

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Victor Wembanyama: How to Build a Global Icon

Our Friends · Thursday, June 4th, 2026

As sports movies go, the 2023 film *Air*, which is based on the real-life shoe deals between Nike and the then-young rookie athlete Michael Jordan, did a good job of **appealing beyond basketball** (and sports apparel) fans. While it didn't smash any box office records, it does hold a 93% rating on Rotten Tomatoes; it picked up plenty of awards and nominations, too.

Of course, it probably helped **that the film** was based on Michael Jordan, one of a handful of athletes that transcend sports. You can ask someone who has never seen an NBA game in their life, and they'll know who Jordan is. There have been a few stars like that throughout history: Muhammad Ali and Tiger Woods, most definitely; LeBron James, maybe.

A young Frenchman with the world at his feet

Right now, there is a growing sense that the NBA has another one on its hands, a young Frenchman by the name of Victor Wembanyama. It is much, much too soon to say that this athlete is the second coming of Michael Jordan or LeBron James. In fact, they have completely different backgrounds, not to mention playing styles. But what is clear is that no player has been as hyped since James was plucked from high school in the early 2000s. Moreover, his early career highlights have arguably exceeded both of those.

What is fascinating, even for non-basketball fans, is watching Wembanyama's star ascend in real-time. Most often, we learn about transcendent athletes after they have 'made it,' but with Wembanyama, it's like we are watching it slowly unfold. He's in the NBA Finals this week with the San Antonio Spurs. The team was seen as an underdog in the **NBA odds** at the beginning of the season, but the young Frenchman has become the catalyst for an unlikely success.

Huge financial incentives await

What follows is a lot of money. Wembanyama has already been scooped up by big brands. Nike, of course, as so many NBA athletes have done in the past, but also others, **including Louis-Vuitton**. The luxury French fashion brand got in early, taking on Wembanyama before he really hit the heights in the NBA. He's also taking equity in startups, so it seems that the millions he has earned so far are not sitting idle.

As for contracts, he is in line for an extension this summer, which could earn him over \$300 million across six years. It's a staggering amount of money, but it's worth noting that Wembanyama will only be 28 when the contract runs up in 2032. That's the age when most players

are heading into their prime. It's staggering to think what sort of money he could earn, should he stay on the same course.

The NBA and the San Antonio Spurs are acutely aware of what having such an athlete on their books means. They have been keen to get the Spurs to play abroad, including in Wembanyama's native France. They know that there is an opportunity to cash in on a non-American as a global star, especially in the burgeoning European market. The NBA will expand with a new European-branded league in the near future, and you can gather that Wembanyama will be used as a kind of soft power for marketing.

The comparisons with Jordan the player can be left behind until Wembanyama finishes his career, but it is clear that they are treating him with the same focus on marketing as if they have unearthed Jordan once again. But, of course, there should be a note of caution. This is a young man who has a lot of pressure and scrutiny suddenly heaped upon him. The weight of expectation is massive. So far, he seems to be dealing with it, taking it in his stride, but sports history is littered with more stories of failure than success.

[CLICK HERE TO DONATE IN SUPPORT OF OUR NONPROFIT COVERAGE OF ARTS AND CULTURE](#)

This entry was posted on Thursday, June 4th, 2026 at 4:19 pm and is filed under [Check This Out](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can leave a response, or [trackback](#) from your own site.