

Beat: Sports

Spanish basketball players Pau and Marc Gasol won the 2015 Princess of Asturias

Of Sports

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USPA NEWS - Pau and Marc Gasol boast a brilliant record of achievements, both with the Spanish basketball squad ““2006 Prince of Asturias Award for Sports”” and with the respective clubs in which they have played, in Spain as well as in the US NBA, where they are currently playing, said the Jury.

World champions and two-time European champions and Olympic runners-up, Pau and Marc Gasol became living legends in the world’s leading basketball league. Last February, they became the first pair of brothers to be chosen to play in the starting line-up ““chosen by fans from around the world by digital vote”” in the NBA All-Star Game played in New York, being the stars of the opening tipoff of this game, which was seen all around the world.

Considered role models of sporting values and ambassadors of Marca España (Brand Spain), the Gasol Brothers set up the Gasol Foundation in 2013 with the aim of promoting physical activity and healthful eating habits among schoolchildren in Los Angeles (USA) and Badalona (Spain). They also collaborate with UNICEF. Pau Gasol (Barcelona, 1980) started playing in the Bàsquet Llor de Sant Boi, in Cornellà, and FC Barcelona youth teams. He began to participate in the Spanish squad as a junior player, also winning the Spanish championship in this category with Barça.

He debuted in the Spanish ACB League in 1999 and won his first Spanish League title and his first Spanish Cup with the club in the 2000-2001 season, being voted Most Valued Player (MVP) in both competitions. His evolution earned him the possibility of entering the NBA “draft” (the process of selection of players) in 2001, figuring in the third position (the first time for a non-American player to achieve this rank).

Gasol was the second Spaniard to play in the NBA, after the late Fernando Martín. In his first season, the Catalan power forward was proclaimed “rookie” or best newcomer of the year in 2002. In 2006, he became the first Spanish player and the first Grizzlies player to be selected to play in the NBA All-Star Game and won a gold medal with the Spanish team at the FIBA World Championships in Japan, followed by a silver medal at the 2007 EuroBasket Championship.

In 2008, he was traded to Los Angeles Lakers, with whom he won the NBA Western Conference Championship. He reached the final with the Spanish team at the Beijing Olympic Games, eventually winning the silver medal. In 2009, his team won the NBA Championship, making him the first Spaniard to become an NBA League champion. In 2010, he added his second championship with the Lakers to his list of achievements, as well as a European gold medal in 2011 and silver medal at the 2012 London Games. He joined the Chicago Bulls in 2014.

Marc Gasol (Barcelona, 1985) began his sporting career in the Bàsquet Llor de Sant Boi and FC Barcelona youth teams. An international player for Spain from the 14-15 age group onward, he accompanied his brother to Memphis, completing his education at the Laussanne Collegiate School. In 2003, he returned to Barça, with whom he debuted in the Spanish ACB League, winning the league title and Supercup in 2004. He debuted with the national team at the 2006 World Cup in Japan, where he won a gold medal. On loan to the Akasvayu Girona team in 2007, he won the FIBA EuroCup and the following season was voted ACB Most Valuable Player.

After winning an Olympic silver medal at the Beijing Games, he crossed the Atlantic to play in the NBA with the Grizzlies in the 2008-2009 season. After winning a gold medal with the Spanish team at the FIBA EuroBasket Championship held in Poland, he became a permanent fixture in Memphis and played his first All-Star Game in 2010. Olympic silver medal winner in London, he was named “top defensive player of the year” in the 2012-2013 season and played in the Western Conference final. After coming back from a knee injury, he played in the 2014 FIBA World Cup with the Spanish team.

That same year he was chosen to play his second All-Star Game and became the first Spanish player to be included in the ideal NBA team as the best “C” in the competition. As stated in the Statutes of the Foundation, the Princess of Asturias Awards are aimed at rewarding “the scientific, technical, cultural, social and humanitarian work carried out at an international level by individuals,

institutions or groups of individuals or institutions.“^[2] In keeping with these principles, the Princess of Asturias Award shall be conferred on those “whose lives and work are not only examples to others, but who have also contributed in an extraordinary manner through their efforts to the advancement, nurturing, fostering or dissemination of sport.”

This year a total of 19 candidatures from Andorra, Colombia, France, India, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, the United States and Spain ran for the award. This is the fifth of eight Princess of Asturias Awards to be bestowed this year, now in their thirty-fifth edition. Each of the Princess of Asturias Awards comprises a Joan Miró sculpture ““representing and symbolizing the Awards””, a cash prize of 50,000 Euro, a diploma and an insignia. The awards will be presented in the autumn in Oviedo at a grand ceremony chaired by TM the King and Queen of Spain.

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