

ABIS Names Sonny Vaccaro as Keynote Speaker at Champions and Legends Award Show

The event will feature famed sports executive Vaccaro as ABIS recognizes and elevates black individuals in the industry to drive DEI initiatives.

Vaccaro is played by actor Matt Damon in the upcoming film, AIR

Baldwin, NY, April 3, 2023 - Advancement of Blacks in Sports (ABIS) has announced former Nike marketing executive Sonny Vaccaro as the keynote speaker at the organization's 2023 Champions and Legends award show. The event, which honors black achievement in sports and champions of diversity, equity, and inclusion, will be held at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas on June 2-4, 2023.

"It's an honor and a pleasure to join ABIS in celebrating the remarkable accomplishments of outstanding Black athletes and coaches," said Vaccaro. "Beyond their performance in sport, they have shattered barriers, amplified their voices for justice, and inspired generations. Time and again these athletes have risen to the occasion, and it is imperative that we, as advocates, fans, and supporters, do the same."

Sonny Vaccaro is a former sports marketing executive, and a legend in the world of basketball, best known for his time at Nike, Inc. during which he signed Michael Jordan to his first sneaker deal. He has been involved in basketball for over 50 years, working as a coach, a sneaker executive, and an advocate for players' rights. His prestigious career is highlighted and celebrated in the upcoming film, *AIR*, as it follows the story of his role in the pursuit of Jordan as a brand ambassador.

Gary Charles, the founder and president of ABIS, has worked with Vaccaro for many years, having shared a deep passion for basketball and the fight for equality for Blacks and their contributions in the industry. The first to negotiate a sneaker deal for Kobe Bryant, Charles has left his mark as a sports executive, in addition to founding various basketball tournaments and a successful coaching career. He founded ABIS following the death of George Floyd, determined to steer away from historical racial inequality and abuse for black individuals in athletics.

"Sonny has been a great ally and friend to ABIS. He understands the importance of our mission and has been an advocate for us for many years," said Charles. "We are thrilled to have him as our keynote speaker at the Champions and Legends award show. There's no better industry veteran to drive inspiration and advocacy for racial equality, and social and economic justice for blacks in sports."

The Champions and Legends award show will be a massive celebration, recognizing coaches, players, and historical sports figures in professional and collegiate sports, as well as offering professional development sessions focused on wealth building, DEI efforts, sports law, and health and mental wellness.

For more information about the Champions and Legends award show, including a full list of honorees, and to purchase tickets, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/abis-champions-and-legends-weekend-tickets-558035618557>.

About ABIS

Advancement of Blacks in Sports, Inc. (ABIS) is a non-profit organization with a mission to boldly advocate for a culture of equity and inclusion that results in the advancement of racial, economic, and social justice for Blacks in sports. ABIS was founded in September 2020 by Gary Charles, New York's Godfather of Grassroots Basketball. Mr. Charles fostered a partnership with notable African Americans and social justice activists and allies to launch ABIS. ABIS members include coaches, administrators, and athletes at all levels of sports, academicians, civil rights attorneys, social justice influencers, diversity, equity, and inclusion allies and advocates. To learn more, visit www.weareabis.org.