Rio Pro.

**“BABE” RUTH** (1895-1948) – George Herman "Babe" Ruth was an American professional baseball player whose career in Major League Baseball spanned 22 seasons, from 1914 through 1935, – setting new records and raising the popularity of the game.

Nicknamed "The Bambino" and "The Sultan of Swat", he began his MLB career as a star left-handed pitcher for the Boston Red Sox but achieved his greatest fame as a slugging outfielder for the New York Yankees.

His parents were German American immigrants and he was one of eight children. His childhood was tough because his parents owned a tavern and had to work long hours to earn an income for the family. They also lived in a rough neighborhood, with street fights common.

It was at school that George Jr became involved in playing and practicing baseball. He was coached and mentored by a senior monk – Brother Matthias and then he started to excel for his exceptional playing skills.

Brother Matthias became one of the few figures in authority that George Jr looked up to and respected. His reverence for Matthias helped to bring some discipline into Ruth’s life, and he would always acknowledge the role Brother Matthias had played in his life.

He also later wryly commented: “If it wasn’t for baseball, I’d be in either the penitentiary or the cemetery.”

**HILARY ATWOOD KNIGHT** was born in 1989 and is an American ice hockey forward with the PWHPA and the United States women's national ice hockey team.

Knight was born in Palo Alto, California, but grew up in Sun Valley, Idaho. She grew up in a skiing family. Her cousin is three-time Olympic alpine skier - Chip Knight. As a young child, she chose to trade skis for skates and started playing hockey with her three younger brothers.

She previously played for the Les Canadiennes de Montreal of the CWHL and the Boston Pride of the NWHL, with whom she won the inaugural Isobel Cup.

Her first year at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Knight helped the team place second in the NCAA championships. The following year she led her team in points as the Badgers went on to win the National Championship. With the US national team, she won seven gold medals at the IIHF World Women’s Championships and the gold medal at the 2018 Winter Olympics.
TIM DUNCAN – was born on April 25, 1976 and is an American former professional basketball player and coach.

Nicknamed "the Big Fundamental", he is widely regarded as the greatest power forward of all time and one of the greatest players in NBA history. He spent his entire 19-year playing career with the San Antonio Spurs. He was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2020.

He started out as an aspiring swimmer and only began playing basketball in ninth grade, when Hurricane Hugo destroyed the only available Olympic-sized pool in his homeland of Saint Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.

He is a five-time NBA champion, a 15-time NBA All-Star and the only player to be selected to both the All-NBA and All-Defensive Teams, for 13 consecutive seasons.

Off the court, Duncan created the Tim Duncan Foundation to raise health awareness and fund education and youth sports programs.

He has his own website with the clever description: www.SlamDuncan.com

CAMILLE LEBLANC-BAZINET is a CrossFit athlete representing Canada. She clinched the victory in the 2014 CrossFit Games for the women’s side, a feat she is best known for.

An accomplished weightlifter, she has qualified for the national championship. Before becoming a professional CrossFit athlete, she was in gymnastics, but at the age of 16, a tear in her hip brought her career came to a halt.

Once she recovered, she went on to take part in AA soccer as well as volleyball, and she was even the captain of the flag football team in college. She also partook in half marathons, in skiing and in rugby, but after she was told that she was out of shape, she moved to CrossFit.

She was named the fittest woman on Earth by the Huffington Post and also has a degree in chemical engineering.

MIGUEL CABRERA – Born in 1983, he is nicknamed "Miggy" and is a Venezuelan professional baseball first baseman and designated hitter for the Detroit Tigers of Major League Baseball.

Since his debut in 2003 he has been a two-time American League Most Valuable Player award winner, a four-time AL batting champion, and an 11-time MLB All-Star.

He may be a professional athlete, but he doesn't have to prove his manliness with a collection of large dogs. He and his wife own a poodle named Princess and a Yorkie named La Cosita (which means "Little Thing). La Cosita is said to have a very extensive wardrobe.

LERYN FRANCO – She was born in Asunción, Paraguay on March 1st, 1982 and is a Paraguayan model, actress and former athlete who currently works for the athletics department of Club Sol de América. She initially played football (soccer) during her high school days and later began participating in athletic events like triple jump and javelin throw. She participated at the 2004, 2008 and 2012 Olympics, competing in the javelin throw.
On 8 June 2012, she achieved a personal best throw of 57.77 meters in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, at the 2012 Ibero-American Championships in Athletics. Her achievement also became the new national record, having surpassed the previous record of 55.66 meters, which she threw at the 2011 South American Championships in Athletics.

In 2013, she also began her career as an actress, portraying the role of the younger version of the title role in the film ‘Eliza Lynch: Queen of Paraguay.’

**JIMMIE JOHNSON**

He was born in El Cajon, California, and began racing motorcycles at the age of four.

After graduating from Granite Hills High School, he competed in off-road series. In 1998, Johnson and his team, Herzog Motorsports, began stock car racing.

He moved to the national American Speed Association (ASA) series for late model touring cars and won another rookie of the year title. In 2000, he switched to the NASCAR Busch Series (now Xfinity Series).

Jimmie won his first Cup Series championship in 2006 and with further wins in 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010, he became the first and only driver in NASCAR history to win five consecutive championships.

In 2016, he won his seventh championship, tying Richard Petty and Dale Earnhardt for the most Cup Series championships of all time.

**NADIA COMANECI** – She was born on November 12, 1961 and is a Romanian retired gymnast and a five-time Olympic gold medalist, all in individual events. In 1976 at the age of 14, she was the first gymnast to be awarded a perfect score of 10.0 at the Olympic Games.

She is one of the world's best-known gymnasts and is credited with popularizing the sport around the globe.

In 2000, she was named as one of the Athletes of the 20th Century by the Laureus World Sports Academy.

She has lived in the United States since 1989, when she defected from then-Communist Romania before its revolution in December that year.

She later worked with and married American Olympic gold medal gymnast Bart Conner, who set up his own school. In 2001 she became a naturalized United States citizen, and has dual citizenship, also maintaining her Romanian citizenship.

**CRISTIANO RONALDO** - He was born on February 5th, 1985 in Madeira, Portugal. He is a professional footballer (soccer player) who plays as a forward for Premier League club Manchester United and also captains the Portugal national team.

Often considered the best player in the world and widely regarded as one of the greatest players of all time, Ronaldo has won five Ballon d'Or awards and four European Golden Shoes, the most by a European player.
He has won 32 trophies in his career and is one of the few recorded players to have made over 1,100 professional career appearances and scored over 780 official senior career goals for club and country.

He was actually named after a very well-known American. His middle name was inspired by the late President Ronald Reagan, who the athlete says his mother was a great admirer of.

ANNA KOURNIKOVA – She was born on June 7th, 1981 and is a Russian-American former professional tennis player, model, and television personality. Her appearance and celebrity status made her one of the best known tennis stars worldwide.

Despite never winning a singles title, she reached No. 8 in the world in 2000. She achieved greater success playing doubles, where she was at times the world No. 1 player. With Martina Hingis as her partner, she won Grand Slam titles in Australia in 1999 and 2002, and the WTA Championships in 1999 and 2000. They referred to themselves as the "Spice Girls of Tennis".

She retired from professional tennis in 2003 due to serious back and spinal problems, including a herniated disk. She lives in Miami Beach, Florida and In addition to her tennis and television work, Kournikova serves as a Global Ambassador for Population Services International's "Five & Alive" program, which addresses health crises facing children under the age of five and their families.

FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR. – He was born on February 24, 1977 and is an American professional boxing promoter and former professional boxer.

He competed between 1996 and 2015. During his career he won fifteen major world championships from super featherweight to light middleweight

As an amateur, Mayweather won a bronze medal in the featherweight division at the 1996 Olympics, three U.S. Golden Gloves championships (at light flyweight, flyweight, and featherweight), and the U.S. national championship at featherweight.

He was named "Fighter of the Decade" for the 2010s by the Boxing Writers Association of America (BWAA). In 2016, he was ranked by ESPN as the greatest boxer, pound for pound, of the last 25 years.

Famously wealthy, he routinely finds himself among the highest earners on Forbes annual list of the World's Highest Paid Athletes.

SONJA HENIE – She was born on April 8th, 1912 and was a Norwegian figure skater and film star. She was a three-time Olympic champion in women's singles, a ten-time World champion and a six-time European champion. Henie has won more Olympic and World titles than any other ladies' figure skater.

She was also an excellent Hollywood actress. At the height of her acting career, she was one of the highest-paid stars in Hollywood and starred in a series of box-office hits, including Thin Ice (1937), Happy Landing, My Lucky Star (1938), Second Fiddle (1939) and Sun Valley Serenade (1941).
STAN MIKITA – He was born May 20, 1940 in Sokolče, Slovak Republic, as Stanislav Guoth and raised in a small farming community, until 1948 when he moved to St. Catharines, Ontario.

He was adopted by his aunt and uncle, Anna and Joe Mikita who had emigrated from Slovakia to Canada 20 years earlier and were childless. They came to Slovakia to visit the Guoth family before Christmas in 1948 and took the 8-year-old Stan with them when they went back to Canada. His parents believed that there was a brighter future for him there, than in then Communist Czechoslovakia. His aunt and uncle also gave him their surname.

Stan considered himself Slovak, and mentioned in interviews how proud he was of his Slovak heritage.

He was a Slovak–Canadian ice hockey player for the Chicago Black Hawks of the National Hockey League, generally regarded as the best center of the 1960s.

In 2017, he was named one of the 100 Greatest NHL Players. He became the first Slovak-born player to win the Stanley Cup in 1961.

MARIA SHARAPOVA – She was born on April, 19th, 1987) and is a Russian former world No. 1 tennis player.

She became the world No. 1 for the first time on 22 August 2005, at the age of 18, becoming the first Russian female tennis player to top the singles rankings.

Although she played under the banner of Russia with the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), she has lived in and been a United States permanent resident since 1994. She competed on the WTA Tour from 2001 to 2020 and had been ranked world No. 1 in singles by the WTA on five separate occasions, for a total of 21 weeks.

She is one of ten women, and the only Russian, to hold the career Grand Slam. She is also an Olympic medalist, having won a silver medal in women's singles at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

She achieved a rare level of longevity in tennis, with several tennis stars and former players calling her one of tennis' best competitors.

ROBINSON CANO - Yankees star Robinson Cano caused conflict between his Dominican parents very early in life. His father, a baseball player, wanted to name his son after his hero: Jackie Robinson. His mother was against the idea, but she eventually came around.

DANICA PATRICK - American auto racing driver, is the most successful woman in the history of American racing.

She won Indy Japan 300 in 2008 and achieved the only women’s victory in an Indy Car Series race.

She became the first female NASCAR driver to win a NASCAR Sprint Cup Series pole in 2013. Apparently, engines are in the blood of the Patrick women. Danica's mother was a snowmobile mechanic. Legend has it that she was so good that racers referred to her as Captain Traction.
RAY ALLEN – He played 18 seasons as a Guard, in the National Basketball Association.

He was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame as a player, in September 2018

His interests and talents extend well beyond the basketball court. He also starred in Spike Lee's "He Got Game" early in his career. Did you know he also plays piano and collects art?

ALTHEA GIBSON

STEVE SMITH - born May 12, 1979 is an American former professional football player who was a wide receiver for 16 seasons in the National Football League (NFL), primarily with the Carolina Panthers, and also playing for the Baltimore Ravens. He played college football for the Utah Utes, and was drafted by the Panthers in the third round of the 2001 NFL Draft.

Smith, a five-time Pro Bowl selection and three-time All-Pro, emerged as one of the NFL's most productive wide receivers of the 21st century, leading the league in catches, receiving yards, and touchdowns in 2005.

He played for the Panthers for 13 seasons before signing with the Ravens in March 2014. Believe it or not, one of his favorite television shows growing up was "I Love Lucy". Smith didn't actually have a color television until he was a teenager and was surprised to learn the show was actually in black in white.
David Beckham - He was born on May 2nd of 1975 and is an English former professional footballer (soccer player), the current president & co-owner of Inter Miami CF and co-owner of Salford City.

He played for Manchester United, Preston North End (on loan), Real Madrid, AC Milan (on loan), LA Galaxy, Paris Saint-Germain and the England national team, for which he held the appearance record for an outfield player until 2016.

He is the first English player to win league titles in four countries: England, Spain, the United States and France, with 115 games played for teams in England.

He retired in May 2013 after a 20-year career, during which he won 19 major trophies

LOTTIE DOD - Charlotte Dod was born on September 24th, 1871 and was an English multi-sport athlete, best known as a tennis player.

She won the Wimbledon Ladies' Singles Championship five times, the first one when she was only fifteen in the summer of 1887. She remains the youngest ladies' singles champion.

In addition to tennis, she competed in many other sports, including golf, field hockey, and archery.

She also won the British Ladies Amateur Golf Championship, played twice for the England women's national field hockey team (which she helped to found, and won a silver medal at the 1908 Summer Olympics in archery.

The Guinness Book of Records named her as the most versatile female athlete of all time, together with track and field athlete and fellow golf player Babe Zaharias.

MICHAEL JORDAN – He was born on February 17, 1963, is also known by his initials MJ, and is an American former professional basketball player and businessman.

He is the principal owner and chairman of the Charlotte Hornets of the National Basketball Association (NBA) and of 23XI Racing in the NASCAR Cup Series.

He played 15 seasons in the NBA, winning six championships with the Chicago Bulls.

His biography on the official NBA website states: "By acclamation, Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player of all time." He was integral in helping to popularize the NBA around the world in the 1980s and 1990s, becoming a global cultural icon in the process.

He joined the Bulls in 1984 as the third overall draft pick, and quickly emerged as a league star, entertaining crowds with his prolific scoring while gaining a reputation as one of the game's best defensive players.

His leaping ability, demonstrated by performing slam dunks from the free throw line in Slam Dunk Contests, earned him the nicknames "Air Jordan" and "His Airness".

He also starred as himself in the 1996 live-action animated film “Space Jam”, and is the central focus of the Emmy Award-winning documentary miniseries The Last Dance (2020).
In 2014, he became the first billionaire player in NBA history. With a net worth of $1.6 billion, he is the fifth-richest African American, behind Robert F. Smith, David Steward, Oprah Winfrey, and Kanye West.

**JIM THORPE:** He lived from 1887 – March 28, 1953) and was an American athlete and Olympic gold medalist. A member of the Sac and Fox Nation, Thorpe was the first Native American to win a gold medal for the United States in the Olympics.

Considered one of the most versatile athletes of modern sports, he won two Olympic gold medals in the 1912 Summer Olympics (one in classic pentathlon and the other in decathlon). He also played American football (collegiate and professional), professional baseball, and basketball.

From 1920 to 1921, Thorpe was nominally the first president of the American Professional Football Association (APFA), which became the NFL in 1922. He played professional sports until age 41, the end of his sports career coinciding with the start of the Great Depression. He struggled to earn a living after that, working several odd jobs.

**SPECIAL MEMORY ABOUT HIM:**

It was the summer of 1912, the Olympics in Sweden. Jim Thorpe, a Native American from the Sac and Fox tribe, was representing the U.S. in four events, including the decathlon, which would determine the greatest athlete in the world.

The decathlon took place over three days. On the morning of day two, when Jim went to gather his track shoes for the competition, they were missing.

Without a store to purchase new shoes, he and his track coach went scouring trash bins looking for a discarded pair. His coach found two mismatched shoes that were of different styles and different sizes. One shoe fit fine. The other was too big. But given time constraints, this was his best option. Jim put two pairs of socks on the foot with the big shoe.

Wearing these track shoes, Jim came in first place. And he didn’t just win, he dominated, winning by a margin of about 700 points. Jim returned home to a ticker-tape parade down Broadway in N.Y. His name was in the papers, the pride of a nation. He was the greatest athlete in the world.

**THE END**