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The crossover appeal of Jeremy Lin

By Cary Chow | ESPN.com



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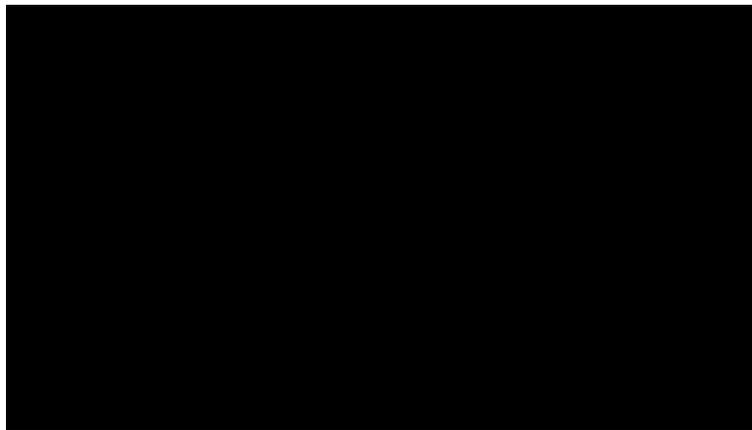
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It's been slightly more than a year since the Rockets' Jeremy Lin emerged from last man sitting to the star of the sports and cultural phenomenon known as Linsanity. His pursuit of hoops happiness was the subject of a crowd-pleasing documentary at the Sundance Film Festival. As Houston hosted NBA All-Star Weekend, Lin launched the Jeremy Lin Foundation, which aims to help underprivileged youths. Playbook went one-on-one with Lin, who's saner than ever.

Playbook: Why was it so important to create the Jeremy Lin Foundation?

Jeremy Lin: It's everything I've wanted to do for a while. My motivation behind it was understanding I was a sinner, and Jesus Christ came in as the best gift that God can give me. In doing so, I wanted to be able to love and serve other people in the community. I also understand that growing up, I had a lot of people that really helped me see what the right path was, help me grow as a person and be a positive influence.

Playbook: You worked relentlessly to get where you are, but you still needed some breaks and opportunities. Does that tie in to the importance of the foundation?

Lin: Absolutely. We selected three organizations that we feel are doing great work in Houston, but they might not have had breaks or opportunities, so we're trying to partner with them to help give them that opportunity, whether it's a boost in exposure or resources.

Playbook: How do you view your role or responsibilities in the Asian American community?

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Lin: It's really unique, and I'm thankful for it. I wasn't always a big spotlight guy, and it took me a little bit by surprise. I've learned to embrace it, be who I am and hope that inspires others to pursue their dreams and be a better person. A lot of people have helped me be where I am today. Anything I can do to pass on what I've learned from other people is really cool.

Playbook: You were the subject of a Sundance documentary called "Linsanity." What was it like to be a part of that film-making process?

Lin: That was just tremendous. We started it before I had ever gone to New York. That was the coolest part of it. We have the whole journey. We have me being cut, me getting waived, me going to the D-League -- the moments when I basically had to be dragged in front of the camera to be filmed, even though I didn't really want to. Looking back, it was one of the best things ever.

Playbook: Was it easy to get comfortable in front of the camera?

Lin: Once I became friends with the director, Evan [Leong], it was really easy, but before that it was tough.

Playbook: How did that whole process begin?

Lin: They approached me when I was at Harvard and asked; I said, "No way!" They approached me in the summer league, into the draft process, then I signed with Golden State. For the whole first year, I didn't want to do it. Then the lockout came around and I thought, This a good opportunity; I might be able to make a little project out of it, and worst-case scenario, I'll get some cool footage to look back at later on in life.

Playbook: When Linsanity actually happened, and the documentary crews were there before it happened, did you guys look at each other and just ask, "What is happening? Can you believe this?"

Lin: Oh yeah. Definitely. I remember they were texting me after every game. "Oh my goodness, what is going on?" It was all a blessing from God the way everything turned out, and now we have a story to tell and share with the whole world.

Playbook: You just shot a "This is SportsCenter" commercial. What was that process like?

Lin: It was fun. The crew was hilarious. They made it super easy. The lines -- I was laughing every time.

Playbook: Those weren't your vocabulary words?

Lin: No, those were scripted unfortunately.

Playbook: Harvard's going to be upset.

Lin: My bad, I let you guys down.

Playbook: Linsanity was almost exactly a year ago. How would you characterize how your life has changed in the last year?

Lin: Night and day. Literally overnight everything changed. Went from just trying to hold on to my career, not knowing if my next day would be my last in the NBA, to this. A lot has come at once, and I'm thankful for it all. It's been a crazy and very enjoyable ride.

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