

# She's a Lady

WNBA star Lisa Leslie is a busy woman, but as she explains in her memoir, she always makes time to be a lady. By Sona Charaipotra



**WHAT DOES A REIGNING WNBA CHAMP EAT FOR BREAKFAST?** Forget Wheaties. And protein bars too. If you're Los Angeles Sparks' leading lady Lisa Leslie, mornings consist of sharing blueberry oatmeal with daughter Lauren, 21 months. These days, the basketball star admits, "I'm a full-time mom and a part-time everything else. Since my daughter was born, basketball and business come second. She's changed everything."

But don't think the three-time WNBA and All-Star Game MVP has gone soft. If there's one thing Leslie hopes to instill in her daughter, it's that, "You can be a woman and still win in a man's world. And that doesn't apply just in basketball — it's sports, it's business, it's medicine, it's whatever your passion may be. That's the fight that I'm fighting for my daughter," she says.

That attitude explains the title of her memoir, *Don't Let the Lipstick Fool You*, which is being released in paperback this month. The book documents Leslie's journey from six-foot-tall sixth grader to big-league pro, including details about her childhood in inner-city Los Angeles, her romantic travails, and her overcoming her innate shyness. "Off the court, I can be very shy and soft-spoken," she says. "But when I get on court, I call it my wonder-woman effect. I love playing, and I love being in charge. I want to win. But when I step off the court, I'm all woman."

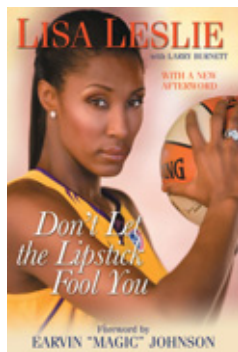
It's something she learned while growing up in Compton, California, the daughter of a single mother

who worked as a truck driver. Even at a young age, Leslie took her mother's pioneering spirit to heart. "I learned early on that you don't have to look like the boys to play with the boys," says Leslie, who today stands at a proud six feet five inches. "I remember that at age seven, I would practice my signature because I was so sure that one day I'd be signing autographs. My mom planted those positive seeds all the time; she always told me I could be or do whatever I wanted. After all, she was driving an 18-wheeler across the country. But she was always wearing her red lipstick, and she had her fingernails done. She was definitely a lady."

Now the former Wilhelmina model — who says she may consider retiring from basketball in the next year — is gearing up for act two of her career. The

36-year-old earned her MBA in 2006 and has been dabbling in commercial real estate with her husband, pilot and author Michael Lockwood. She is in talks to star in her own reality show. But the most important items on her agenda? Spending more time with her three stepchildren and enjoying every moment and milestone with her daughter. "Lauren's mom is staying home," she says, laughing. "I can't wait to teach her

ABC's and numbers. And I'm learning something new every day myself. There's so much left to learn. I can't wait to get started."



## LISA LESLIE BY THE NUMBERS

**2** — Number of WNBA championships she's won

**5,909** — Number of career points she's scored, the most of any WNBA player

**9** — Her jersey number

**101** — Number of points Leslie scored in a single half of a high school game before the other team forfeited. (It was her highest single-game total — just four points short of Cheryl Miller's high school record of 105. It set a new record for most points scored in a single half.)

**77** — Her height in inches

**11** — Number of years she's played professionally

**4** — Number of Olympic gold medals she's won

**0** — Number of dollars won on a 2000 Olympic-themed celebrity version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* (She didn't make it past the fastest-finger round of questioning.)