



## Perseverance Backstory

Shaq, as the world knows him, is one of the most dominating professional basketball players in NBA history. Towering at over seven feet, he has shattered records and backboards from the moment he arrived in the big leagues.

The numerous honors he has won include: three NBA titles with the Los Angeles Lakers, MVP in each of those finals, led the league in field goal percentage five times, and was named one of the 50 greatest players in NBA history. No small feat given the competition in this world-class environment.

There is another accomplishment that is less well-known but extremely important to Shaq. When he was drafted to the pros from Louisiana State University in his junior year, he made a promise that he would return to finish his degree. One might wonder why he would worry about graduating since he had such a lucrative career and did not appear to need a diploma to be more successful in life. But he had made a commitment to his mother, his school and himself. And he likes to keep his promises. It was not easy—he attended 9 summer school sessions and finally reached his goal of graduating in December of 2000 with a BA in General Studies and a minor in Political Science. Unfortunately, the ceremony in Louisiana was scheduled on a game night. In a clear demonstration of what was really important he got permission to miss the game—though at a financial cost to him—and walked through the line to mark this important milestone in his life. A promise kept and statement made that life really is more than a game.

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