

Taking Flight

An Excerpt from JUMP ATTACK: The Formula for Explosive Athletic Performance, Jumping Higher, and Training Like the Pros

Near the end of Michael Jordan's career with the Bulls, he agreed to allow a camera crew to follow him around for a documentary on his last season in Chicago.

Early one morning—it was still dark outside and Michael's kids were still asleep—the crew came to his house for a rare glimpse into his private gym where I trained him.

The complete video has never been released, but I can tell you how it began:

The cameraman noticed a poster on the wall, a classic shot of MJ soaring through the air, with the caption HOW DOES MICHAEL FLY? He zoomed in on the poster, then turned the camera to Michael and asked him:

“How *do* you fly?”

Michael just laughed, shook his head, pointed across the gym at me, and said in that deep, commanding voice, “Ask him.”

Good question.

No doubt Michael's genetics gave him a physical advantage; he has those huge hands and long limbs and predominantly fast-twitch muscles that allow him to do extraordinary things. But contrary to popular legend, he is not a freak of nature. I know people mean it as a compliment when they talk about Michael as if he's superhuman.

But I see it as an insult, because it suggests he didn't have to work for his success, and believe me, no one ever worked harder.

In fact, there are plenty of athletes who share his physical abilities, and in some cases even exceed them. But Michael had the mental toughness to exceed anyone else's physical abilities, along with the drive and commitment to work relentlessly on his skills, and that toughness is ultimately what separates merely great athletes from iconic superstars. That's why Kobe Bryant and Dwyane Wade, in their thirties, could outplay guys who are much

younger; like Michael, they have the mentality and focus and work ethic to maximize their skills, push beyond injuries, and never stop driving to improve.

So there are undoubtedly a lot of factors that allowed Michael to fly. But when he pointed at me in his gym that morning, this is what he meant:

We trained in a way that maximized his abilities and gifts and genetics, so he could reach his ultimate potential in every way, and still keep improving. We tweaked the standard training principles, because there was nothing standard about Michael's game. While everyone else was still obsessed with vertical jumps, we focused instead on overall explosiveness. Not just one jump straight into the air, but multiple jumps in all directions, forward, backward, laterally, and maintaining that explosiveness throughout the entire game, from one end of the court to the other.

Everyone loves the showstopper dunk, but what happens right after that dunk? The game doesn't stop; neither did he. We trained for longevity and overall athleticism that would allow him to stay healthy and powerful from the opening game of the season until he held the championship trophy in June, season after season.

And that training—the “secret” to Michael's explosiveness and his ability to take flight—became the basis for *Jump Attack*.

The first version of this book was created in 1990, when Michael was doing a lot of camps and clinics and everyone kept asking him, “How do you jump so high? How do you dunk like that? What can I do to increase my vertical jump?” Everyone wanted to “be like Mike,” so he asked me to put together something he could give to everyone who attended, a program they could do on their own that reflected the hard work he put into his own body, so everyone could see he didn't just show up and look good—he worked relentlessly to be that good.

I developed the original *Jump Attack* program based on the workout I created for him, which was completely unique and different from the way anyone else was training. At that time, no one else was doing resistance training for the legs during the season; the common belief was that playing basketball and running up and down the court were enough. In fact, it was just the opposite; playing a sport actually breaks down the muscle. So we went the other way and worked on building up the muscles that have a tendency to break down over the course of a long season.

We also began sequencing his exercises to get the most out of every muscle, every time. We focused on pre-exhausting the targeted muscle,

loosening the joints, combining exercises to teach the muscles how to fire correctly, stretching the muscles and joints immediately after so they'd be ready for the next set.

While most programs were targeting the major muscle groups, we were also emphasizing the smaller muscles, the neutralizers and stabilizers, so everything was working together.

And we definitely got people talking when they heard MJ was lifting on game days, which was basically unheard of at that time but made perfect sense to us. Look at the schedule: If you take off every game day, that's a whole lot of days you're not working those muscles properly. For us, not acceptable. So we stayed with our workout schedule regardless of the game schedule. It became part of his game preparation; just like you eat a certain way on game day, you train a certain way on game day.

Bottom line: You can't get extraordinary results from an ordinary workout.

And if you're thinking, "Sure, it worked for MJ, how hard can it be to make MJ look good?" think again. It was quite a challenge to take someone like Michael Jordan, who already had superior ability, and make him even more superior. My challenge: If he's this explosive, if he can jump this high, how can I make him even more explosive? How can we get him to jump even higher?

When you're dealing with the greats—and I've been fortunate to train many—the room for improvement is so small that we're constantly looking for the slightest edge, the tiniest detail or adjustment that will give them the advantage. So Michael's workout program was designed with that in mind: Build on his greatness and make him unstoppable.

Yet it was clear to me that even though the program was created for the best of the best, it would work for anyone, not just the greats. So I expanded the workout into a book, called it *Jump Attack*, and self-published it. Over the next few years, I sold hundreds of thousands of books through mail order, filling out address labels and carrying packages to the post office. When Michael retired, I figured that was that. We sold out, and I didn't print more.

Then one day I got an email from a young basketball player saying he found the book on eBay for \$1,000. That is not a typo. One thousand dollars. I started looking around, and found there were more like it, selling for hundreds of dollars all over the Internet. Before long I started getting emails and tweets from athletes and coaches and parents asking how they could get the book.

And I realized that even though science and research and training had evolved since we released the original *Jump Attack* more than twenty years

ago, I was still using the same core concepts with my clients, and they were still getting the same explosive results and increased athleticism. The only difference was now we had ways of getting those results faster and more effectively. All these years later, the same training principles still form the foundation of what I do. From Michael Jordan to Kobe Bryant to Dwyane Wade and so many others, this works.

But I also realized it was time for an entirely new book. Now we know so much more about elite training, how to train all the muscle groups so everything works together, how the body responds to rest and recovery, how nutrition affects performance, when to stretch and how to stretch. We know how to condition the central nervous system to create faster reflex action and faster explosive contractions, so you don't have to think about what you're supposed to do, your body just knows. By tweaking the exercises in small ways—something as simple as elevating your heels or changing the leg position of a lunge, for example—we can attack the small muscles that most programs completely ignore. I enhanced the program to work all the different muscular contractions—*isometric, concentric, eccentric*—as we work through every phase of developing explosiveness. I also added upper body and core work designed to make the entire body more explosive, not just the legs. I changed the exercises and schedule to keep it fresh and challenging. The result is an entirely new workout: the all-new *Jump Attack*.

The core concept of the book remains the same—we're still using the exclusive sequences I use with every one of my pro athletes—but the entire program has been updated to give you state-of-the-art training for unprecedented results. If you're one of the hundreds of thousands of athletes who worked out with the original *Jump Attack*, you will discover that this program contains entirely new exercises and challenges. If you've never tried this program at all, believe me, you are about to experience something completely unique, train like you've never trained before, and see improvements you probably thought were impossible.