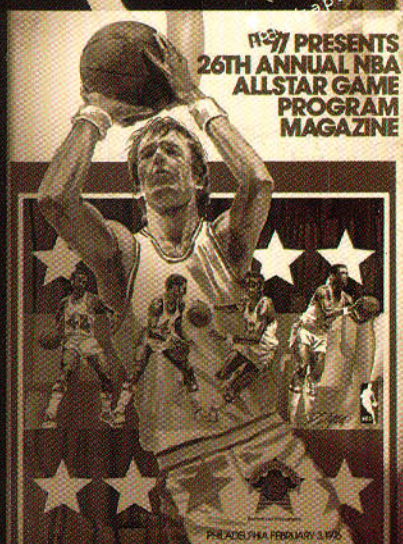
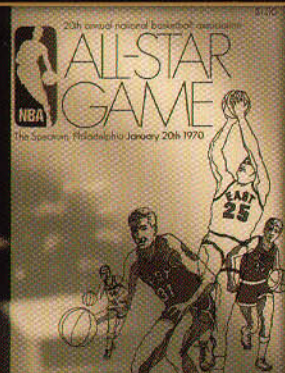
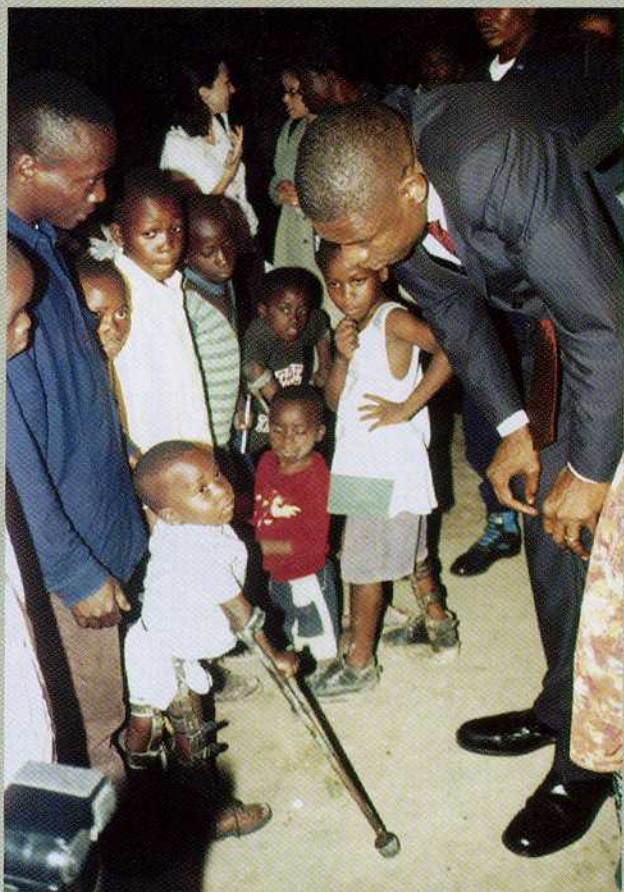
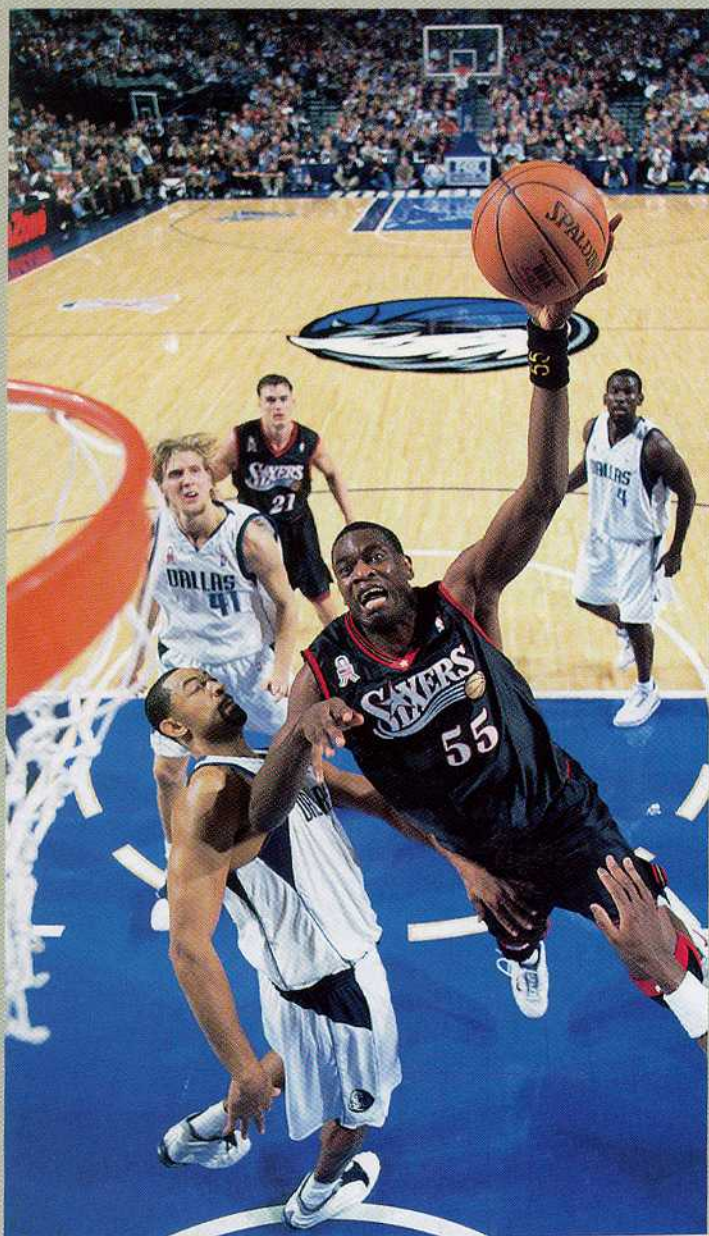


# NBA ALL★STAR 2002 COMMEMORATIVE PROGRAM







# A STUDY IN CONTRAST

ON THE COURT, DIKEMBE MUTOMBO IS KNOWN FOR HARD-NOSED PLAY AND THAT LEGENDARY SCOWL. OFF THE COURT, HE'S ALL KINDNESS AND SMILES.

By John Hareas

Dikembe Mutombo is a 7-2 walking contradiction. Come gametime, the Congo native is a menacing defensive presence, an intimidator who rules the hardhat area under the basket with due diligence: ripping down rebounds, rejecting shots and providing opponents with a little elbow therapy every now and then. (After all, the man needs his space.) Away from the game, the eight-time All-Star and four-time Defensive Player of the Year shows a side that is just as passionate about philanthropic causes.

"There is a contrast between the Mutombo on the court

and the Mutombo off the court," says the 35-year-old center. "I look at the game as some place that I don't want to fool around. I want to go out and do what I have to do and do it in the right way, and the right way is doing everything positive and trying to take a win with me. That's why you see me looking so mean on the court."

The minute Mutombo steps off of it, a humanitarian with a heart of gold emerges. He's a man who donates his time and resources to multiple charities—including those closest to his heart, which work to improve the plight of folks in Africa.



"More people are dying now than ever before," says Mutombo. "[In Africa] the average age of a woman is 43 and for a man, 41. Two out of every 10 children born die on the second day while half of them won't live past the age of five. It is very sad. Very sad."

Civil war and preventable diseases such as diphtheria, measles, polio and tetanus are responsible for the loss of three million lives over the last three years in Africa. The death that hit closest to home for Dikembe was his beloved mother Biamba Marie, who died of a

new hospital has been built in the Congo. For Dikembe, the groundbreaking ceremony was not only an emotional experience but the realization of a lifelong dream.

"It was unbelievable," says Mutombo, who contributed more than \$3.5 million toward construction of the 300-bed, two-story building that is expected to cost \$14 million. "I never thought in all of my life that I was going to get this done. It gave me a great sense of pride to just look at myself and see what I'm doing. And I am not doing it just for me,

the health, education and quality of life for the people of the Congo—and through it he shipped \$250,000 of medical and pharmaceutical supplies and 40 hospital beds to his hometown in '98.

"There are not enough words to express our thanks to Dikembe for everything he is doing," says Atoki Ilekka, the Congo's ambassador to the United Nations. "Dikembe feels that he must give back some of the gifts that God gave him, and the people of his homeland are very appreciative and so proud of him."

*Clockwise from below: designs for the Biamba Mutombo Hospital, visiting a maternity ward, administering vaccine to a child, the hospital groundbreaking ceremony*



**"I always wanted to do something very positive that would leave a big legacy in this world, that would be part of my world."**



stroke, in part because she was unable to receive proper medical attention due to the civil war in the Congo. Tired of watching people die, Mutombo's mission became very clear: Build a hospital in his hometown to provide his people with basic medical care.

"I always wanted to do something very positive that would leave a big legacy in this world, that would be part of my world," says Mutombo who will name the hospital after his mother. "And the big legacy that I want to leave behind is the hospital and to name it after my late mom for the fact that she just died from some circumstances that could have been prevented."

The groundbreaking for the hospital took place last September; once completed in September '04, it will mark the first time in nearly 40 years that a

but I am doing it for so many people who are in most need, and there are so many people out there who appreciate the gift that I am bringing to them."

Since entering the League in '91, Dikembe has given back to his homeland and all of Africa. In his role as spokesman for CARE, the international relief agency, Mutombo visited the Somali refugee camps in Northern Kenya in '93 and traveled with NBA Commissioner David Stern and Georgetown colleagues Patrick Ewing and Alonzo Mourning to Cape Town and Johannesburg. In '96, Mutombo paid for the Zairian Women's basketball team's trip to Atlanta for the Olympics and also picked up the tab for the track team's uniforms. In December '97, he established the Dikembe Mutombo Foundation—its mission is to improve

Mutombo's generous heart can be traced to his late father Samuel, who was the superintendent of schools in Kinshasa, the national capital of the Congo. The Sorbonne-educated man raised 10 children of his own and cared for his brothers and sisters after his own parents died.

"My dad still is playing a major role in my life," says Mutombo, who was selected by *The Sporting News* as the "2001 No. 1 Good Guy." "Every time I try to do something, I try to reflect on my dad's life. He was a proud man who got a chance to look after so many people in his family. I think whatever kind of job he did, it influenced me in what I'm doing. I want to follow in his footsteps as much as I can. I try to be the best man that I can in this society."

On and off the court.