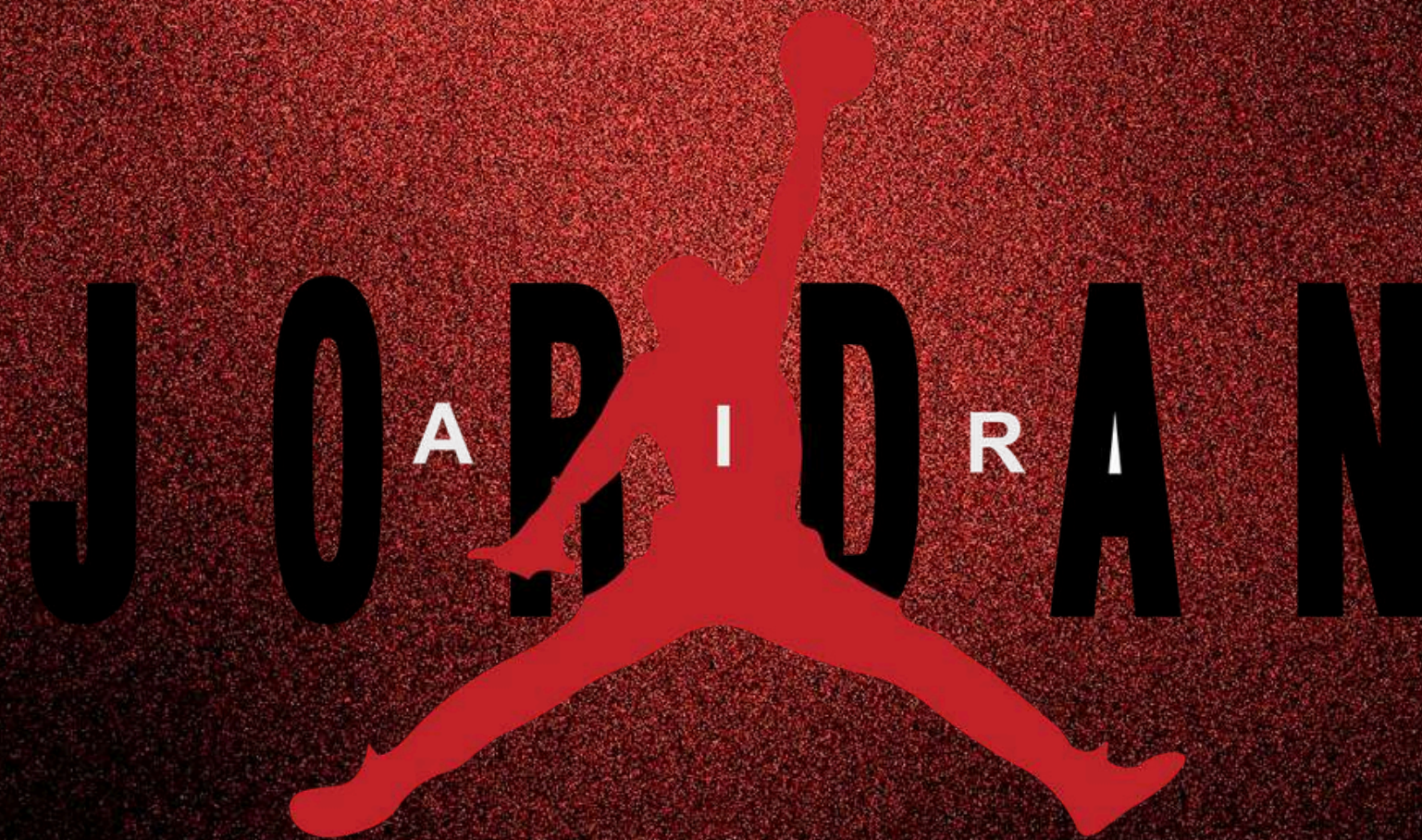


PRESENTED BY ALBERTO FAGGIOTTO



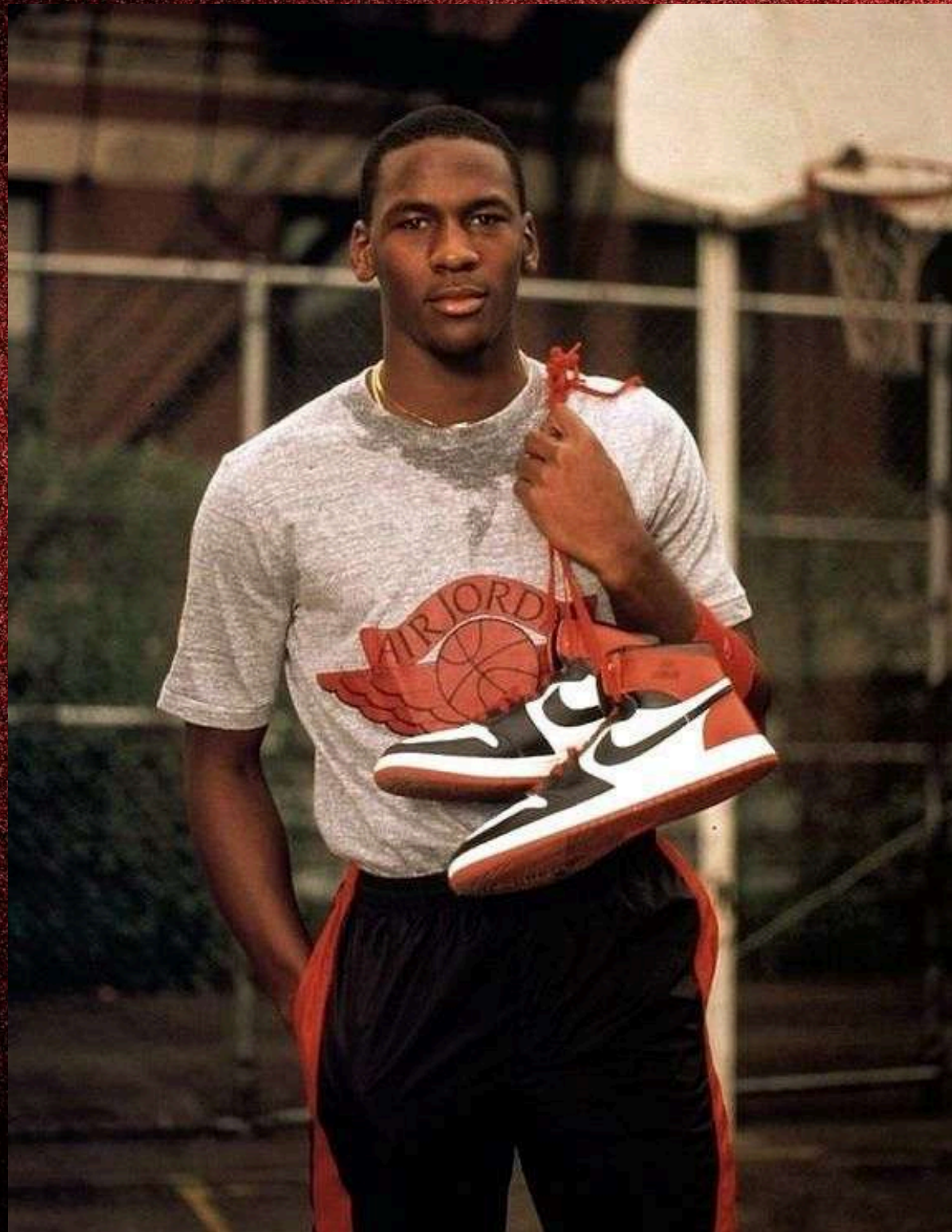
Communication and Storytelling — Bologna Business School · Digital Marketing & Communication



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INTRO



Today, the Michael Jordan brand is a vast ecosystem that is no longer limited only to the world of basketball and its iconic line of shoes, but also includes casual and sportswear, charitable activities, and social initiatives. Michael Jordan, in fact, is many things: he is the Air Jordan footwear line (and therefore Nike as well), he is the athlete, he is basketball, he is individual affirmation, he is Black Lives Matter, and much more. In this paper, we chose to start from where it all began, with the Air Jordan shoes, leaving aside the rest of the ecosystem for the sake of greater methodological rigor and consistency.

AIR JORDAN: A BRIEF HISTORY



1980

The Bet on Jordan



1990

Building the System



2000

Discipline as Platform



2010...

Pressure and Proof

1980



In the early 1980s, Nike realized that focusing only on running was no longer enough. In 1984 it chose basketball and bet on Michael Jordan, then a rookie. The Air Jordan 1 was born: a shoe in the Bulls' colors, with a focus on on-court performance and a strong narrative built around the contested NBA rules ("the Banned," the out-of-dress-code model whose colors led to fines for Nike). At the end of the decade came a shift in language with the Air Jordan III: the now-famous logo appeared, later known as the "Jumpman".

1990



Ray Allen wearing
Jordan Jumpman Team 1 in the late '90s

In the 1990s, Jordan's sporting achievements consolidated the line: each season introduced a new "numbered" model that advanced technically and stylistically, up to 1997, when Jordan Brand was officially created. Alongside the main model, the first signature shoes for other athletes appeared (Ray Allen, Vin Baker, Eddie Jones, etc.), and in parallel, historic models returned in retro versions.

2000



The platform's logo

From 2000 onwards, the message became clearer: greatness is not a gift, it is repeated work: an ethic clearly set out in 2008 with the creation of the "Become Legendary" platform.

2010...



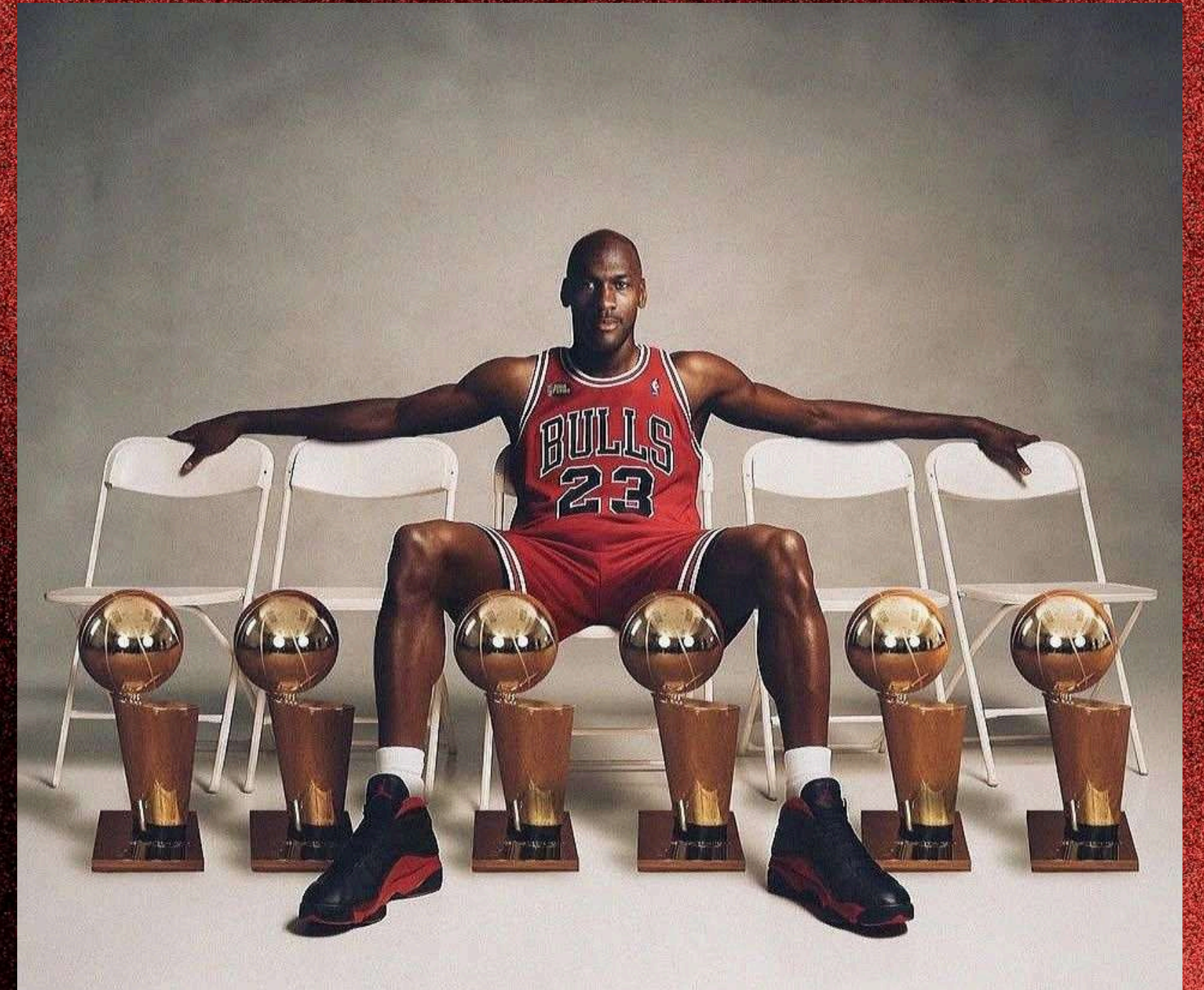
In recent years, the structure has remained the same: the athletes' signature lines continue - such as Jayson Tatum's - bringing the theme of pressure and constant trials to the forefront. The thread that ties everything together is simple: the hero is the individual who steps onto the court even when conditions are not ideal, and the shoe is there to help them withstand that moment.

Jayson Tatum wearing
Jordan Tatum 1 "Pink Lemonade" in 2023

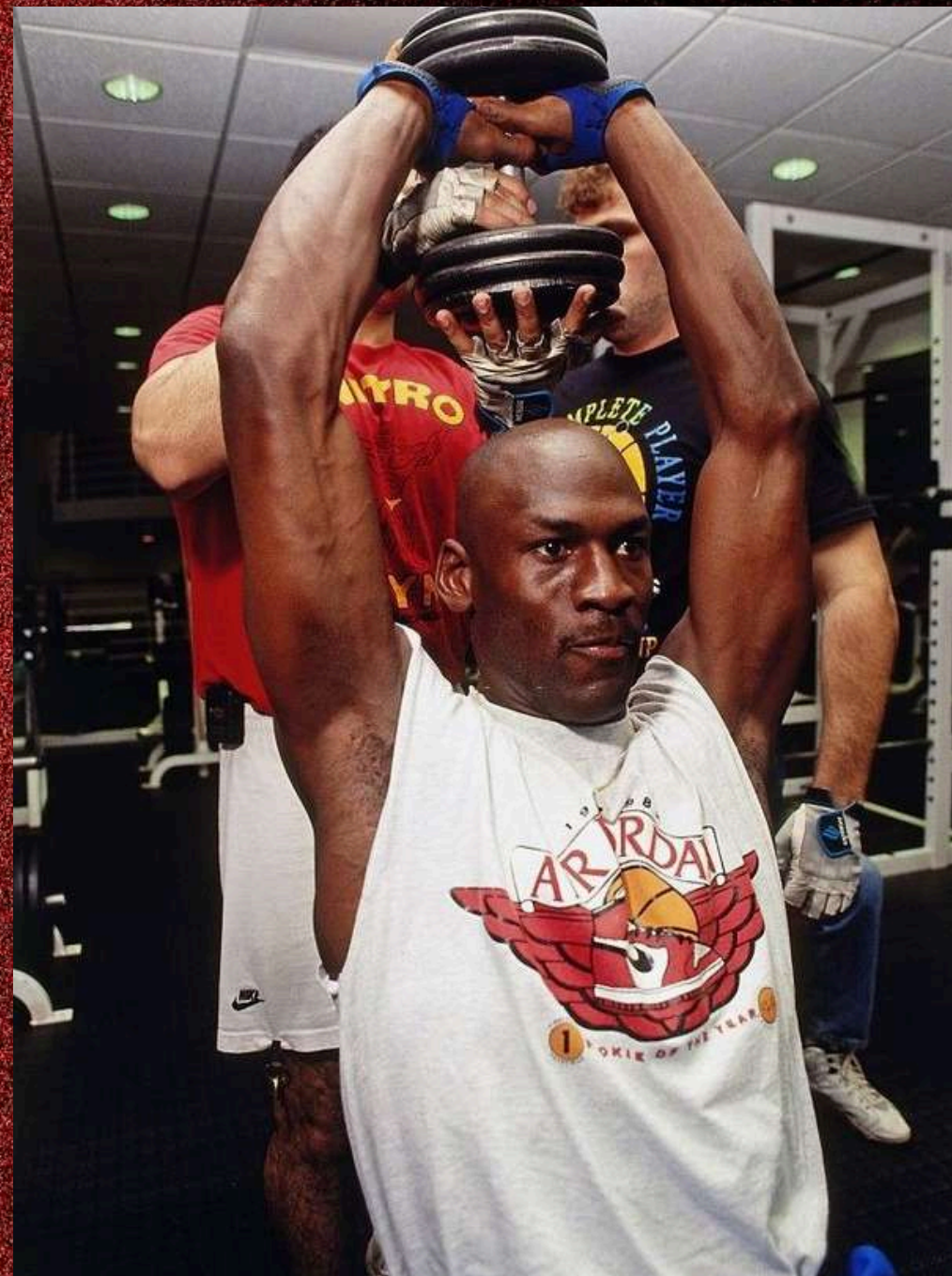
AIR JORDAN: DEEP STRUCTURE

ARCHETYPE: HERO

Core desire: to surpass oneself and live up to an ideal of greatness; **Goal:** to turn potential into measurable results on the court; **Strategy:** building daily discipline, training with intention, managing pressure, and tying every promise to the shoe's concrete technical benefits (traction, stability, cushioning, lightness); **Call:** Stepping into the arena even when conditions are not favorable; choosing action and individual responsibility rather than hiding behind excuses;



AIR JORDAN: NARRATIVE STRUCTURE



STORY PLOT: THE QUEST

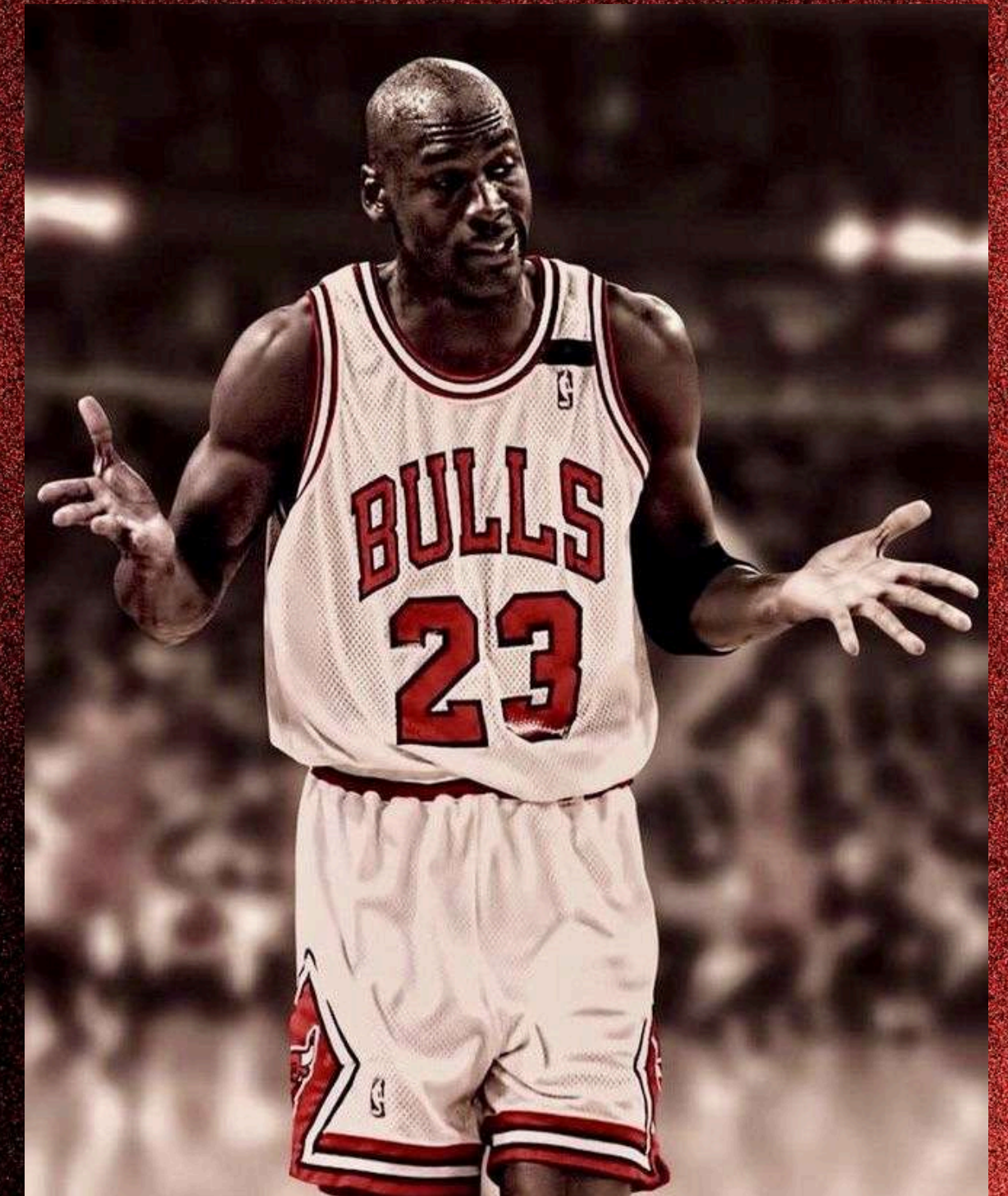
The **hero** embarks on a **journey** toward a distant reward (greatness/titles), must find the right path and overcome recurring obstacles under pressure; they are supported by guiding presences (**mentor/helper**) and by a **magical object** – the shoe – that accompanies them throughout the trial.

AIR JORDAN: DISCURSIVE STRUCTURE

The Air Jordan hero follows a simple rule: no shortcuts, you improve through work. In the macro-narrative, the **Mentor** is twofold: Michael Jordan as the benchmark to reach and, at the same time, the voice of the brand that delivers the tool and the method for using it. The **Helper** is made up of peers: the athletes on the Jordan roster and, more broadly, the people around you who help you keep the pace during the trial. The antagonist is not a person but pressure in all its forms (expectations, difficult conditions, fatigue, doubt): it comes back every time and must be managed. The **magical object** doesn't perform miracles, it is not the cause of the result: the shoe is there to help you hold the court better – more grip, more protection from impact, more stability to make the movement more reliable and repeatable – always linking the benefit to a concrete problem.

BUT... HOW?

Now we turn to *how* Air Jordan constructs and communicates its values, its narrative strategies and its discursive strategies to consumers. To do so, we must begin with its parent company, the one that made its creation possible: **Nike**. We will then go on to analyse the "Jumpman" logo and the **main slogans** used in various brand campaigns, before moving on to an analysis of one of the most significant recent **commercials** released, and concluding with a study of the brand's **website** and **Instagram profile**.



NIKE

SWOOSH

The Swoosh is its visual translation: an essential shape that evokes a wing and suggests thrust, speed, movement. Its perceived trajectory upward and to the right, in line with the Western reading direction, communicates forward motion and the future; at the same time, it mentally recalls the check mark you put next to a completed task, transferring to the brand the feeling of a positive outcome and a goal achieved.

NAME

The name "Nike" directly recalls the goddess of Victory: it is a clear signal, oriented toward sport and the idea of earned success.

SLOGAN

The "Just Do It" claim ties this semantics to action: a short command that lines up effort, discipline, and decision. Anyone can adapt it to their own context as a mantra of personal improvement: fewer words, more work. In this way, the Nike system works through the myth of victory, the sign that suggests propulsion and completion, and the slogan that triggers the act.



THE “JUMPMAN”

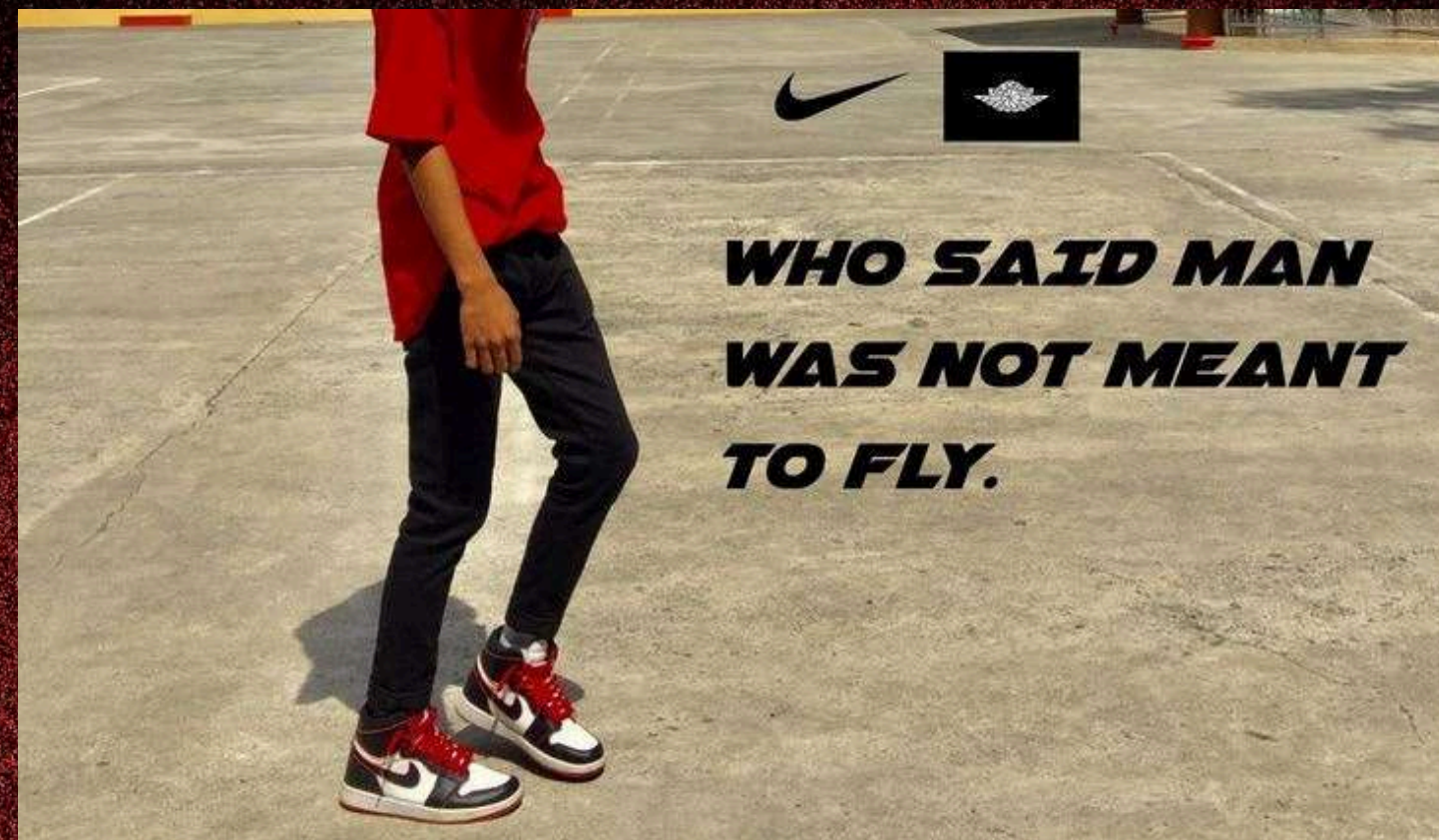
The logo consists of an image of Jordan jumping toward the basket to dunk. The silhouette used to depict him makes him recognizable without tying the logo to a specific body and face, thus generating an effect of identification for the consumer (the same value at stake in Nike's system), because the Jumpman is Jordan but can also be each of us.



Anyone can project their own identity onto that silhouette, which is both unique and adaptable to the individual. Combined with the Nike logo, it activates the desire to reach one's goal through an athletic gesture that conveys willpower, energy, success, but also strength and determination.

AIR JORDAN SLOGANS

THREE KEY ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES



"Who said man was not meant to fly?" (AJ1, 1985)

It elevates the theme of flight and verticality as a promise of performance. It is the foundational frame of the technical-athletic myth.

AIR JORDAN SLOGANS

THREE KEY ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES



"Tailored for Flight." (AJ XX9, 2014)

Here the focus shifts more explicitly to a technical promise.

AIR JORDAN SLOGANS

THREE KEY ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES



"No pressure" (Tatum 3, 2024)

This is the slogan of the commercial we will analyze below, which precisely frames pressure as the antagonist.

AIR JORDAN SLOGANS

THREE KEY ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

Looking at the slogans, we can see how the brand starts from the symbolic horizon of flight ("Who said man was not meant to fly?") to define the vertical ambition of performance. Flight is achieved through engineering ("Tailored for Flight"): flight is not just an idea, it is a gesture supported by the upper, the plate, and stability, and the shoe is designed to sustain it. Finally, the mental dimension closes the loop: "Pressure never stood a chance" shifts the target onto the recurring antagonist and neutralizes it, bringing responsibility back to the individual. There is a clear trajectory that starts from aspiration, moves through action supported by technical innovation and arrives at the control of pressure: the hero is no longer an abstract myth, and the shoe is not magic but the tool chosen to make that gesture repeatable. It is important to stress that "flying" is a metaphor for verticality and effectiveness on the court, because the shoe doesn't create talent; it merely optimizes the conditions for trained talent to express itself. The athlete jumps because they are strong and prepared, and the shoe reduces losses and risks, allowing them to get closer to their own maximum.

EXAMPLE OF A JORDAN BRAND COMMERCIAL: “ZERO PRESSURE”



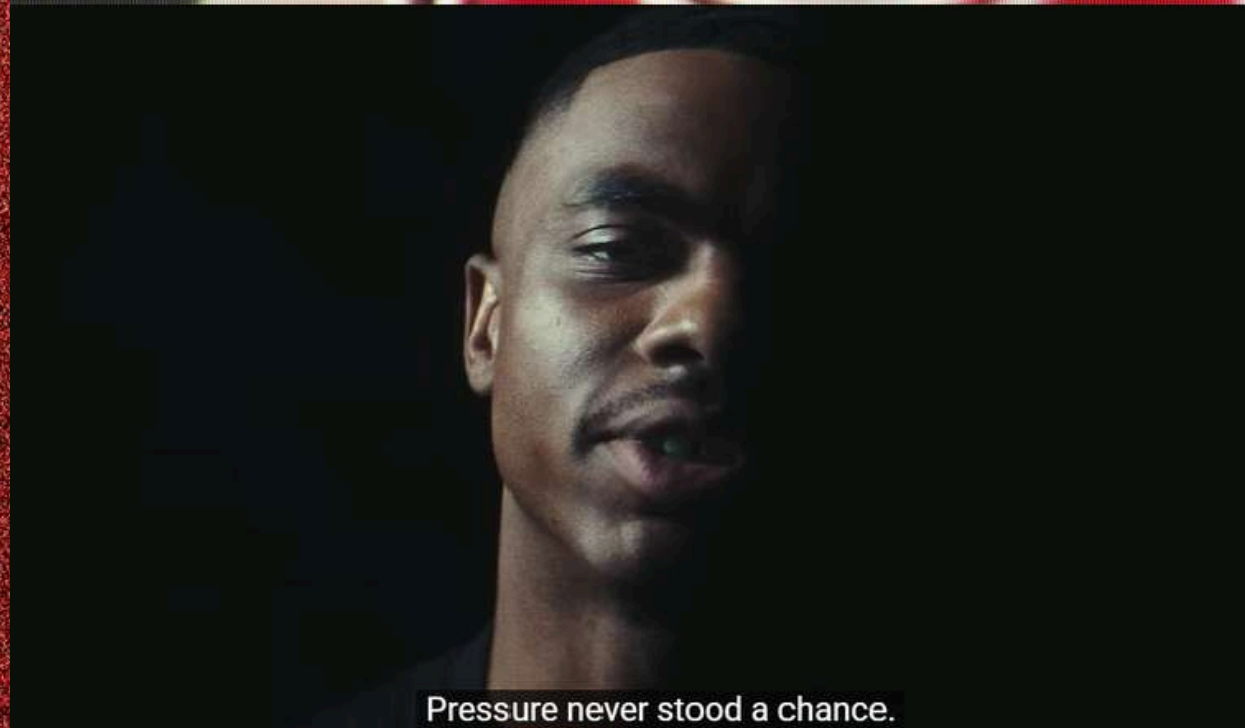
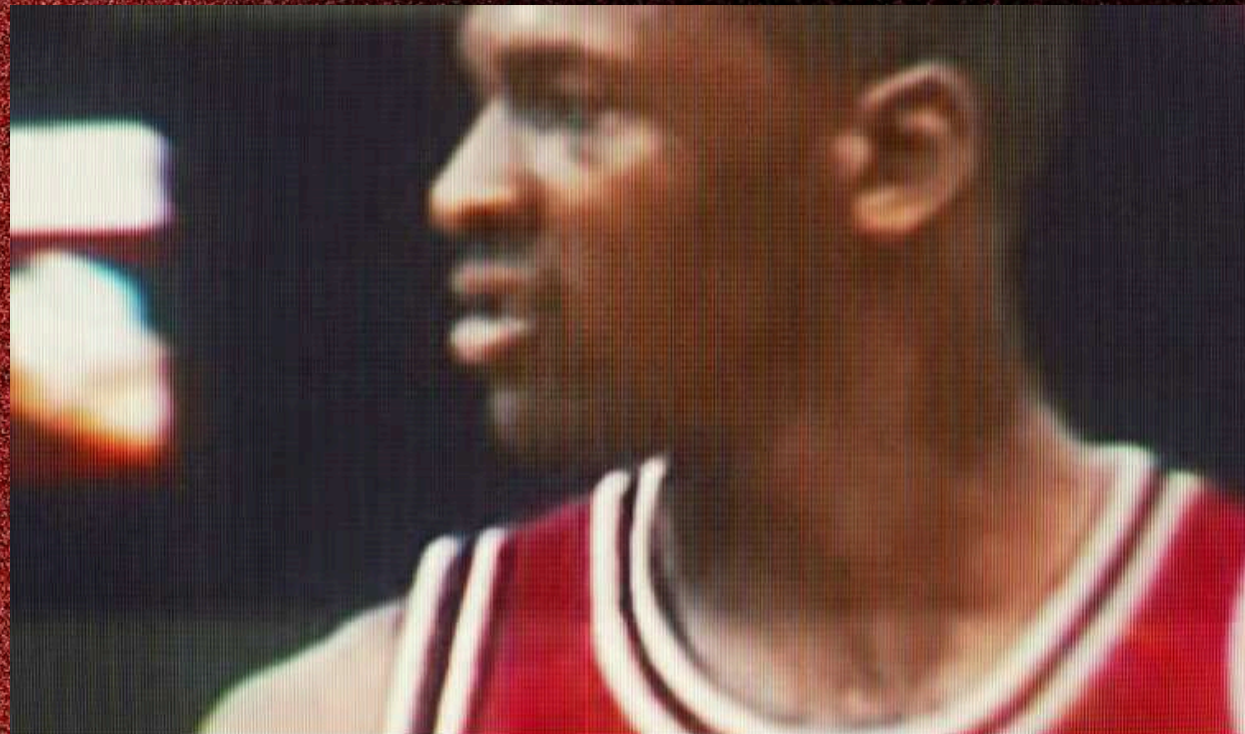
The commercial opens in darkness, with a single light that first isolates a basket and then Jayson Tatum, reducing him almost to a silhouette: his body is backlit, recognizable more by posture than by facial features, with a clear echo of the Jumpman. Tatum immediately starts to define the villain (“You wanna talk about pressure? Let’s talk about top-five recruit pressure... before you can even drive pressure. Coach K pressure. Boston pressure. Pressure of a franchise that’s only got time to championship banners”).

EXAMPLE OF A JORDAN BRAND COMMERCIAL: “ZERO PRESSURE”



The editing then accelerates: quick cuts, completed plays, small victories, tense and jubilant looks; it's a nervous pace that conveys the rhythm of competition. Then he shifts the focus to an even more personal sphere ("What about the pressure to prove her right or him right?"), as a childhood photo with his mother appears for a moment: this signals that pressure didn't start today but is a thread running through the years.

EXAMPLE OF A JORDAN BRAND COMMERCIAL: “ZERO PRESSURE”



The catalogue goes on up to an ironic paradox ("on-ball, off-ball, media pressure, tire pressure, pressure cooker?"), and when it seems that the weight has become unmanageable, there is a twist that reminds the hero he is a winner ("Come on, man. Pressure never stood a chance").

WEBSITE: FOCUS ON SHOES

In this section, I focus only on the areas of the website dedicated to shoes, because this is where the Jordan footwear brand speaks most clearly to the consumer. Concentrating on banners, product cards, and shoe captions allows me to see whether the hero narrative really reaches the product: what the photos show, what the taglines say, and what idea of performance they generate in someone who wants to buy the product.

WEBSITE: FOCUS ON SHOES



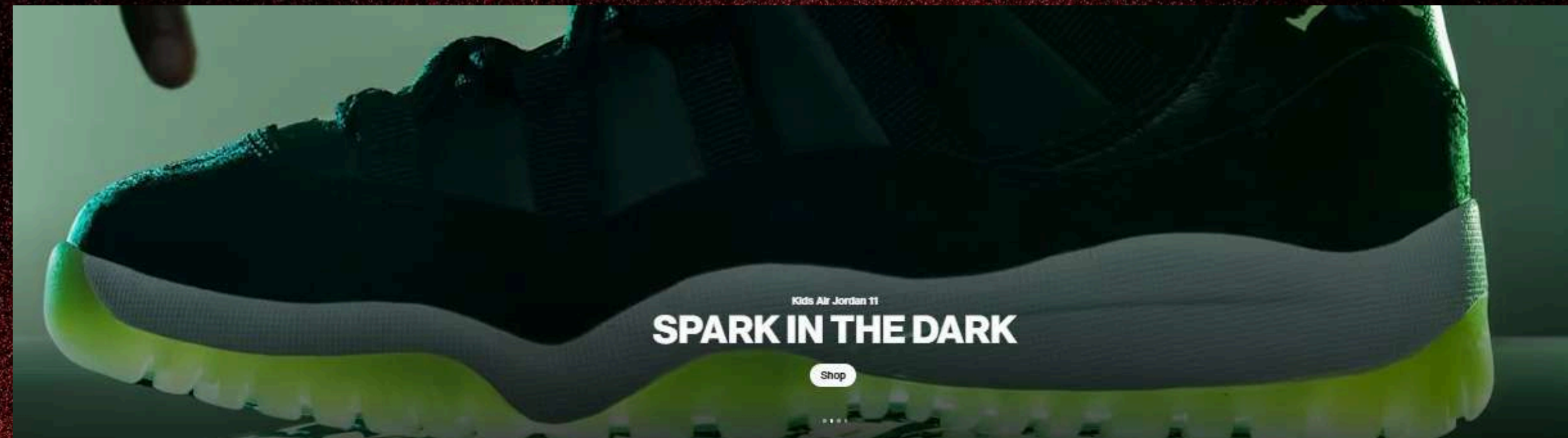
The shoe is again presented here as a tool for individual emergence under pressure. "Break It In" (Jordan Session) introduces practical initiation: it's not enough to wear the shoe, you have to use it until it becomes reliable and truly yours.

WEBSITE: FOCUS ON SHOES



"Never Be The Same" (Tatum 4) brings into focus the change of state after the trial: you go through the challenge and come out different, with the product supporting that transition.

WEBSITE: FOCUS ON SHOES



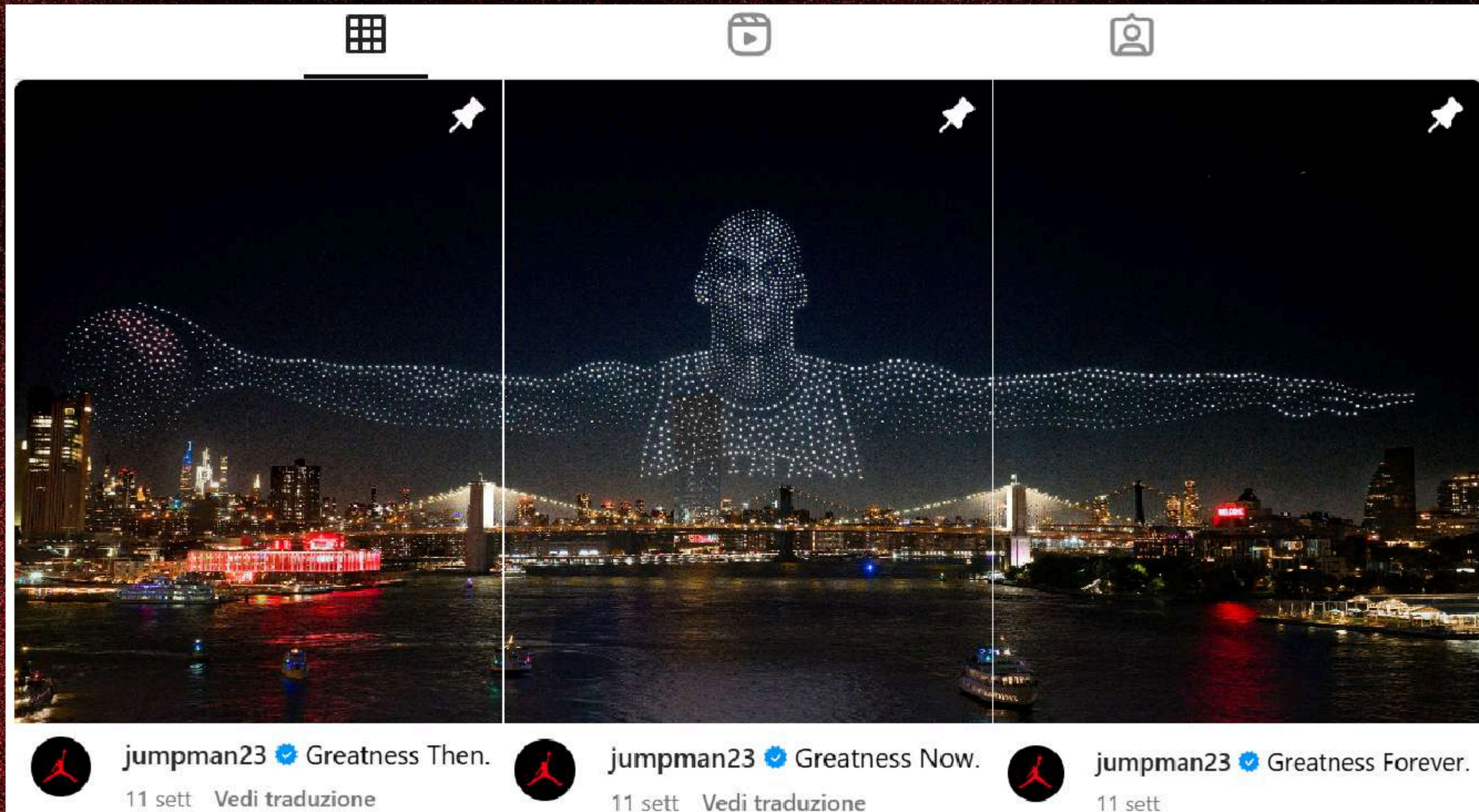
"Spark in the Dark" (Air Jordan 11) concentrates attention on the person who stands out from the surroundings: the shoe is presented as the means that allows you to distinguish yourself when it matters.

INSTAGRAM



On Instagram, the identity is already stated in the name and avatar: jumpman23, with the Jumpman as the profile picture to immediately fix the reference on the symbol (not the person) and on the number "23", firmly anchoring legacy and performance. The bio "OUR TURN" works as a passing of the torch, because Jordan is not (only) a cult of the past but an invitation to the new generation to take the court, consistent with the logic of the individual stepping into the arena.

INSTAGRAM



jumpman23 Greatness Then.

11 sett Vedi traduzione



jumpman23 Greatness Now.

11 sett Vedi traduzione



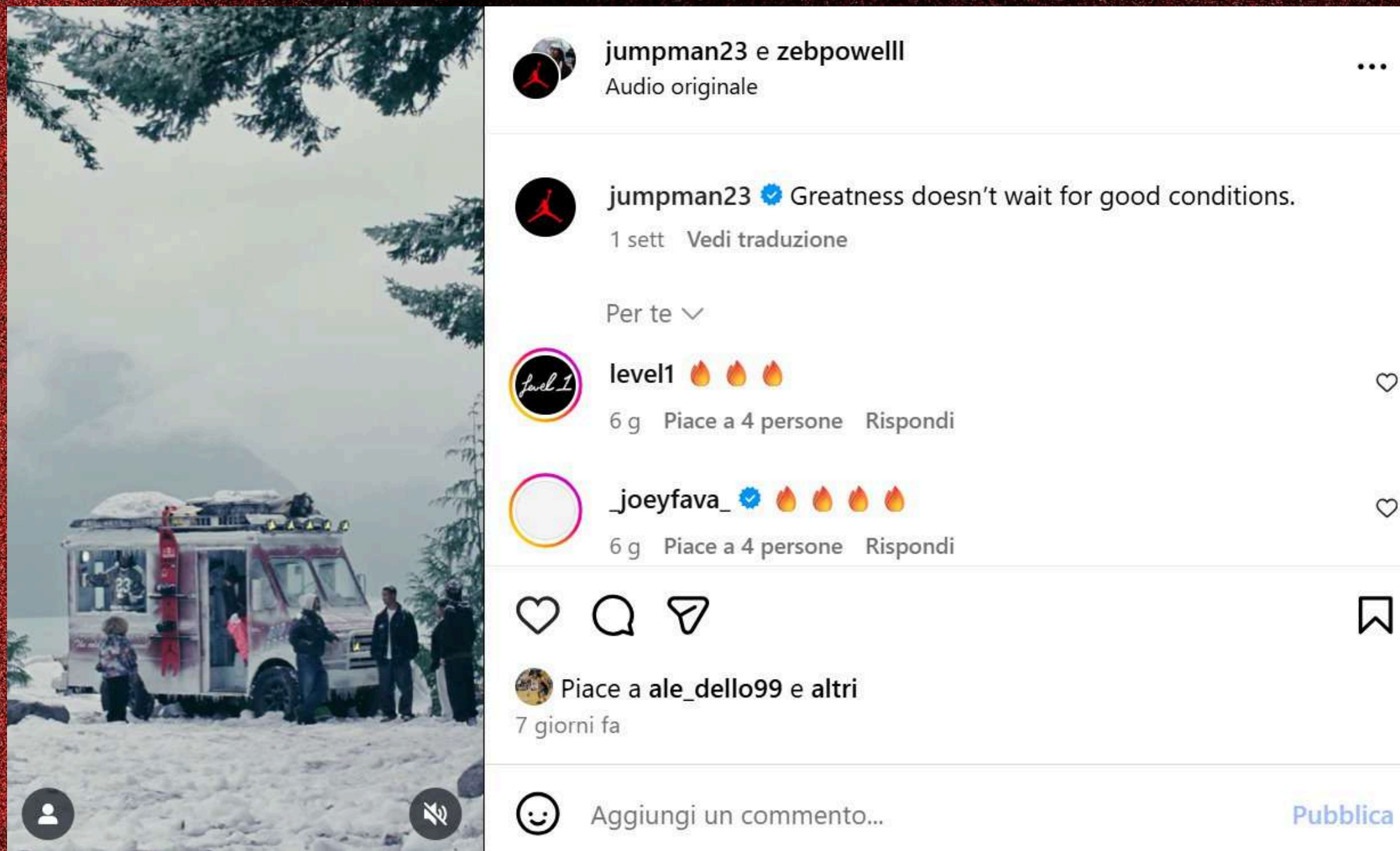
jumpman23 Greatness Forever.

11 sett

INSTAGRAM

The header image with Jordan's figure drawn by drones over the city and the corresponding captions ("greatness then/now/forever") translate the idea of a personal journey onto an explicit temporal axis: we again find the idea, already seen on the website, of emerging from the dark; the glowing silhouette recalls who the mentor is, and in this case it points the way and reminds the individual of their responsibility.

INSTAGRAM



The caption "Greatness doesn't wait for good conditions" reinforces that there can be no excuses: you must take action even when conditions are not favorable.

**THANK YOU
VERY MUCH!**