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Ex-Blazer, broadcaster Antonio Harvey leads new CBD company

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A second cannabis company founded by and targeted at athletes has launched in Portland. But unlike Mendi — the Rapinoe-led and endorsed startup that has so far focused exclusively on CBD products — newcomer Legends Brand is eager to bring THC into the equation.

Just not yet.

Legends is headed up by Antonio Harvey, the former Trail Blazers player and broadcaster. He's no stranger to the Oregon cannabis industry — his family's Terra Mater Farms in the Canby area was among the first licensed grows in the state.

The Harveys went into that business with partners, but have since taken sole control of the indoor grow, expanding it and renaming it Harmony Roots. It sells mostly to cannabis processors.

But Harvey came to believe cannabis could help athletes and was eager to bring the benefits directly to them.



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Legends recently launched with four athlete-focused products.

“I wasn't a big cannabis consumer when I was playing,” Harvey said. “It wasn't until almost the end of my career and into my broadcasting career that I started to utilize the medical benefits of cannabis. I still wasn't a big smoker, per se, but I did begin to realize that it helped me sleep better.”

Harvey is an adherent of the “entourage effect,” a theory with some scientific backing that holds that CBD is more effective working with other natural cannabis compounds, including THC, even at small amounts that aren't necessarily intoxicating.

But THC is illegal under federal law, which means that products that contain it can't cross state lines.

“You have to have a processor in every state,” Harvey said. “And you have to have a co-packer in every state. It's a lot harder to get THC products on a national market.”

So Legends recently launched with THC-free CBD products that include nutritional supplements. “Pre-Game,” for instance, is a beverage powder that combines CBD with vitamin C, caffeine, ginger and various minerals.

The company recommends taking it an hour before exercise to “face every workout with better focus, higher energy and more mental alertness.”

Legends worked with pharmaceutical and nutritional experts on its formulations, Harvey said. And it has the expertise of co-founder Tony Bash to lean on — he created Form Factory, a Portland co-packer of cannabis-infused foods and beverages that was sold to Acreage Holdings in 2018. George Lynch, a teammate of Harvey's back in the day, is also an owner and has the title “chief of athlete relations.”

They've got THC-containing products waiting in the wings.

“We do have versions that are micro-dosed with THC,” he said. “That will be the phase two launch, and we have co-packers in Washington, Oregon and California at the ready when the regulations allow. But we knew we had great CBD products that are much easier to get to the market, so we wanted to move forward.”

Not that selling CBD isn't without complications, despite its legality. The Federal Drug Administration is still working on regulations, but the agency has been warning companies about making medical claims. And the Federal Trade Commission this

month took action against six firms accused of overstepping on that issue.

CBD is also a crowded space, with more than 3,000 companies, according to sector-watcher Brightfield Group. That's putting downward pressure on prices.

"There's two sides to that coin," Harvey said. "It's competitive, but there's still not a leader in the space, right? There may be 3,000 brands, but nobody really knows one from the other. I think that our background, how we got here, makes us different. We could have launched nine months ago if we wanted to take some CBD, put it in a bottle, put a pretty label on it and get it out to the public. But that was never our objective. Our objective was to create a product that was beneficial to the everyday athlete, all the way up to the high-end professional athletes."

Legends' main route to consumers is directly, through its website, but Harvey said the seven-person company is also looking to get into "nutritional stores that don't get attention from the big companies."

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