

HOOP DREAMS

Rap Star Aims to Show the World He's a Baller

by Glenn Minnis

The scene was as eerie as it was riveting. There stood Master P, rock in hand and the breezy Atlantic City air in his face, all but spinning the wheel on perhaps the biggest game of his life.

Indeed, these are daring times for the No Limit rap kingpin, whose dogged pursuit of his own NBA career has prompted many of his once high-profile troops to question his allegiance and commitment to some of his far less risky conquests (i.e. his label and sports agency).

"I know there are risks involved with all this," concedes P. "But the only way I became Master P is by rolling the dice."

Gambling on his pro-prospects, P is spending the summer hooping with the three-time U.S. Basketball League champion Atlantic City Seagulls. From there, it's the dream of being invited to his third NBA draft camp in the last 24 months.

"If all my fame and riches have left me afraid to go after the things that are in my heart, then what's the benefit of my power?" he muses. "I mean, what would have been the point of all of my struggles?"

What most don't know is that P has been balling since his childhood days on the blacktop, under the glaring New Orleans sun. "Even before the music, there was basketball," he says. "It's always been a part of who I am. Me and the game, there's always been a strong bond between us."

It's a bond so strong not even his one-time impenetrable army of talented artists can break it. So focused is P that his fledgling No Limit Sports Agency has also felt its effects. In the last 12 months, NBAers Ron Mercer, Derek Anderson and Ricky Davis have split in search of greener pastures.

But the *coup de grace* came just two months ago when former Heisman Trophy winner Ricky Williams bolted for new representation.

"Clients come and clients go," says P, who nonetheless acknowledges that he's heard the rumors that No Limit's mutiny may have been born of his obsession to travel from the legal courts (as a rep) to hardwood ones.

"One of the biggest benefits of owning your own company is being able to take yourself out of the rat race," explains P. "For me, part of my motivation to be a successful entrepreneur was knowing that once that was done, I'd be free to do other things."

So now, all at once, P finds himself both a soldier at ease and one at war. "I'm always mellow when I'm on the court," he says. "But at the same time I know I'm fighting to keep my dream alive."

"Converse B-Ball" by Master P.

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