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Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant and Caitlin Clark are the celebrities I would ask to dinner. Despite coming from different basketball eras, they all have traits of a rigorous work ethic, tenacity, confidence and leadership that have influenced the sports world. As a collegiate athlete, I am always trying to better myself both on and off the court. Not only would it be thrilling to have a conversation with these three players, but it would also provide me with the chance to gain knowledge that could help me become the athlete and person I want to be.

Although Michael Jordan is considered by many to be one of the best basketball players of all time, his approach to failure is what motivates me. Instead of quitting after being cut from his high school varsity basketball team, Jordan turned the setback into inspiration. I would question him about how he cultivated such an unshakable mindset and how he maintained his motivation in the face of setbacks, missed opportunities to win games and constant criticism. Setbacks are unavoidable for athletes. Every player encounters a hardship whether it be a difficult defeat, a subpar performance or an injury. I would like to dive into how Jordan turned those setbacks into opportunities for future achievement and how I may use that mindset in both my basketball career and personal life.

Kobe Bryant's "Mamba Mentality" is now much more than just a basketball concept; it's a way of thinking that emphasizes preparation, dedication and never stopping trying to get better. I would question Kobe about how, despite winning titles and achieving objectives that most athletes can only imagine, he continued to have such an amazing work ethic every single day. I remind myself that habits formed in private are the foundation of success. I would like Kobe's

guidance on how to maintain self-control on trying days, strike a balance between academics and athletics and keep pushing myself even when things seem to be moving slowly. His viewpoint, I think would educate me that excellence is about continually putting hard effort ahead of comfort rather than just having skill.

Caitlin Clark would be the last visitor. By bringing energy, self-assurance and record breaking performances to the game while managing a great deal of public attention she has revolutionized women's basketball. She has endured pressure, expectations, praise and criticism throughout her career, but she has persisted in playing with assurance and enthusiasm. I would question her about how she keeps her focus on her objectives while blocking out outside opinions. Athletes are continuously subjected to social media, public criticism and irrational expectations in today's world. Finding out how she maintains her authenticity while competing at the top level would offer insightful information that goes well beyond athletics. Her story would serve as a reminder that preparation and self-belief are more important sources of confidence than looking to other people for approval.

I would encourage the three athletes to talk about what they think makes good athletes different from great ones as the discussion went on. They would all likely have different responses, but they would all likely share the following themes of accountability, discipline, resiliency and a readiness to accept failure as a necessary part of development. I would like to know if people are born with leadership skills or if they learn them through experience. I would pay close attention to their various viewpoints because I want to improve as a team player and a leader that can be used in the workforce as well. I would also like to know what guidance they would offer young athletes who are striving for success while attempting to uphold modesty, balance and solid bonds with teammates and family.

I would have roasted chicken, baked sweet potatoes, roasted vegetables, grilled steak, fresh salad and fruit. This meal exemplifies the value of providing the body with wholesome foods while simultaneously fostering a fun environment that encourages deep dialogue. For dessert, I would serve my mother's homemade banana muffins that are a staple in my family. As an athlete, I have discovered that healthy eating is equally as crucial as training and recuperation, but it is important to have the balance and not limit yourself completely. The meal would stand in for the self-control and good habits that each of the three athletes have stressed throughout their careers. The discussion would feel much more significant if we shared a meal focused on performance and health since it represents the way of life that we all cherish.

I would love to walk away from this dinner with much more than basketball advice. I would take away lessons about discipline when inspiration wanes, tenacity when life gets tough, confidence when confronted with criticism and humility even after achievement. At the end of the day, it's always bigger than just a sport. Although this interaction will improve my basketball skills, those lessons would also make me a better person, student, teammate and future professional. The character a person develops along the way endures forever, even though championships, records and awards eventually become history. That is the greatest lesson I believe Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant and Caitlin Clark could teach me and it is why they would be my ideal dinner guests.