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DWIGHT HOWARD

CONQUEST KNIGHT XV | HOW A SUPERHERO GETS AROUND

THE GAME CHANGER ISSUE

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DWIGHT HOWARD

SUPERMAN'S TANK

WORDS: NICK HALILI PHOTOS: THE WD CORP. PHOTOGRAPHY

We've never had a guy this tall who could jump like this. This guy is flat out scary!" When someone describes a basketball player in such reverential tones, you know he is something special. But when the person saying it is hoops legend Charles Barkley, and the player being described is NBA superstar Dwight Howard, there is no choice but to admit you are witnessing a performance that no other big-man in history could ever accomplish. And at that point, in the 2008 Slam Dunk Contest, the 6-foot-11-inch

Orlando Magic center had not even unleashed his signature dunk, draped in the iconic red "S" and cape from the legendary comic book hero, which would compel NBA fans worldwide to refer to him as "Superman."
But unlike the movie franchise featuring the DC Comics superhero, D. Howard's sequels after that fabled All-Star Game weekend were even better. Later that year, alongside fellow NBA superstars like Kobe Bryant and LeBron James, he helped bring USA basketball back to its former glory by winning a gold medal at the 2008 Beijing

Olympics. "Representing the United States was like a dream come true," he says. "It was bigger than just playing basketball for me. I was playing for my whole country. We worked on that goal for four years of trying to win the gold medal; and to see our team from day one to the gold medal was a great journey." Dwight followed up those achievements with a third-act that was arguably his most impressive feat thus far, as he led the Magic to its first NBA Finals appearance in almost 15 years. "Playing on the big stage in the Finals. That is amazing! People don't understand

it. It's like a totally different world because the whole world is watching!"
Howard is both a throwback to the historic NBA centers of old and a prototype for a whole new kind of big-man. "I've always wanted to be Wilt Chamberlain," he admits. "He's like my all-time favorite basketball player." Unlike many of the current NBA big men, who rely on finesse moves and perimeter shooting, Dwight—much like The Big Dipper (Chamberlain) once did—thrives in the paint, throwing down dunks and gobbling up rebounds by the dozens. The >

>> The interior of Howard's Knight XV looks like the inside of a tank with a custom-made steering wheel, custom dash, external communication system, Alpine entertainment system (14 speakers totalling 2,500 watts) and a Flir PathFindIR vehicle thermal night vision camera system (front and rear) with rear back-up camera. Comfort wasn't comprised with an extra spacious extended interior setting, leather seats handcrafted in Andrew Muirhead luxury leather, Wilton Wool luxury carpeting and an Ultrasuede interior finish throughout the beast.



reigning NBA Defensive Player of the Year has also made it a habit of instilling fear in opposing players who even think of going to the hole for a dunk or lay up. However, he is strikingly different from many of the classic big-men because he is blessed with the athleticism and leaping ability of a guard, which he has continued to put on display on the big stage since forgoing college to jump straight to the pros.

It's difficult to fathom that as a 15-year-old high schooler, Howard possessed none of these qualities. He was shorter than many of his peers and had only modest leaping ability. "Back when I was growing up, they said I had an old man's game. Before I had the hops, I used to never dunk. I always used the glass." But then he did something not even the comic book Superman can do. "I went from 5'8" to 6'3" to 6'9" in one year. I would go to church and people would say, 'Yo, are you on stilts?' 'Cause last Sunday, you wasn't this tall!' " Right in the middle of that growth spurt, he broke his leg and was in a cast for six weeks, but responded to that injury more like the X-Men's Wolverine than the Man of Steel. "It was crazy. After I broke my leg, when I was in the cast, I grew two inches, and when I got out of the cast, I was jumping out of the gym!" But even after that growth spurt, he wasn't yet ready to embrace his newfound physical gifts and become a dominant big-man. "I actually played point guard and I wanted to be like Magic [Johnson], a 6-foot-10-inch point guard. Eleventh grade is really when I became a power forward and center. But even then, I was one of the secondary point guards on the team."

These days, everything D. Howard does is larger than life, from his Herculean achievements on the basketball court to the newest toy in his collection off the court. Sure, lots of star athletes and hip-hop moguls drive around in

» Being a playful guy off the court, Howard opted to have a retractable 26-inch Sony Bravia flat screen TV added in the rear cabin, complete with a satellite dish and Xbox 360 with wireless controls so he and his friends can get their gaming on while on the go.



big Hummers. But Dwight has topped them all with the gargantuan, military-inspired Knight XV from Conquest Vehicles, which William Maizlin, president of Conquest says, "makes the Hummer look like a baby." "I like having cars that nobody else has," Howard says. "When I first saw it in the *Dupont Registry*, I was like, 'I gotta have it!'" After being shown that first picture of the Knight XV by celebrity vehicle broker Andre

Hunter, Dwight's right-hand man when it comes to getting the latest and greatest in automobiles, the young center knew this ride fit him to a T.

Just as Howard's game on the court is power personified, the Knight XV exudes strength, from its fully armored bulletproof all-black exterior to its enormous, practically airplane-sized 40-inch tires. "You see pictures of big Bull Mastiffs, or Cane Corsos, or Pitbulls, the car just looks like a ▶





» THE \$500,000-KNIGHT XV FEATURES A 6.8-LITER, V10 TWIN TURBO ENGINE WITH E-85 ETHANOL CONVERSION SYSTEM THAT BOASTS 550 HORSEPOWER AND 580 LB.FT. OF TORQUE, MAKING IT ONE MEANING MACHINE ON THE ROAD.

guard dog—like it's made to guard you. A lot of people say I'm a beast on the floor. This car is a beast on the road. It demands attention." Built on the Ford F-550 Super Duty chassis and sporting a 6.8-liter V-10, Dwight's Knight XV was customized with a twin-turbocharger system that puts down more than 550 horsepower, while being able to run either on E-85 Ethanol or premium gas. Equipped with custom-made 15 1/2-inch front brake rotors with 12-piston billet calipers, Maizlin touts the Knight as having "the largest and most powerful braking system in the world."

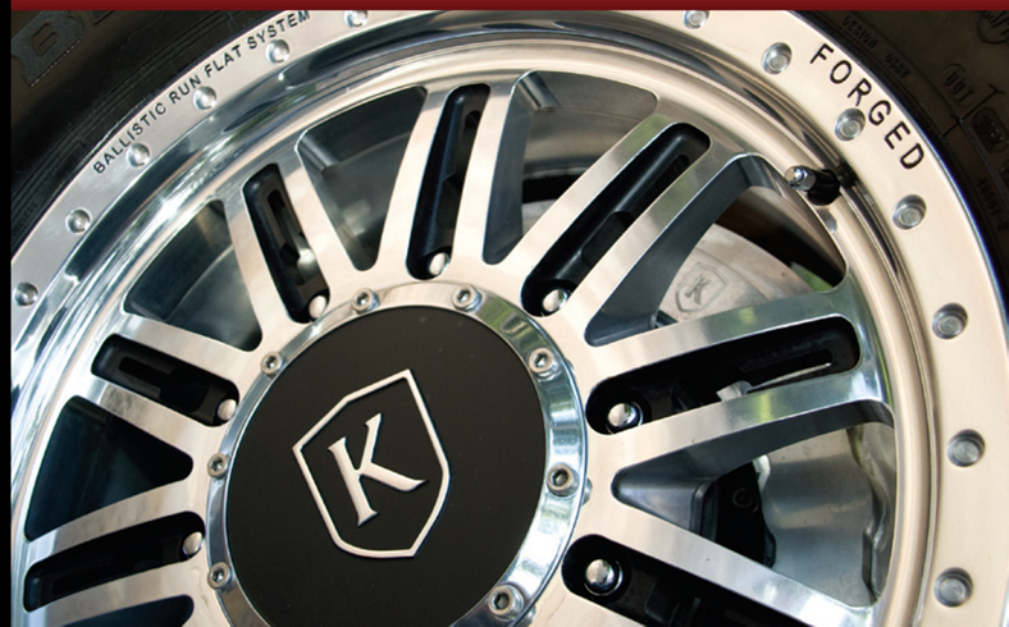
Howard had his Knight's interior customized to fit his fun-loving personality just as its rugged exterior parallels his physical playing style. Originally a six-seater with limo-style, face-to-face seating behind the driver and side passenger, he had two of those removed in favor of a 26-inch retractable flat-screen TV hooked up to an Xbox 360, where Dwight and his friends can play his favorite games such as *Grand Theft Auto* and *Madden NFL*. When describing how much bigger it is on the inside than any other car he's ever seen, Howard says, "You can look at pictures all you want, but it's a different story when you're actually in the car." Its

dashboard resembles the high-tech control panel of some top-secret U.S. army tank more than it does a street-driven automobile, complete with front and rear infrared cameras to see at night and during extreme weather—although the odds of Howard encountering a snowstorm in Orlando are somewhat slim. "I'm a big kid at heart. I always gotta have fun. But when it's time to step on the floor, that's when I turn into an animal. It's just like this car."

As perfect a match as Dwight Howard and his Knight XV are, fans that happen to see him on the road may be left with a lingering question. After gawking at the sight of the superstar and his new whip in jaw-dropping disbelief, many will stop and think: Wait a minute! Did I just see Superman driving around in the Batmobile?! 🦹



» Riding on Knight XV 20-inch polished rims forged from 6061 aluminum and Mickey Thompson 40-inch Baja tires, custom-made 15 1/2-inch front brake Rotors with 12-piston billet calipers were added, making this the most powerful stopping system in the world.



SOURCES

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