

Sports Illustrated for Kids

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Tall Tale

By: Ellen Cosgrove

So you think Tim Duncan is calm, cool, and boring, right? Well, think again! Does forward Tim Duncan of the San Antonio Spurs like to slam down monster-mashing dunks? "No, I prefer turnaround jump shots," he says. Does he growl when he grabs a rebound? "I don't really say anything on the court," says Tim. Does Tim do a celebration dance after big games? "I can't dance," says Tim. Hmm. This NBA All-Star seems, well, boring! Wrong! Would you believe that Tim is one of the NBA's fiercest and funniest players?

Myths and Realities

MYTH 1: Tim shows no emotion during games. He isn't intense.

Reality: Tim plays with more heat than the scorching Texas sun. He hides his emotions to fool opponents. He wants them to think he's taking it easy. Tim might grimace or his eyes might bulge when he's dunking or when he's grabbing a rebound. But most of the time, he looks as cool as a snow cone. Tim doesn't wag a finger or throw elbows at opponents. He doesn't yell. He rarely gets mad. But look out! Game 2 of the 1999 NBA championship series: Avery Johnson tosses an alley-oop pass. Tim grabs the ball for a two-handed slam! That's the real Tim Duncan! He led the Spurs in scoring (21.7 points per game), rebounding (11.4 per game), and blocked shots (2.52 per game) last season. He was named the Finals MVP. "There is nobody more focused or fiercer than Tim," says teammate Mario Elie.



MYTH 2: Tim has no sense of humor.

Reality: Tim is the Spurs' prankster and jokester. He even has a tattoo of a joker on his back. "I'm a clown cleverly disguised as a regular person," says Tim. Guard Antonio Daniels and Tim joke around all the time. They grab microphones from reporters and pretend to interview each other. "Tim and I are in each other's rooms for hours a day, watching TV and laughing," says Antonio. "Don't let his straight face fool you. Tim's funny!"

MYTH 3: Tim is so talented that he doesn't need to work hard in the off-season.

Reality: Tim has tons of natural talent. But he still works like a maniac in the

Tim's FAVORITE THINGS

NAME: Timothy Theodore Duncan

NICKNAMES: Merlin, Big Easy

BIRTH DATE: April 25, 1976

BIRTHPLACE: St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

HOMES: San Antonio, Texas, and St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

FAVORITE SPORT TO PLAY (other than basketball):
Football

COLORS: Black and gray

ANIMAL: Dog. I have two Labrador retrievers, Zen and Shadow.

FOOD: Steak

BOOK: Jurassic Park, by Michael Crichton

off-season. Center David Robinson invited Tim to work out before Tim's rookie season, in 1997. David trains as hard as any player in the league. But even David was impressed by Tim's effort. "I worked him pretty hard," says David, "and he never complained." Tim and the Spurs won the NBA championship last

season, but Tim didn't relax over the summer. He worked on his long-range shooting, free throws, and ball handling.

MYTH 4: Tim can play only under the basket.

Reality: Even though Tim is 7-feet tall and weighs 248 pounds, he thinks of himself as a point guard! He was only 6'1" as a high school freshman. He spent time working on handling the ball and his outside shot. "I'm a point guard packaged as a power forward-center," says Tim.

MYTH 5: Tim is the best player in the NBA.

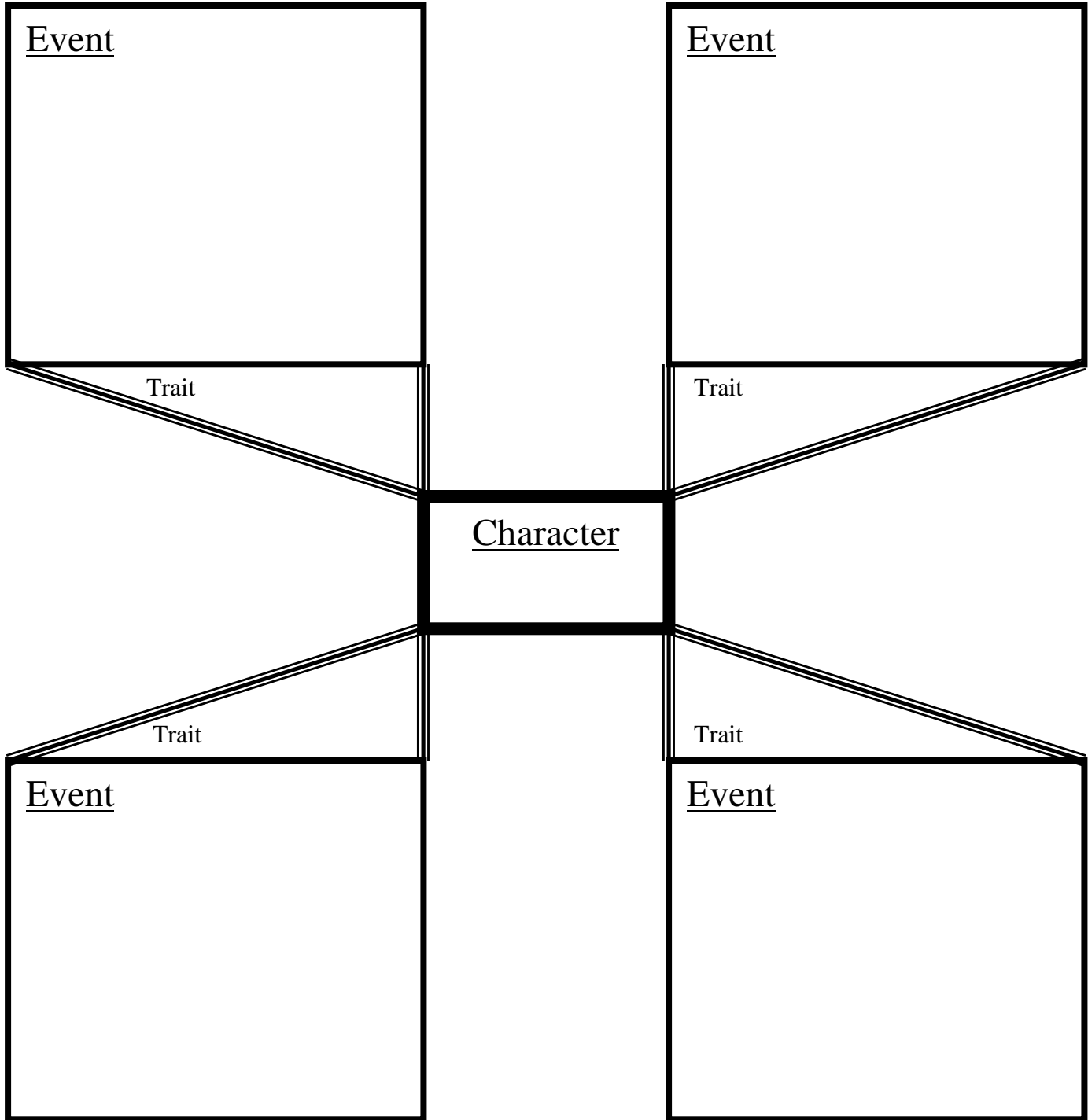
Reality: It's no myth! Tim is the best player in the NBA. He has more spin moves than a Tilt-a-Whirl. His bank shot from 15 feet is a crusher. He

blocks shots as if he were nine feet tall. And he brings his best game to the biggest games: He scored 31 points in the title-clinching Game 5 over the New York Knicks. But ssshhh! Keep this a secret. Tim wants his opponents to keep thinking he's too calm and too nice to be a hotshot NBA star.

You may write to Tim:
C/O SAN ANTONIO SPURS 100 MONTANA
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78203

CHARACTER MAP # 3

Name: _____ Date: _____



CHARACTERIZATION FEELING WORDS

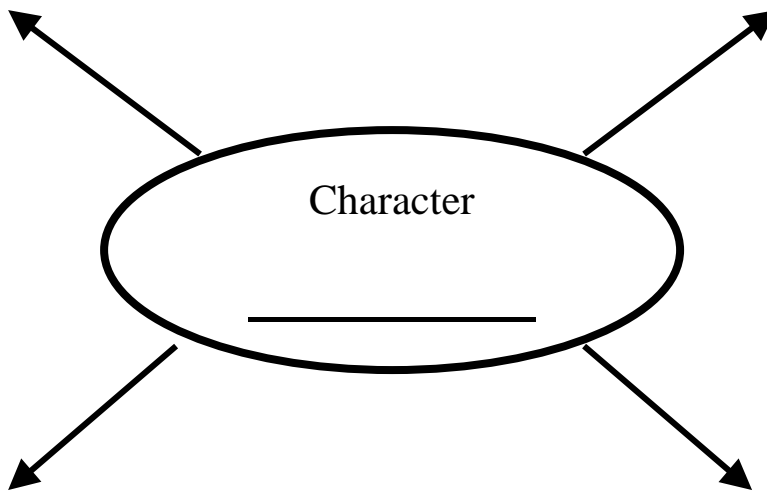
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