



JULY 2012

THE *HEMI* Q&A

Tyson Chandler

Over his 11-year career, this former farm boy has proven to be one of the toughest players in the NBA, earning himself a spot on Team USA's roster. As he gears up for London, we talk with him about how he'll fit into this year's squad, how he keeps the fire burning and perhaps the only thing he doesn't seem humble about: his fashion sense.

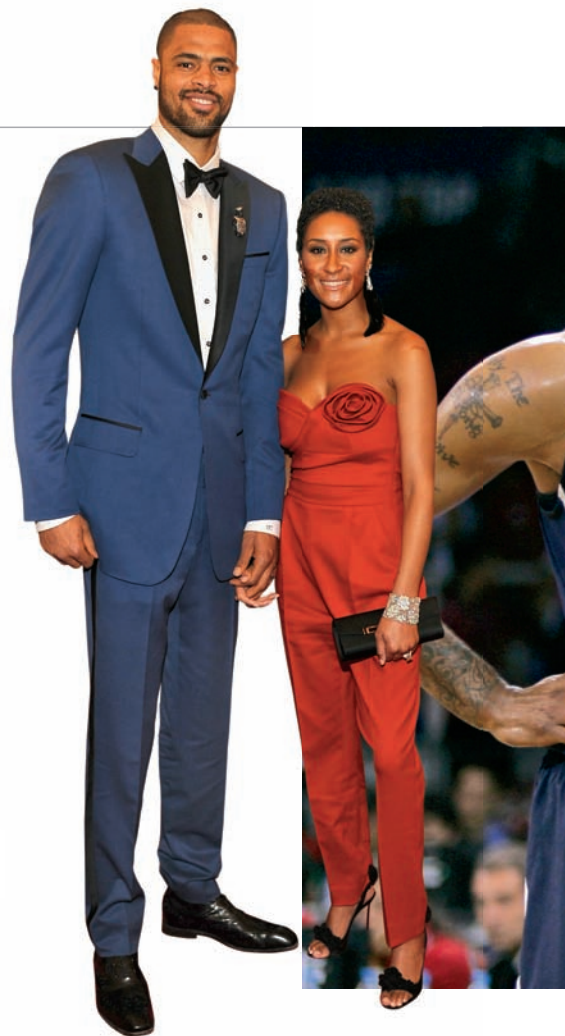
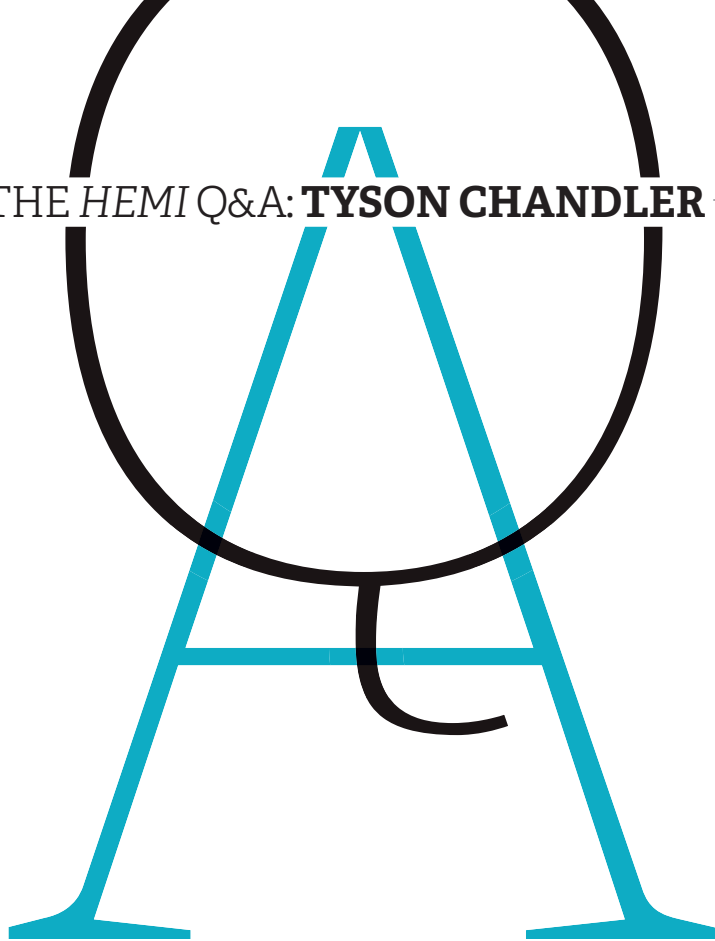
BY SAM POLCER

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— THE HEMI Q&A: TYSON CHANDLER —



WHEN YOU CONSIDER the guys who've gone straight from high school to the NBA, big expectations are often accompanied by big egos, both on and off the court (see Kobe, LeBron). Not so for Tyson Chandler, a team player who treats every game like a last stand, and whose star has risen steadily ever since his childhood on the family farm just south of Fresno, Calif., where, when he wasn't milking cows, feeding pigs or working in the fields, the nearly 6-foot-tall 9-year-old was practicing on a rim that his grandfather had fixed to a tree.

After moving to Compton and leading his high school team to a state championship, the now 7-foot-1 center was the No. 2 NBA draft pick in 2001, and played for five years with the Chicago Bulls, spending much of his time injured or in foul trouble. But during his stints with the New Orleans Hornets and the Charlotte Bobcats, Chandler's game matured, and after being traded to the Dallas Mavericks in 2010, the tenacious big man stunned everybody by helping the aging team win its first championship.

The New York Knicks took notice and signed Chandler to a reported \$58 million four-year contract. By all accounts, it was money well spent. Thanks to Chandler's relentless defensive skills and knack for adapting to the players around him, the Knicks—for

HIGH STYLE

Tyson Chandler with, from left, wife Kimberly; Coach K in 2010; New York Knicks teammates Carmelo Anthony and Amar'e Stoudemire

whom colossal blunders (Amar'e Stoudemire lacerating his hand punching a fire extinguisher case, for instance) overshadowed occasional flashes of hope (Linsanity)—made the playoffs. Through it all, Chandler was there, the last thing any opposing team wanted to see anywhere near the basket. For his efforts he was named the NBA's Defensive Player of the Year.

Lately, in addition to posting the fourth highest field-goal percentage in NBA history, he's been getting noticed for his off-court pursuits, namely art and fashion, attending events like the famed Costume Institute Gala Benefit in New York. We called him just as he was preparing to step into the international spotlight as a center on USA Basketball's all-star roster at the London 2012 Olympic Games.



TYSON CHANDLER, BY THE NUMBERS

29

Age

11

Seasons in the NBA

\$13,107,837

2012 salary

8.9

Rebounds per game (career average)

6.8

Points per game (career average)

23

Most rebounds in a game (vs. Memphis in 2007)

27

Most points in a game (vs. Portland in 2002)

HEMISPHERES: *The Knicks probably wouldn't have made it into the playoffs without you—so, as a New Yorker, I'll start with a belated welcome to our fair city. I already like what you've done with the place.*

CHANDLER: [Laughs.] Thank you, I appreciate that.

HEMISPHERES: *One of the reasons you signed with the Knicks was to play alongside folks like Carmelo Anthony and Amar'e Stoudemire. In London, you'll be playing not only with Carmelo, but also with superstars like Dwyane Wade, Kobe Bryant and LeBron James.*

CHANDLER: *To play with guys like that is a great honor. The best part of the Olympics is not only playing in it, but also being able to practice with some of the best players in the world.*

HEMISPHERES: *That said, there's been quite a lot of upheaval in the roster. Which must be something you're used to, after playing for four teams and now the Knicks, an organization addicted to staffing and lineup changes. Do you think all these changes will affect how Team USA, whatever it ends up being, plays together?*

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Who will be the best-dressed player on Team USA? “Besides myself?” the notably stylish Chandler laughs. “Maybe Dwyane Wade?”





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“It’s something that every kid dreams of, but it’s one of those things that seem so out of reach. To be able to represent myself, my family and my country in the Olympics and bring back a gold medal would mean so much.”

CHANDLER: No. The incredible coaching staff that we have, led by Coach [Mike] Krzyzewski, always gets the guys to come together, to play hard and play as one. And we understand that we’re representing something that’s much bigger than us as individuals. I think we’re all up to the challenge.

HEMISPHERES: *There are some outsize personalities heading to London, but for all your aggressiveness on the court you’re known for being somewhat even-keeled. Do you think that factored into your being selected for the team?*

CHANDLER: Yeah, I think that while a big part was what I could bring to the table as far as my performance on the floor, I’m good in the locker room as well. Every discussion with Coach K has been “I want you to come here and just be yourself.”

HEMISPHERES: *You bring a lot of energy*

and spirit to whatever team you’re on.

CHANDLER: Oh, definitely. Every night you have to go out and play with a certain passion. You’re not only playing for yourself, your teammates and the organization, but also for the fans who come out and watch. You should give it your all and give a great performance.

HEMISPHERES: *What would an Olympic gold mean to you?*

CHANDLER: It’s something that every kid dreams of, but it’s one of those things that seem so out of reach. To be able to represent myself, my family and my country in the Olympics and bring back a gold medal would mean so much.

HEMISPHERES: *The NBA now has far more international stars than it used to. Do you think the Olympic Games have played a role in that?*

CHANDLER: Any time that you’re able to see basketball on a world stage, it sparks interest. Now we have a lot of players from across the world that make up our league, and I think that with USA Basketball and everything the NBA is doing globally, the game is getting bigger and bigger. There are kids all around the world now, picking up a ball, that will one day be in our league.

HEMISPHERES: *But on the flip side, it makes the competition stronger.*

CHANDLER: Oh, yeah, so it’s good and bad. [Laughs.] Good for the NBA, bad every four years in the Olympics.

HEMISPHERES: *Who’s the team to beat this year, besides you guys?*

CHANDLER: There are a lot of good teams. You have Spain, France, Argentina, Brazil ... but the main competition is probably Spain.

HEMISPHERES: *Your defensive skills are well known at this point, but in terms of offense, how do you fit in with the rest of the crew?*

CHANDLER: I think I fit in really well. The coaching staff is all about fast-paced pick and roll. There are a lot of talented players who can create shots, create plays, and the big guy has to get to the rim and get up and down the court.

HEMISPHERES: *Are there any differences in the style of play between the NBA and international basketball?*

CHANDLER: Huge differences. There’s less time—the quarters are shorter. The floor is much more spread out, so a lot of the big guys can step out and knock down jump shots on the perimeter. And there’s no three-second rule, which helps because if I don’t have to worry about that when I’m in the paint, it makes me more effective defensively.

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“After playing under Coach K, and getting to understand who he actually is, I have all the respect in the world for the man. I would send my son to Duke if he was coaching.”

HEMISPHERES: *This is probably Mike Krzyzewski's last year as coach of the U.S. team. What has he meant to the world of basketball?*

CHANDLER: It's hard to describe. What he's brought to not only the college level, but also the NBA—I know he hasn't coached there, but the players that he's brought to the NBA are always first-class players. He's going to go down as one of the greatest coaches of all time. I've played under him twice already. I wasn't a big Duke fan before meeting Coach K. It was just one of those organizations. I think that for everybody, you either love Duke or you hate it. But after playing under him, and getting to understand who he actually is, I have all the respect in the world for the man. I would send my son to Duke if he was coaching.

HEMISPHERES: *You have quite a few hobbies off the court. For instance, last year an artist named Ari Marcopoulos put together a 'zine about you, and the two of you became friends. How'd that come about?*

CHANDLER: Yeah, he did a 'zine about me, and I was in New York visiting at the time. This was before I came to the Knicks. Someone told me about it, so I stopped at his shop and got some copies. It made me wonder more about who this artist was, so I told him that we should hook up when I came to New York after the season. I didn't realize

that I was going to be signing with the Knicks that summer, so when I signed, I reached out to him, and from there we've just been hanging out and taking pictures together and kind of building a relationship.

HEMISPHERES: *So, you're also into photography.*

CHANDLER: Yeah, I like to walk around in different cities and different areas and just shoot anything that catches my eye. I'm definitely looking forward to capturing the London trip.

HEMISPHERES: *And you're into painting. What do you like to paint?*

CHANDLER: Mainly the things I take pictures of. A lot of times my children are my inspiration, so I often do paintings for them.

HEMISPHERES: *And fashion. You and your wife went to the Costume Institute Gala Benefit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and were even featured on Vogue's best-dressed list for the event. Who did you wear?*

CHANDLER: I wore a suit made by Waraire Boswell. It was incredible. Just to be there with everybody that you love and admire, fashion-wise, and to be able to meet the designers, was incredible. And all the fashion in the room ...

HEMISPHERES: *Any standouts?*

CHANDLER: Anna Wintour is at the top of my list. I've seen her a couple of times, and she's always sharp as a tack. She's the queen of fashion, so it was a big honor to meet her. She dressed my wife, who looked great that night—she was wearing a Valentino jumpsuit. Anna gave my wife her approval, so it was very nice.

HEMISPHERES: *Ralph Lauren is doing Team USA's duds again this year. Have any feelings about that?*

CHANDLER: I love his stuff, so I'm looking forward to getting my suit. It's always so chic.

HEMISPHERES: *Who'll be the best-dressed basketball player in London?*

CHANDLER: Besides myself? [Laughs.] I'll have to put myself first. Second best, maybe Dwyane Wade? When I see him in different magazines, he's always well put together.

HEMISPHERES: *What kind of a reaction are you expecting from Londoners and the rest of the international community once you arrive?*

CHANDLER: I'm expecting a good reaction. It's the Olympics, so for the fans, it's all about seeing the greatest athletes in the world, and USA Basketball is obviously a huge part of that.

HEMISPHERES: *Would it be bad luck to speculate on how you'd celebrate winning the gold? Any parties planned?*

CHANDLER: You know what? I'm going to wait and take it game by game.

Hemispheres executive editor **SAM POLCER** is, in fact, the first thing that any opposing team would like to see standing anywhere near the basket.
