

Drew Brees Tops the Power 100 in 2012

The quarterback broke NFL passing records and helped New Orleans recover from Katrina to take first place on our list of most powerful athletes



Photograph by Chris Graythen/Getty Images

By Venessa Wong

Drew Brees, the New Orleans Saints's popular quarterback, had an exceptional season in 2011, breaking a number of records. It reaffirmed his elite status and catapulted him to new levels of fame and influence.

The 6 ft., 209 lb. quarterback broke Dan Marino's 27-year-old National Football League record for most passing yards in a season, finishing the season with 5,476 yards. Brees, 33, also completed a record 71.2 percent of his passes and threw for more than 300 yards in 13 of 16 regular-season games, the most in NFL history.

That performance, coupled with lingering goodwill for the role he played in helping the City of New Orleans claw its way back from Hurricane Katrina's devastation, vaulted Brees to the No. 1 spot in this year's Power 100, a ranking by CSE, an integrated sports and marketing firm in Atlanta, and Horrow Sports Ventures that uses data from Encino (Calif.)-based research company [E-Poll Market Research](#).

CSE evaluated about 600 of the best-performing athletes from a pool of 3,000 based on statistics, the popularity and viewing audience of their sports, endorsement earnings, and their reach on social media. Nielsen/E-Poll N-Score data, based on surveys that evaluate such factors as players' name

and face awareness, appeal, influence, and trustworthiness, were also included to measure athletes' endorsement potential. (Here's more about the methodology.)

Football Dominates the Pack

The NFL dominated this year's Top 100 list with 26 players, followed by the National Basketball Assn., with 20 players, and Major League Baseball, with 16.

In 2011, Brees led the Saints to a 13-3 regular-season record (later losing to the San Francisco 49ers in the playoffs), and his "record-breaking on-field performance, combined with universal recognition of his charitable and community work" pushed him to the top spot, says Rick Horrow, president of Horrow Sports Ventures. The Brees Dream Foundation, which he founded in 2003, has contributed over \$7 million to cancer research and care and to rebuild schools, parks, playgrounds, and athletic fields in New Orleans, San Diego, and Purdue, Ind., according to the foundation's website.

"He's clearly an endorsement darling now," says Horrow. The quarterback earned \$16 million in salary and endorsements in 2011, according to data from CSE.

Brees first appeared in the 2010 Power 100 at 25th place. He led the Saints to their first-ever Super Bowl victory that year and has since soared in the ranking, to seventh place in 2011.

Absent: Lance Armstrong

Rounding out this year's top five: Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers (who had \$19 million in earnings, estimates CSE), New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady (\$28 million), Miami Heat basketball forward LeBron James (\$61 million), and tennis champion Rafael Nadal (\$21.7 million).

Newcomers to the list include Novak Djokovic (who had a near-perfect tennis season) at No. 9, rising golf star Rory McIlroy at No. 21, and the Los Angeles Dodgers's Matt Kemp, who signed a contract extension worth \$160 million over eight years, the largest in National League history, at No. 32.

As Brees rose to the top, last year's most powerful athlete, Peyton Manning, fell to 51st place because of injuries. Golfer Phil Mickelson dropped from No. 4 to No. 18 after a disappointing season. Lance Armstrong, No. 8 last year, fell off the list entirely. The pro cyclist announced his retirement in February and came under scrutiny for alleged drug use; Armstrong denied doping allegations.

"The real key is measuring how these superstars perform," says Horrow. In athletics, power means "earning power for athletes, owner, agents, communities, and corporate brands." As this year's list shows, an athlete's value can change dramatically in one year.

With Joel Stonington

Wong is a lifestyle and real estate reporter for Bloomberg Businessweek.

2012 Power 100

	Athlete	Sport	2011 Rank	Age	Appeal	Awareness	Power Points	Total Earnings
1.	Brees, Drew	Football	1	33	63.00%	26.00%	77.32159759	\$16.0M
2.	Rodgers, Aaron	Football	2	28	67.00%	20.00%	72.65631433	\$19.0M
3.	Brady, Tom	Football	3	34	43.00%	41.00%	71.80710442	\$28.0M
4.	James, LeBron	Basketball	4	27	23.00%	41.00%	69.64407715	\$61.0M
5.	Nadal, Rafael	Tennis	5	25	58.00%	12.00%	66.21772804	\$21.7M
6.	Federer, Roger	Tennis	6	30	48.00%	21.00%	65.73371407	\$40.7M
7.	O'Neal, Shaquille	Basketball	7	39	47.00%	70.00%	64.01441106	\$13.5M
8.	White, Shaun	Action Sports	8	25	45.00%	55.00%	63.56471653	\$8.5M
9.	Djokovic, Novak	Tennis	9	24	53.00%	7.00%	62.79239088	\$21.0M
10.	Johnson, Calvin	Football	10	26	71.00%	6.00%	60.05404833	\$13.0M
11.	Donald, Luke	Golf	11	34	67.00%	4.00%	60.03493346	\$25.5M
12.	Woods, Tiger	Golf	12	36	15.00%	75.00%	59.86990584	\$60.6M
13.	Bryant, Kobe	Basketball	13	33	25.00%	57.00%	57.16787182	\$35.2M
14.	Howard, Dwight	Basketball	14	26	50.00%	14.00%	56.55703392	\$29.8M
15.	Manning, Eli	Football	15	31	47.00%	32.00%	56.3171899	\$22.0M
16.	Wade, Dwyane	Basketball	16	30	42.00%	20.00%	54.45213077	\$30.5M
17.	Durant, Kevin	Basketball	17	23	69.00%	12.00%	54.08062432	\$21.6M
18.	Mickelson, Phil	Golf	18	41	52.00%	19.00%	54.0053862	\$53.7M
19.	Westwood, Lee	Golf	19	38	67.00%	6.00%	53.30650544	\$15.2M
20.	Polamalu, Troy	Football	20	30	64.00%	23.00%	52.67479344	\$15.5M
21.	McIlroy, Rory	Golf	21	22	60.00%	8.00%	52.52195305	\$17.2M
22.	Earnhardt Jr., Dale	Motorsports	22	37	45.00%	40.00%	52.40571137	\$24.1M
23.	Foster, Arian	Football	23	25	60.00%	6.00%	51.85197885	\$2.5M
24.	Nowitzki, Dirk	Basketball	24	33	69.00%	25.00%	51.41772678	\$24.0M
25.	Williams, Serena	Tennis	25	30	38.00%	41.00%	50.69602477	\$17.0M
26.	Pujols, Albert	Baseball	26	32	44.00%	20.00%	50.33613709	\$24.0M
27.	Peterson, Adrian	Football	27	26	62.00%	14.00%	50.12325902	\$14.0M
28.	Pacquiao, Manny	Boxing / MMA	28	33	59.00%	19.00%	50.10172261	\$50.0M
29.	Gordon, Jeff	Motorsports	29	40	35.00%	39.00%	50.05288845	\$18.8M
30.	Rose, Derrick	Basketball	30	23	65.00%	12.00%	49.98660611	\$10.0M
31.	Braun, Ryan	Baseball	31	28	61.00%	7.00%	49.18499762	\$5.5M
32.	Kemp, Matt	Baseball	32	27	45.00%	5.00%	48.77874956	\$8.5M
33.	Sharapova, Maria	Tennis	33	24	50.00%	19.00%	48.76498493	\$23.8M
34.	Phelps, Michael	Olympics	34	26	40.00%	40.00%	48.71292286	\$5.3M
35.	Griffin, Blake	Basketball	35	22	58.00%	17.00%	48.60445169	\$12.0M
36.	Turner, Michael	Football	36	29	51.00%	5.00%	47.68705569	\$7.8M
37.	Johnson, Jimmie	Motorsports	37	36	47.00%	20.00%	46.85666356	\$16.1M
38.	Cabrera, Miguel	Baseball	38	28	47.00%	10.00%	46.84224245	\$21.0M
39.	Jones-Drew, Maurice	Football	39	26	51.00%	6.00%	46.70045877	\$9.5M
40.	Wozniacki, Caroline	Tennis	40	21	41.00%	5.00%	46.59091564	\$12.0M
41.	Fitzgerald, Larry	Football	41	28	68.00%	9.00%	46.34893366	\$21.0M
42.	Halladay, Roy	Baseball	42	34	70.00%	9.00%	46.17257856	\$21.5M

43.	Stafford, Matthew	Football	43	23	56.00%	13.00%	46.10060725	\$18.0M
44.	Rice, Ray	Football	44	24	48.00%	6.00%	46.01778278	\$1.5M
45.	Gonzalez, Adrian	Baseball	45	29	58.00%	6.00%	45.16426372	\$9.5M
46.	Paul, Chris	Basketball	46	26	63.00%	9.00%	44.78786871	\$19.0M
47.	Woodson, Charles	Football	47	35	62.00%	11.00%	44.0667542	\$10.5M
48.	Bolt, Usain	Olympics Boxing /	48	25	47.00%	11.00%	43.99948978	\$6.0M
49.	Mayweather Jr., Floyd	MMA	49	34	31.00%	19.00%	43.96391597	\$40.0M
50.	Ryan, Matt	Football	50	26	53.00%	9.00%	43.88364055	\$16.0M
51.	Manning, Peyton	Football	51	35	54.00%	46.00%	43.82024681	\$29.0M
52.	Granderson, Curtis	Baseball	52	30	55.00%	7.00%	43.71767988	\$9.0M
53.	Verlander, Justin	Baseball	53	28	48.00%	6.00%	43.50418912	\$15.5M
54.	Garnett, Kevin	Basketball	54	35	54.00%	20.00%	43.48450166	\$31.2M
55.	Donovan, Landon	Soccer	55	29	59.00%	8.00%	43.34262324	\$7.0M
56.	Stoudemire, Amare	Basketball	56	29	45.00%	12.00%	43.27859284	\$20.0M
57.	Willis, Patrick	Football	57	26	72.00%	5.00%	43.19430826	\$10.8M
58.	Beckham, David	Soccer	58	36	39.00%	37.00%	43.01212187	\$27.0M
59.	McCoy, LeSean	Football	59	23	18.00%	3.00%	42.88121404	\$1.3M
60.	Stewart, Tony	Motorsports	60	40	40.00%	23.00%	42.7253309	\$15.2M
61.	Allen, Jared	Football	61	29	55.00%	8.00%	42.68668075	\$11.8M
62.	Edwards, Carl	Motorsports	62	32	62.00%	11.00%	42.6382795	\$13.2M
63.	Williams, Deron	Basketball	63	27	68.00%	7.00%	42.53538401	\$16.8M
64.	Ellis, Monta	Basketball	64	26	51.00%	5.00%	42.51182559	\$11.3M
65.	Ohno, Apolo Anton	Olympics	65	29	60.00%	34.00%	42.3563088	\$1.5M
66.	Cano, Robinson	Baseball	66	29	48.00%	9.00%	42.15998214	\$10.5M
67.	Rivers, Philip	Football	67	30	39.00%	13.00%	42.04828936	\$14.0M
68.	Duncan, Tim	Basketball	68	35	58.00%	20.00%	42.01967954	\$25.5M
69.	Toews, Jonathan	Hockey	69	23	59.00%	3.00%	41.728325	\$6.8M
70.	Westbrook, Russell	Basketball	70	23	54.00%	6.00%	41.59119778	\$5.1M
71.	Kaymer, Martin	Golf	71	27	52.00%	2.00%	41.41340407	\$10.5M
72.	Matthews, Clay	Football	72	25	49.00%	16.00%	41.39325644	\$2.5M
73.	Nash, Steve	Basketball	73	37	61.00%	17.00%	41.38143985	\$16.0M
74.	Bautista, Jose	Baseball	74	31	36.00%	6.00%	41.38082806	\$10.5M
75.	Anthony, Carmelo	Basketball	75	27	35.00%	15.00%	40.73678051	\$24.5M
76.	Sedin, Daniel	Hockey	76	31	51.00%	2.00%	40.58100148	\$6.9M
77.	Gronkowski, Rob	Football	77	22	40.00%	4.00%	40.42479315	\$1.5M
78.	Jeter, Derek	Baseball	78	37	39.00%	45.00%	40.3599438	\$25.0M
79.	Wambach, Abby	Soccer	79	31	66.00%	7.00%	40.35172485	\$1.5M
80.	Murray, Andy	Tennis	80	24	45.00%	5.00%	40.33516206	\$9.6M
81.	Tulowitzki, Troy	Baseball	81	27	67.00%	5.00%	40.21343028	\$6.5M
82.	Vonn, Lindsey	Olympics	82	27	44.00%	9.00%	40.10890671	\$3.5M
83.	Kvitova, Petra	Tennis	83	21	66.00%	2.00%	39.93640257	\$6.3M
84.	Scott, Adam	Golf	84	31	67.00%	4.00%	39.89938071	\$6.8M
85.	Love, Kevin	Basketball	85	23	59.00%	5.00%	39.83663078	\$5.6M
86.	Thomas, Tim	Hockey	86	37	51.00%	4.00%	39.77545674	\$5.8M
87.	Kershaw, Clayton	Baseball	87	23	53.00%	6.00%	39.63102341	\$1.5M
88.	Solo, Hope	Soccer	88	30	70.00%	9.00%	39.49924427	\$2.5M
89.	Gonzalez, Carlos	Baseball	89	26	60.00%	3.00%	39.49599607	\$1.5M

90.	Gasol, Pau	Basketball	90	31	41.00%	12.00%	39.38359183	\$19.5M
91.	Suggs, Terrell	Football	91	29	31.00%	8.00%	39.21064472	\$11.0M
92.	Harvick, Kevin	Motorsports	92	36	55.00%	9.00%	39.05508288	\$8.5M
93.	Williams, Venus	Tennis	93	31	38.00%	35.00%	39.02793764	\$10.2M
94.	Ortiz, David	Baseball	94	36	47.00%	17.00%	38.9488614	\$16.5M
95.	Welker, Wes	Football	95	30	40.00%	4.00%	38.8564368	\$4.5M
96.	Azarenka, Victoria	Tennis	96	22	55.00%	2.00%	38.74639783	\$4.0M
97.	Anderson, James	Football	97	28	60.00%	2.00%	38.65821527	\$3.1M
98.	Wallace, Mike	Football	98	25	51.00%	8.00%	38.59999553	\$1.1M
99.	Hamilton, Josh	Baseball	99	30	47.00%	10.00%	38.59865218	\$11.0M
100.	Stricker, Steve	Golf	100	44	64.00%	3.00%	38.52319056	\$9.0M