

Celebrate Dee Brown's Birthday with a Countdown of the Best Dunk Contest Sneaker Moments

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In celebration of Dee Brown's birthday, we reflect on his iconic Reebok Pump moment and where it ranks among Dunk Contest lore.

It's Dee Brown's birthday today. Besides winning the 1991 NBA Dunk Contest competition in a fierce battle with Shawn Kemp, Dee brought the style and showmanship to the contest by rocking a pair of the Reebok Pump Omni Lite's and creating one of the best on-court sneaker moments of all-time when he pumped up his kicks before going to work.

You know the Pumps and the legacy, including the countless athletes who endorsed it, and the scene in Austin Powers. It all traces back to Dee and that '91 competition, where it all began. So cheers and happy birthday, Dee Brown – sneakerheads united owe a lot to you and what you did for the shoe game.

So where does Brown's moment stack up in Sneaker Dunk Contest history? Click the pages below to begin the countdown...



Converse ERX 300, White/Blue (Kenny Walker)

Rocking baggy compression unders that were twice the size of his Knicks shorts, Kenny “Sky” Walker brought home the bling in 1989 while looking super fly with a gold chain and a massive high top fade which looked like a skyscraper on the city skyline. Walker hammered home a flurry of graceful leg-twitching rimbenders, while putting on display his Converse ERX 300s in a white and blue colorway. You’d be hard-pressed to find a pair of ERX 300s nowadays, unless you had a rigged up DeLorean or something.



KangaROOS Skywalker III, Red/White (Clyde Drexler)

Back when Clyde had hair and was the pride of Blazer Nation, he was a Dunk Contest regular. Though never victorious, he did manage to stand out in the 1987 competition with a murderous pair of red KangaROOS Skywalker IIIs, complete with ankle strap and ROOS penny pouch. The Skywalkers came back last year, however only 600 limited edition pairs were up for grabs – were you one of the lucky ones?



Reebok Technique DMX, Blue/Orange/White (Steve Francis)

The smiling, bright-eyed young'n with the hop in his step during the 2000 Dunk Contest was none other than Steve Francis, whose kicks nearly touched his wrist while he pulled the rock back during his first throw-down. Franchise donned a pair of Reebok Technique DMXs, which any gawking onlooker worldwide couldn't miss as he continually got up, and up, and up, eventually settling for second place in the contest. The Technique DMXs never gained much popularity despite their wavy design, and haven't been brought back.



Air Jordan 2 Nu Retro, White/Blue (Fred Jones)

Former Oregon Duck Fred Jones busted out a pair of white and blue Air Jordan Nu Retro 2s during his coronation as NBA Dunk Contest champ of 2004. Jones and Jason Richardson went back and forth for a while before eventually ending the competition on two missed dunk, ultimately resulting point-wise in the W being awarded to Jones. The Nu Retro 2s were among the first wave of numbered Jordan silhouettes to be remixed, a product strategy which continues in full force today.



Brooks Unique, White/Red/Yellow (Dominique Wilkins)

The sour taste in the mouth of ATLiens world-wide in 1988 was no doubt caused by the Dunk Contest that year, as Michael Jordan escaped Dominique Wilkins with a victory in arguably the greatest dunk contest of all-time. The Thor-like power that Wilkins threw down with in the showcase, combined with his astro hopskies, created a burden for his feet which were laced up with a pair of Brooks Uniques in red and yellow Atlanta Hawks colors. Wilkins would later famously switch to Reebok Pumps. Some of his Brooks joints have survived though and can be found on eBay for gargantuan amounts. Happy hunting.



Converse Sky Rider, White/Black/Blue (JR Rider)

Before he became the prototypical NBA bad boy, JR literally followed in the footsteps of former UNLV product Larry Johnson and laced up his soles with Converse, React Juice and all. His East Bay Funk throwdown in the '94 contest locked up the trophy, and his signature sleds, the Sky Riders, were doled out by Converse complete with a limited edition poster. The Sky Riders haven't been remade since then – that decision could have something to do with Rider's off-court shenanigans since.



Reebok X Beam Franchise, White/Black (Jason Richardson)

Before Jason Richardson hit Orlando rocking his PEAKs, he was a full-on Reebok endorser and had a pair of fresh X Beams laced up for the 2002 contest. Fellow contestants Gerald Wallace and Steve Francis also rocked the same shoe, albeit in different colorways, however JRich's white and black color scheme stood out the most as he came through with a blender of remixed windmills and an alley-oop reverse double pump to seal the trophy. Even though three of the best dunkers wore them during the same contest, the X Beams were never highly sought after. A quick eBay search could likely produce a pair.



Nike Foamposite Lite, “KryptoNate” PE (Nate Robinson)

During the prop-filled, attention-demanding Dunk Contest of 2009, Nate Robinson defeated Dwight Howard amidst a flurry of DC Comics homages. Howard busted out a Superman cape during one of his dunks, to which Nate responded with an all-green New York Knicks St. Patrick’s Day jersey, complete with bright green Nike Foamposite Lites. The shoes and the gimmicks definitely helped Nate, as he rose to the ’09 trophy. The Foamposite Lite “KryptoNate” edition hit shelves on St. Patty’s Day 2009 in a very limited release, and for a couple Benjamin Franklins can currently be yours if you know where to look.



Pony City Wings Low, White/Red/Black (Spud Webb)

With an injured Michael Jordan sitting out the '86 competition, Spud Webb showed off his hot-potato uppers and shocked the world (including teammate Dominique Wilkins) by kissing the sky en route to winning the championship. Webb flossed a pair of low cut Pony City Wings, which were put on full display as he brought out a medley of stuffs of the 360, off-the-backboard, and double pump varieties. The City Wings were eventually brought back in a limited edition 2008 release.



Nike Air Flight 89, White/Black (Shawn Kemp)

Like Ice Cube's slow downward progression, Shawn Kemp's nastiness is a fair comparison in terms of what once was. Widely considered the best stuffer to never win the Dunk Contest, Kemp put up some thunder during the '91 contest and coasted past Rex Chapman and Kenny Smith (among others) before eventually falling victim to Dee Brown in the dope finale. Before he became the cult 90s Reebok Basketball Icon that he is remembered as, The Reignman flashed the swoosh brand and donned the Air Flight 89s during the 1991 Dunk Contest. The 89s will see a re-release sometime in the first half of 2012 – mark your calendars, kids.



Nike Air Zoom Flight 95, Red/White (Brent Barry)

Like Steve Nash and the Nike Jet Flights, the Air Zoom Flight 95s were practically Jason Kidd's signature sleds. However, Brent Barry strutted out in a pair of red and white joints during his 1996 Dunk Contest victory, where he channeled his inner 1988 Michael Jordan and took off from the free throw line twice, all the while silencing the Sidney Deane's of this world. Bones would later perform in the '03 Three Point Shootout rocking a pair of Brown Nike Blazers and later Crip Walking in them after hitting a money ball.



adidas EQT Elevation, Purple/White/Gold PE (Kobe Bryant)

Equipped with a gangster scowl and bouncy strut, pre-afro Kobe Bryant captured the 1997 Dunk Contest hardware while rocking a pair of purple adidas EQT Elevations. After a powerful reverse double-pump, an announcer could be heard exclaiming “I think he should get extra points for wearing purple shoes.” Much to the chagrin of sneaker enthusiasts and Kobe jockers, the EQT Elevations haven’t been brought back yet. We’re waiting, adidas.



Reebok Pump Omni Zone II, Black/White/Orange (Dee Brown)

The birthday boy and reason for this sneaker feature changed the shoe game forever when he coolly and casually squeezed life into his Reebok Pumps, much to the delight of fans and announcers present. It was the idea behind the whole design that vaulted him into sneaker fame – he didn't draw too much attention to himself, didn't wave his arms up and down before pumping up his joints, didn't flag the camera person over to get a pic of his sneaks. Nah, he pumped up as if he were all alone in a gym in Boston dunking the ball just for the sake of dunking the

ball. It was enough of a move to get people intrigued, but not too much of a stunt that would make people cry “Gimmick!”

His creativity — of the not-trying-too-hard variety — was later seen when he threw a tomahawk while blanketing his eyes with his free arm, sealing the W and putting Shawn Kemp historically in second place. The look-alike Reebok Pump Omni Lite is available today in retro form, and can be picked up for under \$100.



Air Jordan III, White/Cement (Michael Jordan)

Out-dueling Dominique Wilkins in what is widely accepted as the greatest Dunk Contest showdown of all-time, Michael Jeffrey Jordan rocked a pair of White Cement IIIs en route to racking up several Chicago 50s to best 'Nique and his Brooks. Even though he did the same free-throw dunk twice, it was the other dunks Michael threw that got him so many points – the leg twitching combined with his squeaky dome grazing the net added to his swagger, and his Jordan IIIs complemented the whole majestic performance – what sneakerhead doesn't have the iconic foul line poster?

Regardless, ya'll know the history of the IIIs by now – countless re-retros (including this past Black Friday), numerous colorways, mind-boggling exclusives (Oregon Ducks?) – the lot goes on. Best sneaker of all-time? Could be, but come Dec. 23rd you might just be reminded otherwise.



And1 Tai Chi, Red/White (Vince Carter)

Unlike Nike/Jordan, which was already dope before Mike's '88 performance, And1 was just on the cusp of breaking out in the year 2000. Before the brand blew up with the streetball craze during the earlier part of the millennium, they were Stephon Marbury and Latrell Sprewell endorsed.

The high profile flash that Vince Carter brought to the 2000 Dunk Contest was exactly what And1 needed. The simple design of the Tai Chi, with the two color split on the upper, laces and the metallic arch, were put on very full display during Vince's coming-out party, as he left mouths agape and had dunk connoisseur Kenny Smith ready to pack it up after his opening 360 windmill.

The dope red and white styled And1's that Carter rocked is the most memorable flavor for the shoe, even given that the Tai Chi silhouette was released in a slew of various colorways. The silhouette was re-introduced by the basketball brand starting in 2009 and currently shouldn't be too hard to find a fresh pair to rock.