



COURTESY NIKE

Hatfield

Tinker Hatfield

BY HEATHER STRANG

WHETHER HE'S HANGING OUT WITH MICHAEL JORDAN OR HIP-HOP RECORDING STAR Kanye West, or he's the envy of kids on MySpace, Nike designer Tinker Hatfield isn't letting it go to his head.

"At home, I'm just the idiot who doesn't clean up after himself," says Hatfield. "They keep me pretty grounded at home, and my three daughters don't let me get away with much."

Hatfield, who was recently honored for more than 25 years of work at Nike, has built an impressive career. He's designed all 22 Air Jordan shoes, worked with Olympic athletes, and considers Phil Knight one of his mentors.

"You get to where you are because of the people you meet along the way and the things you learn from them," he says. "Whether achieving great or small things, it's all the same."

Hatfield firmly lives by the motto, "If it isn't fun, I'm not doing it." That means choosing projects that he's most passionate about. Today, you'll find Hatfield still involved in designing; in fact Kanye West

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was in his office a few weeks ago outlining a new shoe concept.

He spends the rest of his time immersed in activities close to his heart, such as mentoring Nike designers and participating in sports, his other love. In the spring, Hatfield coaches Grant High School pole vaulters, a sport he competed in at the University of Oregon while coached by Nike co-founder Bill Bowerman. He's also taken up bicycling. Hatfield and his family recently entertained seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong at their Portland home.

His favorite project to date has been working with his brother, also a Nike employee, on a women's pole vault shoe for the Athens Olympics. The project originally began as a shoe for female pole vaulter Stacy Dragila. From there, they "beefed up the shoe" to create a male version. Their shoe went on to win a gold medal, courtesy of pole vaulter Tim Mack.

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As the face of Nike design, Hatfield is often asked by the outside media and celebrities, including Michael Jordan, "Why Portland?" Having grown up in the small town of Halsey, Ore., Hatfield isn't one for pretense. He finds comfort in Portland's laid-back approach and friendly atmosphere.

"I love the questions about Portland. This is such a unique and creative place. I tell the media (and Jordan) that Portland is the best place to live and work. People are from all over the country and have come here to set up shop and live. You aren't required to have some type of pedigree to be here. I love that." ○