

JOHN AMAECHI

b. May 29, 1947

“It was absolutely my ultimate goal to play in the NBA,” says Amaechi. In 1995, his dream became reality.

“I am gay, black, British ... and I am now asserting my activism.”

John Amaechi is the first NBA player to speak publicly about being gay. In 2007, three years after retiring from pro basketball, he became one of only six male professional athletes in the four major U.S. sports to come out.

Esera Tuaolo, an NFL player who came out in 2002, said of Amaechi, “What John did is amazing. He does not know how many lives he’s saved by speaking the truth.”

Amaechi, the son of a Nigerian father and a white British mother, grew up in England. When he started playing basketball at 16, his right hand was nearly severed in an accident. As a result, Amaechi became ambidextrous, which helped him become a better basketball player. Amaechi played basketball at Penn State University, where he was twice selected a First Team Academic All-American.

“It was absolutely my ultimate goal to play in the NBA,” says Amaechi. In 1995, Amaechi’s dream became reality. He played for the Cleveland Cavaliers, followed by the Orlando Magic and the Utah Jazz. In 2000, Amaechi made headlines when he turned down a \$17 million offer from the Los Angeles Lakers. Opting to stay in Orlando earning \$600,000 a year, Amaechi remained loyal to the Magic, who hired him when no other team would.

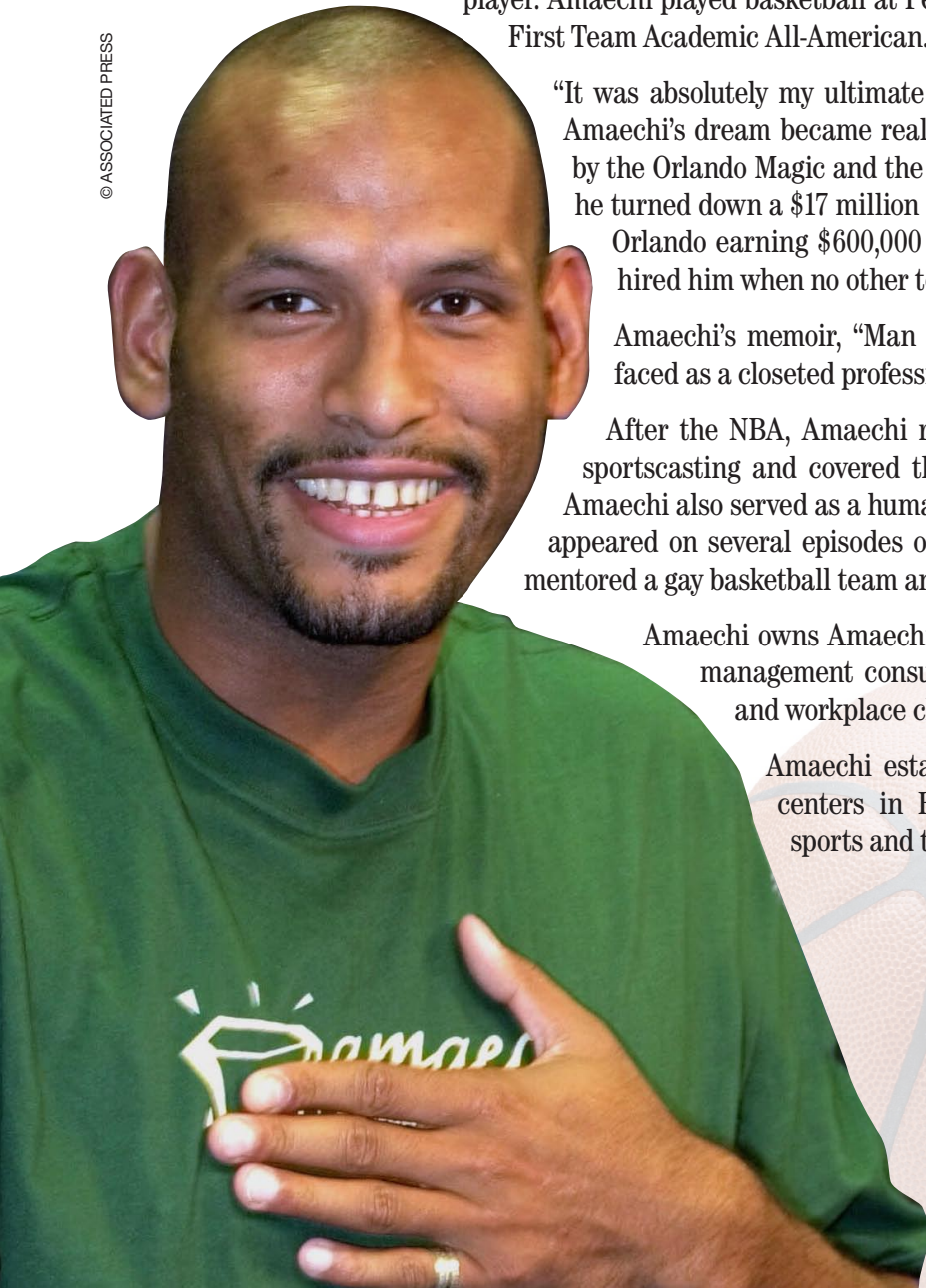
Amaechi’s memoir, “Man in the Middle” (2007), explores the challenges he faced as a closeted professional athlete.

After the NBA, Amaechi returned to Britain, where he turned to television sportscasting and covered the 2008 Beijing Olympics for the BBC. In Beijing, Amaechi also served as a human rights ambassador for Amnesty International. He appeared on several episodes of “Shirts & Skins,” a Logo reality series, where he mentored a gay basketball team and shared his experiences as an out athlete.

Amaechi owns Amaechi Performance Systems. He is a psychologist with a management consulting company specializing in workplace diversity and workplace climate and culture challenges.

Amaechi established the ABC Foundation, which builds sports centers in Britain and encourages children’s involvement in sports and their communities.

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