



8:00 a.m.

Parker's explosively cluttered office—which includes items ranging from Jimi Hendrix's Fender Stratocaster to Olympic sprinter Michael Johnson's gold shoes—reflects the CEO's eclectic design sensibility.

TRACKED

MARK PARKER

Nike's top executive combines technical savvy with a sophisticated aesthetic eye.

BY CHRISTOPHER ROSS PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL FRIBERG

WERE YOU TO RUN into Mark Parker, Nike's CEO, on the company's pristine Beaverton, Oregon, campus, you might mistake him for one of the 21 PhDs who work in the athletic powerhouse's top-secret research lab. Creative-casual duds (blazer, polo, jeans, Nike Roshe sneakers) and a professorial bearing (quiet intonation, short beard, slight stoop) make it difficult to square this somewhat unassuming figure with his position as the fourth-highest-paid head executive in the country. A fanatical devotion to sneaker design and a technical fluency rare among CEOs propelled the 58-year-old Nike lifer to the top perch of the footwear and apparel giant, which has reached annual revenues of \$24 billion, up 60 percent since he was appointed in 2006. "Have you heard the Japanese word *otaku*?" he muses. "It means being deeply

obsessed by the details of something. I relate to that."

As a track star at Penn State (and an early tester for the magazine *Runner's World*) who put in double-digit mileage daily, he used to tinker with his own running shoes, and it was this right-brained DIY sensibility that landed him at Nike's R&D lab in Exeter, New Hampshire, in 1979 as a young designer. He went on to work with the late Nike cofounder Bill Bowerman, the hard-edged University of Oregon track coach whose motivational quotes now adorn the walls of Nike stores. Fast forward 34 years later, and Parker is still directly involved in shoe construction, walking into meetings holding his Moleskine graph-paper notebook filled with doodles and wearing new prototypes on his feet—to the great alarm of his minders, charged with keeping said prototypes under wraps.

Parker has an uncanny eye for good design, whether

it's the two recent megahits he green-lit at Nike—the ultralight Flyknit sneakers and the chic body-data-gathering FuelBand—or the works of surrealist painter Mark Ryden, whom he counts as a friend and whose pieces he collects. Parker's cutting-edge sensibility is in part derived from his social network of art and music luminaries—which includes Kanye West and artist Tom Sachs—whose members congregate at salon-like gatherings he occasionally throws. As he looks forward to the 2014 Olympics and World Cup (Nike will be producing shoe models and apparel that will be used by the athletes), his greatest advantage may be his ability to synthesize the input of disparate influences, from lab engineers to downtown artists. And beneath it all, he can still hear the old refrain his former boss, Bowerman, challenged young designers with: "Is that the best you can do?" >



8:30 a.m.
Grabbing a coffee
shortly after arriving at the office.
An early riser, he's been up since
five and has already worked out.

11:38 a.m.
Mobbed on campus
by a group taking a tour. Parker is a celeb-
rity in Asia, where he is often recognized
on sight and asked to pose for photographs.



10:11 a.m.
A morning
check-in meeting
with brand president
Trevor Edwards. Left:
One of Parker's drawings.
His hand conceals a yet-
unreleased new design.
Above: An early Nike shoe
model in Parker's office.

2
hours

Amount of time he worked out that morning,
primarily weight-lifting and spinning.
He exercises two hours a day four times a
week, and one hour a day on the other three.

8,000
pieces

in Parker's art collection, which includes
work by Andy Warhol. He prefers to
visit artists' studios, instead of going
to galleries.

1
lifelike bust

of Abraham Lincoln in Parker's office, made
from the president's death mask. He
considers Lincoln his model for leadership.

15:32.5

The world record
for women's 5,000 meters at the National
Track Championships, set by Parker's wife,
Kathy, in 1978. It's since been broken.

\$500

Amount Phil Knight
and his former coach, Bill Bowerman,
each pledged when they founded Nike, then
called Blue Ribbon Sports, in 1964.

2
dogs

in the Parker household: a Chihuahua
and a mixed-breed pooch rescued from
Hurricane Katrina.

200
meters

Distance the first prototype of Flyknit
sneakers traveled before falling apart.
Over 100 prototypes later, they nailed it.

3
kids

in the Parker family: Jennifer, 30,
Megan, 27, and Matthew, 25.

\$35.2M

Parker's compensation
in 2012, up from \$11 million in 2011.

12:15 p.m.
Reviewing
shoe fabrics

in Nike's materials library
with Hannah Jones, vice
president of sustainable
business and innova-
tion. Nike has tested the
environmental impact of
70,000 different fabrics.



3:32 p.m.

Discussing the cultish, limited-edition HTM line with legendary designer Tinker Hatfield (creator of the best-known Air Jordan models) in the Winnebago-turned-conference room. H stands for Hiroshi Fujiwara, the other series' designer, T for Tinker, M for Mark.



\$800

Cost of the used Winnebago
Nike converted into an innovation office. Bringing the space up to building codes cost many, many multiples of this.

2:59

Time set on the clocks
in the Winnebago meeting room, said to be a reference to the sub-three-hour marathon.

85

motion-sensor detectors
glued onto Olympic decathlete Ashton Eaton's body in the Nike Sports Research Lab. Digital renderings of his form can be used to create physical models of his body with a 3-D printer.

150

emails received
20 sent.

\$90,300

Winning eBay bid
for limited-edition Nike Air Yeezy II sneakers, designed by Kanye West, one of the highest prices paid for a pair of Nike shoes.

30

calls received
10 made.

250

acres
make up Nike's campus, which includes soccer and track fields, swimming pools, basketball courts, gyms, saunas and a Japanese garden.

500

total models
made of the 2003 BMW Alpina Z8. Parker drives one to and from work that day.

6'4"

Parker's height
Among CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, roughly 58% are six feet or taller, according to one study—only about 14.5% of all U.S. men are this tall.



2:05 p.m.
In the research lab,
Nike-sponsored Olympic
decathlete Ashton Eaton
practices his start off the
blocks, as Parker—and
motion-sensor cameras—
look on.



5:20 p.m.
Photo op
with Nike employees
competing in that weekend's
Hood to Coast event, the
largest relay in the world,
in which teams of 12
runners cover 199 miles.

6:55 p.m.

Taking off
to stop by Portland's Nike store
before heading home. He has dinner
(salmon and rice) with his wife at
8 p.m., walks the dogs, watches the
news and is in bed by 11:30 p.m.

