

Friday, February 29, 2008

### Showtime in L.A.

A lot has happened since Sunday, the 24th, the date of my last NBA post. Sam Cassell has been bought out, which will help Boston, Yao Ming is done for the year with a stress fracture, which sucks because he's one of my favorite non-Lakers, Jamaal Magloire joined Dallas, and Caron Butler has a torn muscle in his hip, which means Washington will be an even worse playoff team in a few months.

Also, the Lakers won three more times: Sunday against the Sonics, by 20, Tuesday against Portland, by 13, and yesterday over Miami by 18. Seattle and Miami aren't good teams, of course, but holding the Blazers to 83 points is pretty impressive, even if they're not a playoff team anymore. The Miami game featured a King Kobe (as Pat Riley apparently calls him now) dunk contest, and also a patently ridiculous Showtime-style fast-break: Kobe gets a long defensive rebound around the foul line, throws a ridiculous over-the-head, no-look pass to Luke Walton at the Miami three-point line; Walton catches the ball up over his head like a wide receiver in traffic and in one motion, as he's coming to the floor, throws a behind-the-back bounce pass to Lamar Odom, who catches the ball at about the free throw line, takes two steps, and throws it down. The video is currently here, and I'd encourage you to watch it. Just beautiful. The Knicks haven't had a play like this in three years, I think.

What's happened in the standings? L.A. is now alone in first place, with a one-game lead over San Antonio. Phoenix has dropped all the way to fifth, two games back of the Lakers, in a virtual tie for third with New Orleans (which has one fewer win and one fewer loss), but with Utah getting the priority for the fourth-seed by virtue of being the division leader. Dallas, Houston, and Golden State remain the bottom three, with Golden State just a half game better than Denver. Sacramento, 11th in the West, would be a playoff team in the East.

The Bulls, Heavyweight Champions going into last Sunday, lost the title to Houston that day. Houston then destroyed Washington, holding them to just 69 points, on Tuesday. They'll play Memphis tonight, and I really can't see them losing that game, Yao or not. You know, it's not like they need Yao to shut down the likes of Kwame Brown (who actually started against Cleveland on Sunday, but then got a DNP against Phoenix on Tuesday; at some point, you can't just yank the guy around like this, can you? Either you treat him like an expiring contract or you treat him like an actual player, right?).

2007-08 Title Bout Records:

Boston122  
Cleveland52  
Houston52  
Milwaukee52  
San Antonio73  
Phoenix32  
Utah32  
Chicago11  
Denver11  
L.A. Clippers11  
Philadelphia11  
Miami23  
Washington24  
Charlotte12  
Chicago12  
Memphis14  
Sacramento14  
Dallas01  
Detroit01  
Orlando01  
Portland01  
Seattle01  
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Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Basketball, L.A. Lakers at 10:23