

BRITTNEY GRINER

WNBA SUPERSTAR

b. October 18, 1990

“Don’t worry about what other people are going to say ... if you’re just true to yourself, let that shine through.”

She is one of the greatest female professional basketball players of all time.

Brittney Griner is a seven-time WNBA All-Star, a two-time Olympic gold medalist, and an LGBTQ advocate. She ranks among the greatest women’s basketball players of all time. After her highly publicized imprisonment in Russia, she vowed to help other Americans detained abroad.

Griner was born in Houston, Texas. She showed tremendous aptitude for basketball early on. During her junior year of high school, a YouTube compilation of her extraordinary dunks amassed almost seven million views.

Griner shattered records and steered her high school team to the Texas 5A girls’ basketball state championship. She was selected for the 2009 WBCA High School All-America team, and the mayor of Houston named May 7, 2009, “Brittney Griner Day.”

Griner accepted a basketball scholarship to Baylor University. She set multiple records, becoming one of the best shot blockers in the history of the women’s game. In 2012 she led Baylor to a perfect 40-0 season (a first for any college basketball team) and an NCAA title. She received both the Naismith and Wooden Awards and was named the AP Player of the Year, among other honors.

In 2013 the Phoenix Mercury drafted Griner. That same year, she came out publicly as a lesbian and was named a WNBA All-Star. In 2014 she helped the Mercury win the WNBA finals—their third time ever—and became the first out gay athlete to receive a Nike endorsement deal. She also released her memoir, “In My Skin: My Life On and Off the Basketball Court,” written with Sue Hovey, describing her struggles as an African-American lesbian.

In 2015 Griner married fellow player Glory Johnson. A month before, they were both arrested for a domestic dispute and suspended for seven games. They divorced after a year.

In 2019 Griner married Chelle Watson and played for a sixth time on the WNBA All-Star team. In 2016 and again in 2021, she played on the U.S. women’s Olympic basketball team and won the gold both times.

Like many other WNBA players, Griner sought supplemental income in the off-season playing overseas. In February 2022, authorities in a Russian airport discovered a vape cartridge for prescription cannabis in her luggage. She was arrested on alleged drug smuggling charges and sentenced her to nine years in a penal colony. After unrelenting pressure, President Biden secured Griner’s release in December 2022 in a one-for-one prisoner swap.

In 2023 TIME magazine named Griner to its list of 100 most influential people. She lives with her wife in Arizona and continues to play for the Phoenix Mercury.



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