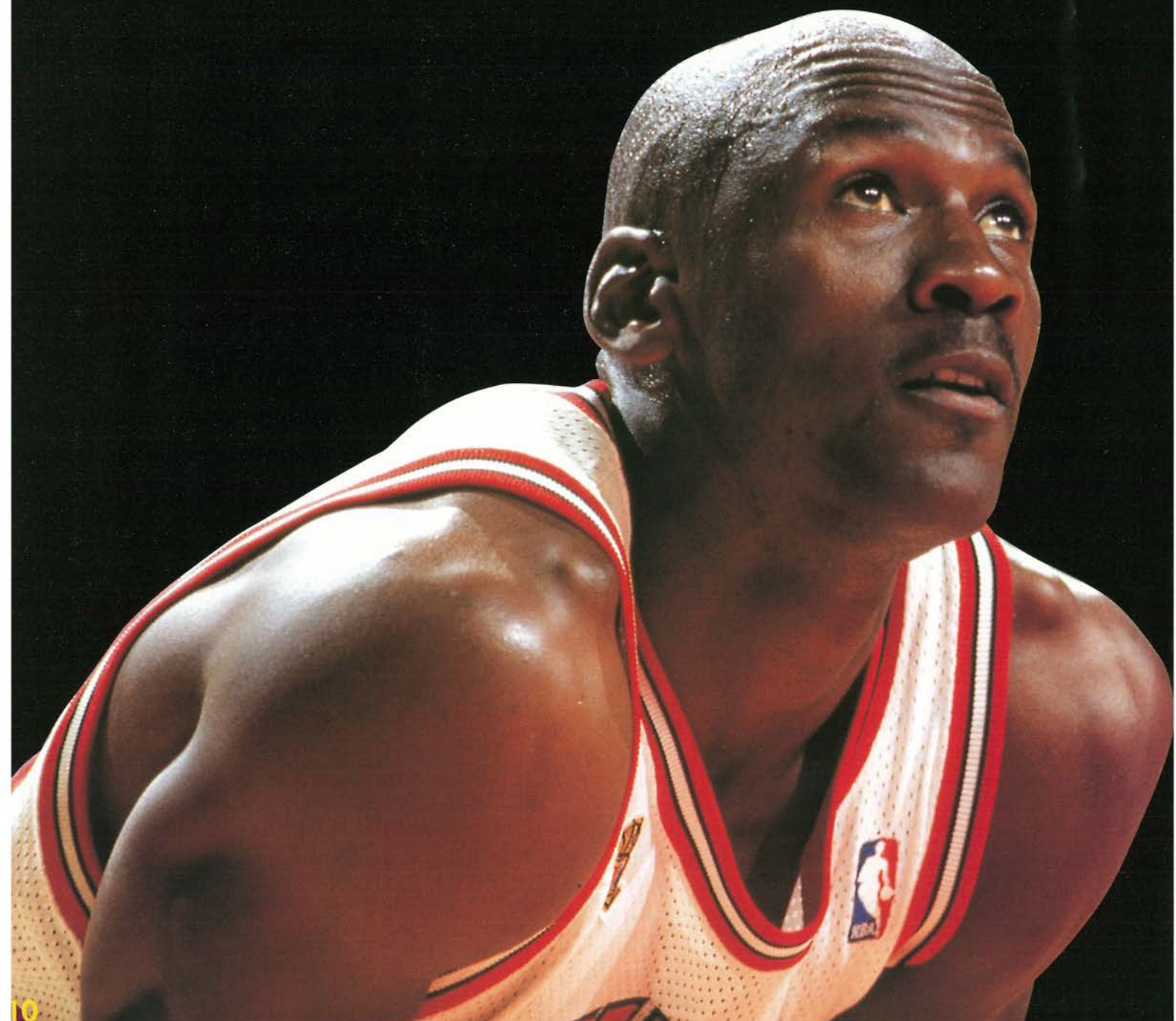


michael jordan

on the pursuit of excellence



Goals

"Step by step. I can't see any other way of accomplishing anything."

I always had the ultimate goal of being the best, but I approached everything step by step. That's why I wasn't afraid to go to the University of North Carolina after high school.

Everyone told me I shouldn't go because I wouldn't be able to play at that level. They said I should go to the Air Force Academy because then I would have a job when I finished college. Everyone had a different agenda for me. But I had my own.

I had always set short-term goals. As I look back, each one of those steps or successes led to the next one. When I got cut from the varsity team as a sophomore in high school, I learned something.

I knew I never wanted to feel that bad again. I never wanted to have that taste in my mouth, that hole in my stomach.

So I set a goal of becoming a starter on the varsity. That's what I focused on all summer. When I worked on my game, that's what I thought about. When it happened, I set another goal, a reasonable, manageable goal that I could realistically achieve if I worked hard enough.

Each time I visualised where I wanted to be, what kind of player I wanted to become.

I guess I approached it with the end in mind. I knew where I wanted to go, and I focused on

getting there. As I reached those goals, they built up the confidence that I could compete at North Carolina. It was all mental for me. I never wrote anything down, I just concentrated on the next step.

I think I could have applied that approach to anything I might have chosen to do. It's no different from the person whose ultimate goal is to become a doctor. If that's your goal and you're getting Cs in biology then the first thing you have to do is get Bs in biology and then As. You have to perfect the first step and then move on to chemistry or physics.

Take those small steps. Otherwise you're opening yourself up to all kinds of frustration. Where would your confidence come from if the only measure of success was becoming a doctor, would that mean your whole life was a failure? Of course not.

All those steps are like pieces of a puzzle. They all come together to form a picture.

If it's complete, then you've reached your goal. If not, don't get down on yourself.

If you've done your best, then you will have had some accomplishments along the way. Not everyone is going to get the entire picture. Not everyone is going to be the greatest salesman or the greatest basketball player. But you can still be considered one of the best, and you can still be considered a success.

That's why I've always set short-term goals. Whether it's golf, basketball, business, family life, or even baseball, I set goals — realistic goals — and I focus on them. I ask questions, I read, I listen. I did the same thing in baseball with the Chicago White Sox. I'm not afraid to ask anybody anything if I don't know. Why should I be afraid? I'm trying to get somewhere. Help me, give me direction. Nothing wrong with that.

Step by step, I can't see any other way of accomplishing anything.

*Excerpt from Michael Jordan's
"I can't accept not trying"
Reprinted with permission from
HarperSanFrancisco*