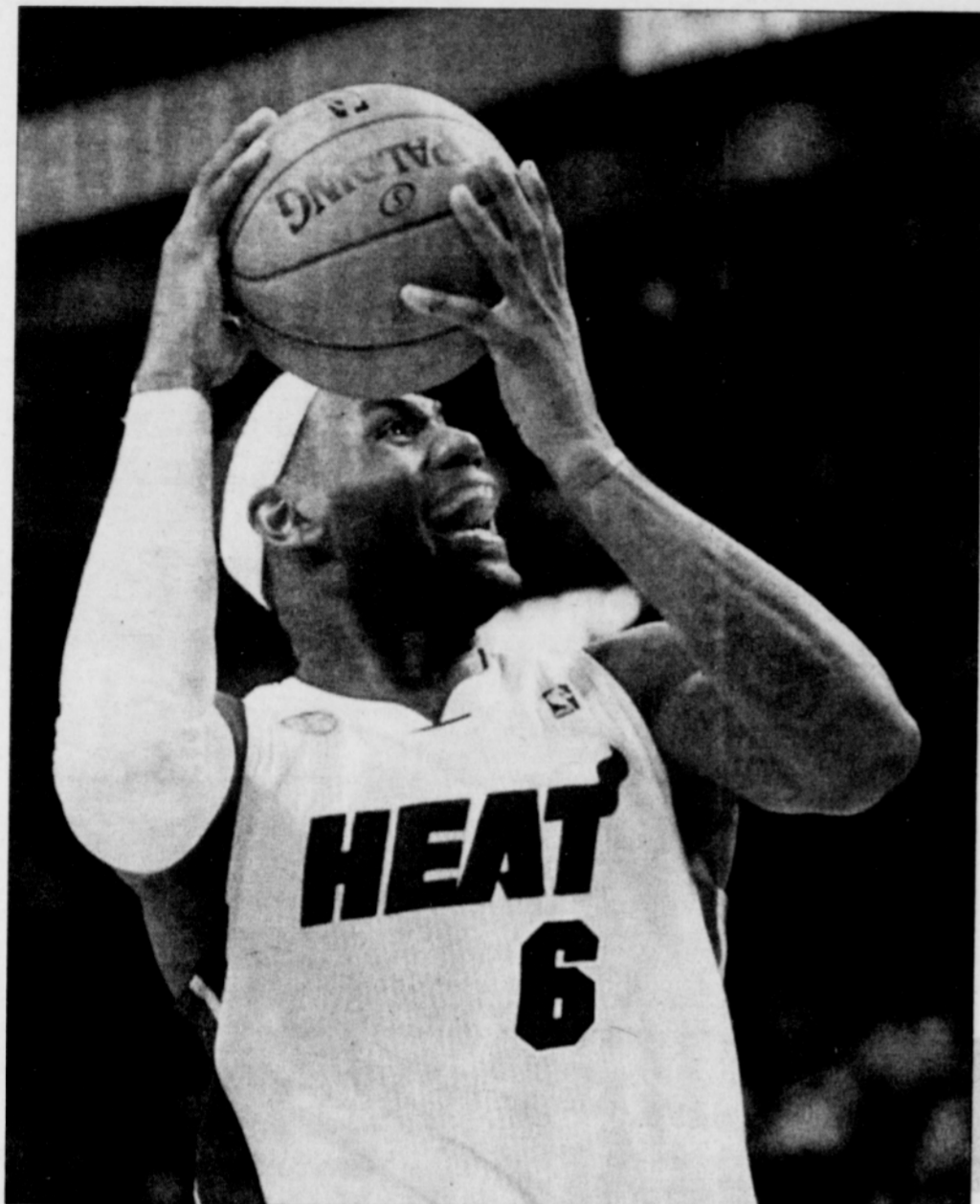


SPORTS



Sportsman of the Year James surprised by Sports Illustrated honor

(AP) -- When LeBron James learned he was Sports Illustrated's Sportsman of the Year, the Miami Heat star was surprised.

Not because he thought his achievements in 2012 weren't worthy, but because he figured what happened in 2010 was still holding him back.

Apparently, that's no longer the case. The magazine announced its annual choice Monday, with James becoming the first NBA player to win the award since Heat teammate Dwyane Wade in 2006.

"I remember just like yesterday when I signed here and basically, like the roof caved in," James told The Associated Press, referring to the fallout from his infamous "Decision" to leave Cleveland for Miami in 2010. "To see that I and my team and everyone around me was able to patch that roof up,

to come to this point, to come to this point and receive such a prestigious award, it's huge."

Past winners include Muhammad Ali, Jack Nicklaus, Wayne Gretzky, Arthur Ashe, Tom Brady, Derek Jeter and Michael Phelps. College basketball coaches Mike Krzyzewski - James' Olympic coach - and Pat Summitt shared the honor last year.

Time Inc. Sports Group editor Paul Fichtenbaum said one thing separating James this year was that when Miami needed him most "he came up the biggest." In particular, Game 4 of the second-round series at Indiana and Game 6 of the Eastern Conference finals at Boston.

"LeBron kind of made it easy on us," Fichtenbaum said. "In a year that had really high standards, he just stood taller than everybody else."

James won essentially all he could win in 2012: He became an NBA champion for the first time, won the NBA Finals MVP trophy, helped the U.S. win Olympic gold for the second time and picked up his third NBA MVP award.

LeBron James named Sports Illustrated's Sportsman of the Year.

Murder-Suicide Stuns NFL

(AP) — As investigators search for a motive to help explain why Chiefs linebacker Jovan Belcher killed his girlfriend and then himself, a discordant picture of the couple began to emerge.

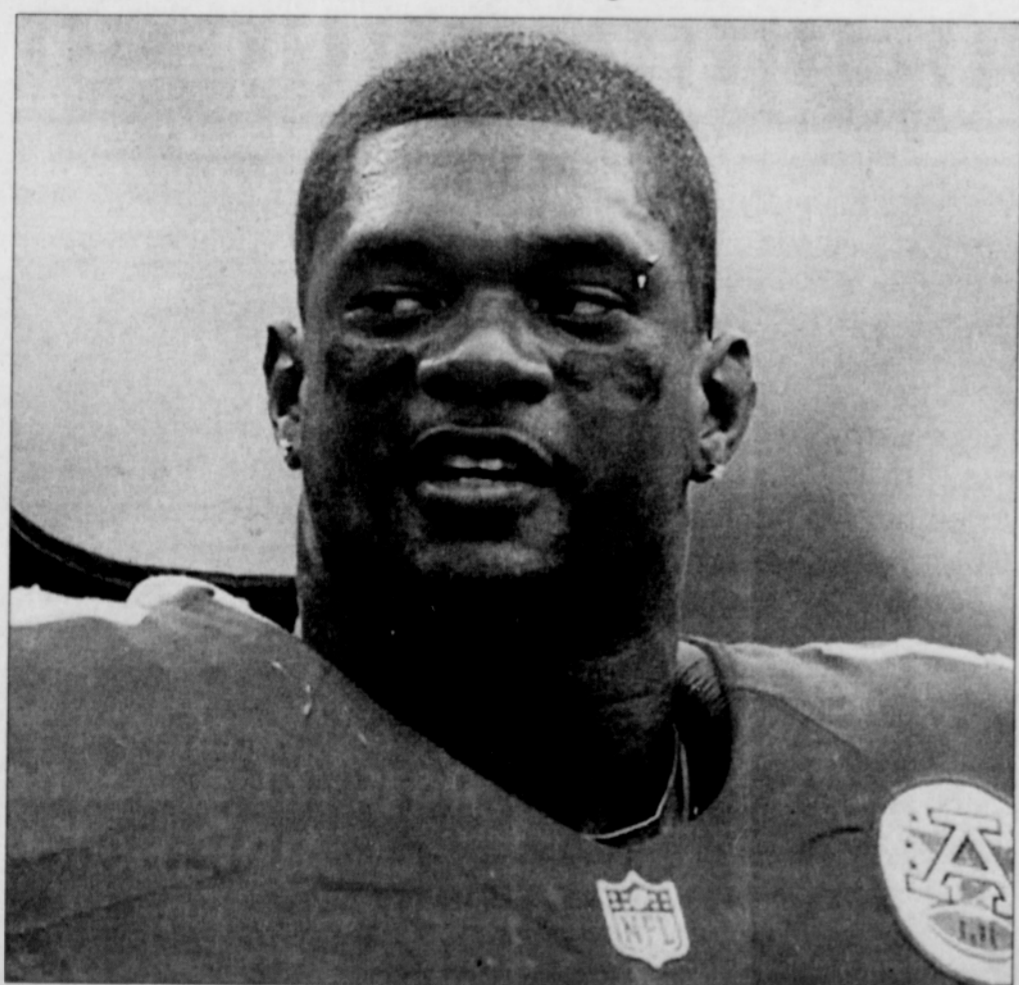
Belcher and his girlfriend, 22-year-old Kasandra M. Perkins, had lived apart briefly earlier in the year but had gotten back together by Thanksgiving, according to a friend of Perkins.

Brianne York, 21, said Sunday the couple, who had a 3-month-old daughter, Zoey, argued about "normal couple stuff" but that her friend was "really happy about being a mom."

When she learned Saturday that Belcher had fatally shot Perkins at the couples' home, York said, she thought someone must have been mistaken.

Afterward, Belcher drove about five miles to Arrowhead Stadium, where he thanked general manager Scott Pioli and coach Romeo Crennel for all they'd done for him. Belcher then fatally shot himself in the practice facility's parking lot, police said.

Sunday found Crennel on the sidelines, bravely holding together a team in turmoil. The Chiefs rallied to a 27-21 victory over the Carolina Panthers, breaking an eight-game losing streak.



Jovan Belcher

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