

RETRO REPLAY



John Glenn relaxed in a pair of Chucks on the USS Noa immediately after his Friendship 7 flight in 1962.

POP CULTURE

COOL RUNNINGS

From gym court to punk-rock stage, Chuck Taylors score a century of wins. **BY MARY-LIZ SHAW**

When Marquis Mills Converse devised his over-the-ankle sneaker in 1917, it wasn't a direct answer to a need in the marketplace. He had started Converse Rubber Co. nine years earlier in Malden, Massachusetts, making a variety of cold-weather rubber items, including galoshes and duck-hunting boots. But the business was seasonal. Converse thought of making athletic shoes as a way of keeping his factory operating through the summer.

Those early shoes likely were designed with soccer and the basketball-like netball in mind. But around the time of the First World War, basketball was becoming popular in cities

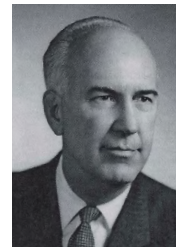
because it was a relatively compact game that could be played anywhere.

Converse's sneakers had features that seemed a good fit for basketball playing, including an ankle-hugging design. But sales were slow.

It wasn't until 1922, when an affable young basketball enthusiast from Columbus, Indiana, named Charles Hollis "Chuck" Taylor took a sales job at Converse, that the sneakers began to jump off the shelves.

Converse All Stars were the world's bestselling basketball shoes before making an equally remarkable leap into the world of popular fashion. Today, they continue to enjoy special status as the footwear of cool rebels everywhere.

SERGIO AZENH/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



all over the country, developing close relationships with coaches and players, and highlighting their feats in annual Converse yearbooks.

1932

Converse adds Chuck Taylor's signature to its All Star ankle patch. It solidifies his identity with the brand.

1936

All Stars are named the official shoe of the U.S. basketball team at the Olympic Games. This is the first year the game is an Olympic sport and it marks the debut of Converse's "Olympic white" Chuck Taylors. On a muddy outdoor court, the U.S. takes gold in a 19-8 win against Canada.

Chucks remain the U.S. team's official shoe through the 1968 Games.

1922

Taylor, above, a star of his high school basketball team, played for many semipro clubs beginning in 1919. The story goes that Taylor walked into the Chicago offices of Converse complaining of sore feet. In 1922, Converse hires him to promote its redesigned All Star line as a basketball shoe. Taylor is no ordinary salesman. He coaches the company's basketball team and runs clinics



NEW TONES in 1971 were green, orange, light blue, navy, gold, off-white and red.

1957

Converse introduces its low-top Oxfords, which become popular as casual shoes off the court. That same year, kids on the new sitcom *Leave It to Beaver* wear Chuck Taylor low-tops under rolled-up jeans.

1962

Wilt Chamberlain wears a pair of Chuck high-tops when he scores his record-setting 100 points in a single NBA game.

1969

Calling him a basketball ambassador, the board of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame names Chuck Taylor to its class of 1969. He dies later that year.

1971

Converse debuts Chucks in seven new colors, above, bolstering the brand's growing popularity among rock stars and in the counterculture.

1976

Sylvester Stallone, as underdog boxer Rocky Balboa, runs through Philadelphia in Chuck high-tops as he trains for the big bout.

1977

Dee Dee Ramone, bassist of seminal American punk band The Ramones, rocks a pair of Chuck low-tops while on tour in Denmark.

2001

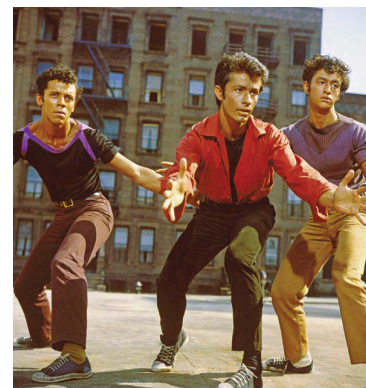
Despite the popularity of its Chuck line as a fashion shoe, Converse struggles to match the technical advances in athletic shoes of competitors such as Nike and Adidas. It declares bankruptcy.

2003

Converse's one-time rival Nike buys the company for \$315 million.

2015

Nike sells an average of 270,000 pairs of Chuck Taylors a day. ●



THE SHARKS, led by Bernardo (George Chakiris), wear Chuck Taylor low-tops in *West Side Story* (1961).

WEST SIDE STORY: PICTURELIXY/THE HOLLYWOOD ARCHIVE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO