

# THE AIR JORDAN STARTING FIVE

By Christian Trojan & Brad Graham



**"I DON'T KNOW ABOUT  
FLYING, BUT SOMETIMES  
IT FEELS LIKE I HAVE  
THESE LITTLE WINGS ON  
MY FEET." JORDAN.**  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE, MARCH 24, 1995





# THE AIR JORDAN STARTING FIVE

## CENTRE.

### AIR JORDAN I.

**Worn in the 1984-85 and 1985-86 NBA Season's.**

Alongside its (Nike) cousin – the Air Force 1 – this sneaker is responsible for revolutionised the footwear industry. Imagine the game, or a world for that matter, without these kicks? Imagine the Swoosh hadn't paid that \$5000/ game fine because MJ's kicks were in violation of the NBA's uniform rule? The 1s remain the centrepiece of the Air Jordan Collection for two reasons: A. They're the joints MJ's gold chains still hang out with, and B. After dropping 63 points on the Boston Celtics, Larry Bird coined the definitive MJ quote: "God disguised as Michael Jordan". Despite being first, this sneaker also ended the game – changing consumer habits and unleashing a cultural hurricane that's yet to be repeated.

## POWER FORWARD.

### AIR JORDAN XXIII.

**Released for the 2007-08 NBA Season.**

Released on MJ's 45th birthday, the XXIII remains a landmark release. The last of his 'numbered' signature series, footwear maestro Tinker Hatfield was brought back into the fold to deliver this fitting finale and his masterpiece remains one of the finest basketball performance shoes ever. Killing it with a fingerprint sole, Nike Considered construction and a timeless aesthetic, the XXIII, is, in the words of Jordan himself, the "pinnacle moment in a journey summed up by one single number."

## SMALL FORWARD.

### AIR JORDAN III.

**Worn during 1987-88 NBA season.**

Conceived by former-architect turn footwear aficionado, Tinker Hatfield, the III became the first true MJ signature shoe. Capturing the essence of the man with its elephant print upper, visible Air Sole and Jumpman logo, the III featured three of the most memorable MJ footwear elements. Throw in a series of groundbreaking commercials (and one starts to understand the gravity of this cultural icon). Not hurting his cause, MJ won everything (Defensive Player of the Year, the Slam Dunk Competition, All-Star MVP and League MVP) while leading the NBA in scoring (35.0) and steals (3.17) in these joints. In '88, Jordan took the game and footwear to another planet and he did so on an elephants back.

## SHOOTING GUARD.

### AIR JORDAN XI.

**Worn in the 1995-96 NBA Season.**

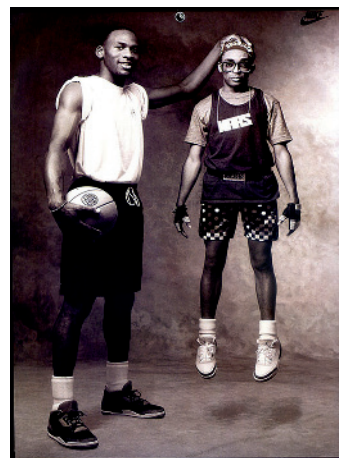
Tuxedo inspired, the XI holds down the title of footwear G.O.A.T thanks to its patent leather. Helped by MJ claiming his fourth career NBA chip and notching a record setting 72 regular season wins (to go along with his eighth scoring title), the shoe was often enjoyed by a legion of fans in T.Vs primetime. Proving he was capable of throwing down on a 100-foot hoop, Jordan bulldozed through Miami, New York and Orlando before defeating Seattle in six. He was officially back in '96. His Legend was never questioned again.

## POINT GUARD.

### AIR JORDAN IV.

**Worn in 1988-89 NBA Season.**

The Tom Clancy of kicks (international bestseller), the IV combined breathable mesh inserts, trapezoidal stabilisation straps and 'Flight' logo. The shoes made a famous cameo in Spike Lee's masterstroke, Do The Right Thing, adding to its street cred and desirability. On the court, Jordan and his IVs registered 32.5 points, a career high eight boards and 2.89 steals per game en route to appearance with the All-Defensive, All-NBA and Eastern Conference All-Star Teams, respectively.





# OFF THE BENCH

## SIXTH MAN. AIR JORDAN VI.

**Worn in the 1990-91 NBA Season.**

The AJVI featured a novel inner boot and iconic lace locks but it'll live forever in the history books as the kicks Michael pushed down Patrick Ewing's throat when he spun baseline and hammered it down like Thor. Winning his first NBA Championship in a spectacular series against the Lakers, MJ had to make room in his trophy case for a fifth scoring title, second NBA MVP and Finals MVP trophy. Many AJVI retros still keep collectors awake at night.

## CENTRE. AIR JORDAN VIII.

**Worn in the 1992-93 NBA Season.**

With its radical look, the VIII remains a very memorable sneaker – it was also the shoe Jordan capturing his first threepeat in. The AJVIII featured anti-inversion straps, a polycarbonate torsion plate and that (love it or hate it) carpeted Jumpman on the tongue. These kicks also had the best view as Jordan dropped 41.0ppg during the NBA Finals (against Charles Barkley and the Phoenix Suns).

## POWER FORWARD. AIR JORDAN XX.

**Released for the 2004-05 NBA Season.**

The motorcycle-inspired XX brought fashion and function together like no other Jordan. Featuring a laser etched strap, independent podular suspension cushioning system and internalised impact distribution plate, the XX was dubbed the "world's most technologically advanced hoops shoe" for a reason.

## SMALL FORWARD. AIR JORDAN IX.

**Released for the 1993-94 NBA Season.**

On October 6, 1993, Jordan blocked out the sun like his name was Monty Burns, announcing his retirement. With his father being murdered, Jordan opted to chase his Major League Baseball dream. Tinker Hatfield designed this Japanese-inspired sneaker which would be emblazoned on the Jordan statue.

## SHOOTING GUARD. AIR JORDAN XIII.

**Worn in 1997-98 NBA Season.**

This shoe was an instant classic the moment it hit retail thanks to its cat's-eye Jumpman hologram and Tinker Hatfield's creative ingenuity. Despite Jordan wearing the AJXIV in the Final against Utah, this shoe helped secure a second threepeat.

## POINT GUARD. AIR JORDAN VII.

**Worn in the 1991-92 NBA Season.**

Winning his second NBA title wasn't enough, Jordan also took his VII's to Barcelona so he could stomp on the '92 Summer Olympics. Based on running-shoes of the time, the VII took its visual cues from West African tribal culture. This shoe remains a fan favourite and was the toughest model to exclude from our Air Jordan Starting Five.

## 12TH MAN. AIR JORDAN XII.

**Worn in the 1996-97 NBA Season.**

Japanese inspired, the lightweight and responsive XII became Jordan's Kleenex. The Flu game in Utah may have put his shoe on the map but it was only one game on a long list of standout showings from MJ in a season which included All-NBA and All-Defensive First Team nods. The XII saw Jordan move into fifth on the NBA's all-time scoring list, oh, and he collected his fifth ring and Finals MVP, just because he could.

## INJURED RESERVE AIR JORDAN X.

**Worn in the 1994-95 NBA Season.**

Michael helped his own signature shoe take on a whole new life when he crashed his own retirement party. March 19, 1995 is still being celebrated by sneakerheads everywhere, just don't New York City if they've got change for a Double Nickel.

