

Friday, February 29, 2008

### San Francisco signs a wideout

Isaac Bruce has apparently signed a two-year deal with the 49ers. Bruce has never played a day in his career outside a Rams uniform, winding up with 197 games on that team, racking up over 14,000 yards. He's 36 years old this year, and in two of his last three seasons, he hasn't been able to get on the field for all sixteen games. His rate stats have also declined from his prime years, of course, but he's still probably better than Darrell Jackson, who was most definitely miscast as a #1 receiver.

Given the poor quality of the 49er receiving corps last year, pretty much anybody would be an upgrade. Which is kind of a backhanded compliment for the deal, but it also illustrates how necessary it was to get somebody in that role who can at least approximate a receiving threat. Will Bruce and Jackson be a fearsome twosome for Alex Smith to use to strike fear in the heart of defenses everywhere? Of course not. But paired with Vernon Davis and Frank Gore, and with some further development from Arnaz Battle, maybe the offense can avoid being awful.

...

Ok, ok, I can't keep a straight face any more. I meant Shaun Hill, of course, not Alex Smith.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Football at 21:26

### 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  
Atlanta02  
Indiana02  
New York02  
L.A. Lakers03

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Basketball, L.A. Lakers at 10:23

Sunday, February 24, 2008

### Profile of Kurt Suzuki

Here is John Sickels' take on Kurt Suzuki. The gist of it is that Suzuki isn't a star in the making, but rather a solid big league regular. Any kind of hitting that rates as anything above "abominable" will be an upgrade on Jason Kendall, of course, but Suzuki may end up pushed out by some of the young catchers the A's have in the minors: Landon Powell (though he's not young anymore) or Anthony Recker, perhaps.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Oakland A's at 11:26

### Lakers win again; Bulls have the belt; West roundup

L.A. destroyed another team last night, beating the Clippers in a "road" game by 18. The theme of the AP story was that Kobe Bryant was just "one of the guys", and the box score backs it up: six different Lakers took either 11 or 12 shots (Kobe and Pau among them), and Luke Walton had nine. Nobody took more than 12 shots. The assist numbers also back up the general ball-sharing theme: 27 assists on 39 field goals.

Sasha Vujacic went nuts again, hitting 5 of 9 from three and 6 of 11 overall for 17 points.

Other Western powers in the last few nights have done this: Houston beat Miami by 12 on Thursday as Tracy McGrady and Rafer Alston each had points-assists double-doubles and Yao Ming shot 10/11. San Antonio edged Minnesota by one behind Manu Ginobili's 44 points on 7/9 three-point shooting. (But don't the Spurs have to beat teams like the Wolves by more than a single point?)

On Friday, Houston won again, clobbering New Orleans by twenty, as Yao Ming had 28 and 14, Tracy McGrady dropped 34, and the Hornets shot just 40%. Chicago beat Denver at Denver's own game, winning 135-121 despite J.R. Smith's 43 points in 33 minutes off the bench (8/14 from three); Ben Gordon had 37 points of his own off the bench and Jo Noah and Ty Thomas each had double-doubles, proving the Bulls probably won't miss Ben Wallace's sulking about not getting to wear a headband at all. Dallas beat Memphis by 15, which is what Dallas is supposed to do: Dirk had 27 points on just nine shots and Jason Kidd had 2 points and 15 assists. Golden State lost to Atlanta by seven, despite Baron Davis and Monta Ellis combining for 61 points. Utah lost to the Clippers by ten as the Jazz apparently lost the ability to guard small forwards: Al Thornton and Corey Maggette had 27 points apiece. Phoenix beat Boston in a Celtics-style game, 85-77. It was sloppy, with 44 turnovers combined, but the Suns won by dominating the glass, 50-32. Shaq had 14 of those rebounds despite getting just five shots (making one), proving that the new, improved, motivated Shaq has actually quit the "if the big dog don't get fed, maybe he won't guard the house" nonsense he was spouting a few years ago with the Lakers.

Finally, last night, Denver lost again, this time to Milwaukee, as Michael Redd went off for 42 points and Andrew Bogut grabbed 20 rebounds, including seven offensive. It's not every day a guy gets seven offensive boards against Marcus Camby. San Antonio sent New Orleans to another L behind Manu Ginobili's continued offensive dominance: 30 points and 12 assists. Tim Duncan showed again why he might be the best player of his generation: 25 points, 11 rebounds, six assists, four blocks, a steal, and just one turnover. Bonzi Wells shot 1-7 off the bench for his new team. Utah beat Atlanta as seven Jazz scored in double figures.

The result of all these wins and losses? The Lakers and Phoenix are now tied for first. New Orleans has dropped to fifth (albeit with a better record than the division-leading Jazz), in a tie for third with San Antonio, just a half game back of the leaders. Dallas, Houston, and Golden State round out the top eight, but the Warriors are tied for that last spot with Denver. The Lakers hold the tiebreaker against Phoenix, having beat them 3-1 in the season series. San Antonio currently holds the tiebreaker over New Orleans, leading them 2-1, but they have one game left in New Orleans. Denver and Golden State have split their first two games with each other, and each have a home game left in the series. Golden State's in-conference record is one game better than Denver's.

On the Heavyweight front, my guess about Denver soundly beating Chicago missed pretty badly, so the Bulls are the new Heavyweight champions. The Bulls defend their title tonight against the red-hot Houston Rockets in a nationally televised bout!

2007-08 Current beltholder: Chicago Bulls

2007-08 Title Bout Records:

Chicago10  
Boston122  
Cleveland52  
Milwaukee52  
San Antonio73  
Houston32  
Phoenix32  
Utah32  
Denver11  
L.A. Clippers11  
Philadelphia11  
Miami23  
Washington23  
Charlotte12  
Chicago12  
Memphis14  
Sacramento14  
Dallas01  
Detroit01  
Orlando01  
Portland01  
Seattle01  
Atlanta02  
Indiana02  
New York02  
L.A. Lakers03

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Basketball, L.A. Lakers at 10:39

Friday, February 22, 2008

### Mega NBA post, including trade thoughts

With the regular season back underway and the trade deadline past, it's time for a mega basketball post.

First, the Jason Kidd deal. I hate the trade for the Mavs. They get a washed up point guard who can't or won't play defense anymore for: a young, improving point (Devin Harris), a young, improving defensive center (Diop), a young swingman (Maurice Ager), and two first-round picks. That's essentially five young players for a guy who will throw out some 10-10-10 triple doubles this year while allowing Chris Paul, Deron Williams, Tony Parker, and all the rest to run past him all game. Also, as The Yemen Deli has insisted to me over and over again, the Mavs are damaged psychologically and needed to make a move a long time ago, not now. At least now Devean George can put this whole thing behind him now.

The Mike Bibby deal. I'm just not sure how this is relevant. The Hawks should make the playoffs with Bibby, since they gave up absolutely nothing (two backup points, one lottery pick who wasn't playing any minutes for them) to get him, but this doesn't make them a contender. Bibby's a good player, but he's not a game-changing player. His peak ended two years ago. I have no idea how this deal will work out for Sacramento. I guess it depends on how good Shelden Williams actually is.

The Ben Wallace deal. The Cavs gave up Drew Gooden, Larry Hughes, Cedric Simmons, Shannon Brown, Ira Newble, and Donyell Marshall for Ben Wallace, Wally Szczerbiak, Delonte West, and Joe Smith. This is a risky move for the Cavs: Wallace is an aging malcontent who basically has one skill. He does rebound better than any of the guys the Cavs gave up, of course, so they'll improve in that area. Wally should actually be a key to the deal, since the Cavs basically had two three-point shooters: Daniel Gibson (who's also supposed to be running the point for the team, not just hoisting up threes) and Damon Jones (Sasha Pavlovic should be on the list, just not this year). Adding a third guy who shoots it at 40% from downtown could help keep defenders off of Bron Bron. Delonte West should also be a better backup point than whoever was doing the job for the Cavs before the deal (Brown? Eric Snow? Hughes?).

For Seattle, this is a straight salary dump, getting rid of Wally and getting back Newble (expiring), Adrian Griffin from Chicago (expiring), and Donyell Marshall (who's a useful player for 10 or 15 minutes per game).

Finally, Chicago gets to move on from the massive Ben Wallace mistake, and ends up with Gooden, Hughes, Simmons, and Brown. Who they got back almost doesn't matter as much as getting rid of Wallace and moving on to the next phase for the franchise. Gooden may be considered a project, to see if anyone can get him back on track: he's stagnated the last two years in Cleveland, and it's not really clear why. Maybe someone in Chicago can get him back on track.

The Hornets. New Orleans made a bit of a silly trade, sending Bobby Jackson to Houston for Mike James and Bonzi Wells. Wells is an interesting pickup, but you have to worry about a corrosive personality.

Jackson for James is essentially a lateral move -- these backup point guards, they all look alike to me. For Houston, I'm not sure what the deal does. More playing time for Luis Scola and Chuck Hayes? It's a risky move because they're in the playoff picture, but the West is tight enough, with nine teams for eight spots, that any incremental downgrading could let Golden State push past you.

The Spurs. Brent Barry and Francisco Elson for Kurt Thomas. This deal reminds me of those waiver claims in baseball where you put in a claim to keep another team from picking up a player via a trade. Thomas's name has been bandied about as a guy who could defend well against Tim Duncan in the playoffs, so maybe the Spurs decided to take that off the board. The problem for San Antonio is I don't see what Thomas gives them that Elson doesn't, and then they have to give up a great three point shooter to get him? Let's say that Thomas is a better defensive player than Elson, and that he's less incompetent on offense. Both of those things are probably true. Does that make it worth giving up a shooter of Barry's caliber? I'm not so sure. (Not that I'm complaining, as a Laker fan.)

Speaking of the Lakers, they won the last two nights, once in a blowout over the Hawks (it was 73-37 at halftime). Mike Bibby played just 16 minutes. The Lakers did their usual: Kobe scored, Pau scored with a ridiculous shooting percentage (7-11), Odom rebounded, and a bench guy knocked in a couple of threes (it was Jordan Farmar this time). The other Lakers win, last night, was a little more exciting: 130-124 over Phoenix. No overtimes. L.A. scored at least thirty in each quarter, and rode an eight point halftime lead to the victory. Kobe had 41 (what finger?), Pau shot 13-19, Odom had 22-11, Sasha Vujacic went off again (15 points in 24 minutes), and L.A. generally just shot the lights out (56.5%).

LeBron had a triple-double in an eight-point loss at home to Houston in which Yao shot just 3-17. That sentence makes my mind boggle. He went for another triple-double the next night, this time leading the Cavs to a victory over a bad team. (Indiana.) Congratulations, LeBron. You beat a team you were supposed to beat.

The Knicks scored 23 points in overtime in Washington. 23! Overtime is only five minutes! They should have saved some of those points for the next night: they lost by forty in Philly yesterday.

Charlotte shot a whopping 28.2% in losing by 20 to the Spurs. That's awful. Tim Duncan only hit 2 of 12 shots, and it was still a blowout? Terrible.

Dueling benchies: Francisco Garcia had 23 points in 21 minutes for Sacramento and Travis Outlaw had 23 in 27 for Portland. The Kings won, as if that matters.

After beating Detroit by keeping them under 40%, the Magic allowed Toronto to shoot almost 60% in a Raptor win. Chris Bosh dropped 14 of 16 en route to 40 over Dwight Howard. Howard had a funny line: 37 points on great shooting (13/16) and fifteen rebounds, but just five of those rebounds were defensive. Ten offensive rebounds. When you get ten offensive rebounds, shouldn't you have like 30 total?

The Marcus Williams era began in New Jersey with an overtime win over the Bulls. Williams scored 25, but with just four assists. Kidd's re-debut for Dallas resulted in a New Orleans win as Kidd had six turnovers and Chris Paul scored 31, with eleven assists, nine steals,

and just one turnover. Yeah, that's pretty much what you can expect from here on out, Dallas.

My heavyweight prediction came true, as Marcus Camby came this close to a points-rebounds-blocks triple double, finishing one block short. This helped lead Denver to a win over Boston, stripping the Celtics of their Heavyweight title. Allen Iverson and Carmelo combined to shoot 33 free throws. Boston shot 28 total.

Denver's next test is at Chicago tomorrow. Yeah, I'm taking Denver in that game. That shouldn't even be close. Marcus Camby probably won't get 10 blocks, but that's only because Chicago will just shoot 65 jump shots and miss 45 of them all on their own.

2007-08 Current beltholder: Denver Nuggets

2007-08 Title Bout Records:

Denver10  
Boston122  
Cleveland52  
Milwaukee52  
San Antonio73  
Houston32  
Phoenix32  
Utah32  
L.A. Clippers11  
Philadelphia11  
Miami23  
Washington23  
Charlotte12  
Chicago12  
Memphis14  
Sacramento14  
Dallas01  
Detroit01  
Orlando01  
Portland01  
Seattle01  
Atlanta02  
Indiana02  
New York02  
L.A. Lakers03

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Basketball, L.A. Lakers at 10:39

Saturday, February 16, 2008

### **Happy trails to Jeremy Brown**

Craziness in catcher-land for the A's: Jeremy Brown has retired and Matt LeCroy has signed up on a minor-league deal. Brown, just 28, apparently decided to quit for "personal reasons", which of course could be anything. LeCroy was basically signed to fill the void that Brown's retirement created.

Brown will, of course, always be remembered as the Moneyball guy who didn't pan out, the bad-body catcher who doesn't sell jeans. It's too bad he wasn't able to hang around long enough to join the fraternal order of backup catchers, because it's likely he was a good enough player to at least fill that role for a few years for somebody.

LeCroy, the former Twin, has great power (180 career ISO-SLG), but not much else (.260 batting average, .326 on-base, bad defensive reputation). He's probably not a threat to appear on the major league roster this year, and he might not even be a good bet to push Sacramento toward a championship: he had just a .560 OPS in Rochester last year, playing most of his games as a DH. (Jose Morales, an actual prospect, at least nominally, was the main catcher.)

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Oakland A's at 12:13

Friday, February 15, 2008

### **Kobe trying to skip the All-Star game**

This is utter crap:

The Los Angeles Lakers are hoping that Kobe Bryant gets clearance from the league to miss Sunday's All-Star Game in New Orleans after announcing Thursday that Bryant has a torn ligament in his right pinkie.

But Bryant doesn't yet have that clearance -- and may not get it.

A league official confirmed Thursday night that the NBA is not looking for potential replacements to fill Bryant's spot on the Western Conference squad. That's because the league office still expects Bryant to start and play for the West, even if it's only for a brief cameo, after he played for the Lakers all the way through to their final game before the All-Star break Wednesday in Minnesota.

How on earth can the league justify forcing a player to play in a meaningless exhibition when he's hurt? If they did force him to play and he got further injured, could he / the Lakers sue the league? Does the league really want to deal with pissing off one of their premier players, one of their genuine superstars? What if Kobe just stays home? Would the league fine him? Could the Lakers then just pay that fine?

Why am I using so many question marks?

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in L.A. Lakers at 10:09

Thursday, February 14, 2008

### **Lakers finish 7-2 on the trip; Manu is unstoppable**

I guess I wasn't so hasty after all in suggesting that the Lakers might end up with a 7-2 road trip: that's precisely what they did after blowing the Wolves out last night, winning by 25 after being up by 31 going into the final quarter. When you win by that much, it's not just one thing that caused the victory, but L.A. did get a little help from the boys with the whistles: Minnesota got hit with 27 fouls compared to just 11 for the Lakers. Thanks Mark Wunderlich!

Sasha Vujacic had another double-digit scoring game, leading the bench with 15, Kobe scored 29 by hitting thirteen out of thirteen free throws, Pau shot 9 of 11, and Lamar Odom had a 10-16-10 triple-double. That's the Lamar Odom I was desperately hoping the Lakers would get after this trade went though: he's the third scoring option (fourth once Bynum comes back), he can just grab rebounds and set up his teammates. It's what he's good at, and it's what he likes doing. After the game, Odom said "I think as we continue to win, we'll start to realize what I do bring to the team. It's not about me. At the end of the day, it's about winning." (emphasis added) Translated: "I've been waiting to do this all along! You had no idea what you had in me because you tried to make me a scorer! I'm the 6'10" Jason Kidd, biotch!"

Elsewhere in the league: Manu Ginobili is unstoppable right now: he scored 46 on 15-20 shooting, including 8-11 from threes (!) to lead the Spurs to a seven point win over the defending Eastern Conference champs (hahaha!).

Why anyone ever wanted to put up with Ben Wallace when Marcus Camby was available to do exactly the same thing, I'll never know. Six points, eight boards, three dimes, four steals, four blocks last night. I love the guy, and it's not just about UMass. (That said, it wasn't enough for the win, and he couldn't contain Dwight Howard, who ripped down 24 boards, including nine offensive.)

The Pacers starters shot 10-37 against the Pistons. Stephen Jackson, playing against the Suns, had a down game, with 19 points, and still had more points than any Indiana player did (Ike Diogu led the team with 14 in 13 minutes).

I watched the first quarter of the Phoenix-Golden State game while on the treadmill. I thought it'd inspire me to run better. Instead it just made me tired. Golden State won by 2, Steve Nash had seven turnovers, and Monta Ellis scored 37 points.

Man-of-the-hour Devean George shot 0-11 in a rare start for the Mavs. I'm guessing he'll end up agreeing to the trade upon the payment of some money by either or both of the teams, so what a way to end your Dallas career, right?

Carlos Boozer racked up a triple-double for Utah, 22-11-10, with five steals thrown in for good measure. The Jazz had predictably little trouble with Seattle, beating them by 19.

Heavyweight championship: Boston and New York? Sadly, the rivalry only extends to football and baseball. In basketball, it's just unfair. New York put up a fight, losing by only eight, but a loss is a loss. Boston's next test is after the All-Star break in Denver. That could be interesting: Denver will try to impose their will on the Celtics, coming off the layoff and in their building -- I could see Boston finally dropping into double-digit losses in that game.

2007-08 Current beltholder: Boston Celtics

2007-08 Title Bout Records:

Boston121  
Cleveland52  
Milwaukee52  
San Antonio73  
Houston32  
Phoenix32  
Utah32  
L.A. Clippers11  
Philadelphia11  
Miami23

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Orlando01  
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Seattle01  
Atlanta02  
Indiana02  
New York02  
L.A. Lakers03

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Basketball at 08:40

## Blog Export: Beaneball, <http://beaneball.org/>

Wednesday, February 13, 2008

### **Basketball catch up, including Roger Mason!**

Well, Sunday's heavyweight matchup between San Antonio and a banged-up Boston team didn't work out like I thought: the Celtics beat the Spurs by eight, led by Paul Pierce's 35 points on eighteen shots. Rajon Rondo should've had a triple-double as he had double-digit assists and rebounds, but only managed to score five points on 1-6 shooting.

On the same night, the Lakers beat the Heat in Shawn Marion's debut. Marion had a nice game, with fifteen points and fourteen boards, but the Lakers won by ten behind Kobe's 33 points on fifteen shots and Lamar Odom's eighteen rebounds.

I'm not sure I've ever noticed one of these before: in Sunday's loss to Phoenix, Washington had three guys with point-rebound double-doubles: Andray Blatche, Antawn Jamison, and Brendan Haywood (who had the game of his life, hitting 9 of 11 shots).

Larry Hughes of all people dropped 40 on the Magic on Monday, his most since scoring 43 for the Wizards back in January of 2004.

Manu Ginobili, apparently angry about the loss of the heavyweight belt, dropped a 34-15-6 line on the Raptors. Manu's 6'6"! What's he doing rebounding?

The Lakers won yet again on Monday, beating Charlotte by nine. Pau and Kobe combined for 57 and Lamar Odom had 10 rebounds. That's the formula, boys. Just keep it up.

Who the hell is Roger Mason? Doesn't he do office supplies? Or maybe it's a law school? Something like that! Six career starts coming into the year, but then Washington got into a run-and-gun game with Golden State (is there any other kind with the Warriors?), losing 120-117, in which Mason scored 32 points and had six dimes! It's been said before, but let's just go ahead and say it one more time: Gilbert who? (Stephen Jackson, unfortunately for the Wizards, had 41 points on just 18 shots. Jesus that guy's good.)

Boston beat Indiana by seven yesterday to defend its belt. Paul Pierce and Ray Allen scored, Rajon Rondo had seven boards and seven assists, Scot Pollard waved a towel, and the Pacers turned the ball over twice as often as the Celtics.

The Knicks have the misfortune of being Boston's next victim, tonight -- New York's record in championship fights ought to soon match the Lakers.

2007-08 Current beltholder: Boston Celtics

2007-08 Title Bout Records:

Boston111  
Cleveland52  
Milwaukee52  
San Antonio73  
Houston32  
Phoenix32  
Utah32  
L.A. Clippers11  
Philadelphia11  
Miami23  
Washington23  
Charlotte12  
Chicago12  
Memphis14  
Sacramento14  
Dallas01

## Blog Export: Beaneball, <http://beaneball.org/>

Detroit01  
New York01  
Orlando01  
Portland01  
Seattle01  
Atlanta02  
Indiana02  
L.A. Lakers03

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Basketball at 15:08

Monday, February 11, 2008

### **Mike Sweeney to Oakland**

Mike Sweeney has finally joined the A's. I remember back in the day, in the early 00's, A's fans wanted this guy so bad. After Jason Giambi left and we suffered through the power-less years (Scott Hatteberg?), there was Sweeney, laboring away in Kansas City with his .500 slugging percentages.

Unfortunately, Sweeney's only played 134 games in his last two years combined and had an OPS+ well under 100 last year, so there's a good chance he's done. But since he signed a minor-league deal, he'll give the A's some depth at first base and DH, and I'd probably rather have him make the team than Dan Johnson, if for no other reason than to have a right-handed option in the immobile-slugging mix with Jack Cust and Daric Barton.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Oakland A's at 09:27

Sunday, February 10, 2008

### **Greg Popovich is a dumbass**

Greg Popovich said: "What they did in Memphis is beyond comprehension. There should be a trade committee that can scratch all trades that make no sense. I just wish I had been on a trade committee that oversees NBA trades. I would have voted no to the L.A. trade."

Really, you would have voted no on a trade that vastly improves one of your chief rivals in the West? I'm shocked! But hey, while we're at it, Mitch Kupchak would have voted no on the Damon Stoudamire buyout that your team is now benefiting from. I also notice that you didn't utter a peep back when the Lakers gave up a soon-to-be All Star, Caron Butler, out of the conference for Kwame Brown. Or when Kevin Garnett got traded out of the conference for a pupu platter of young mediocre players. Or when Shaq got traded out of the conference. Or when Shaq got traded back into the conference! Bad trades happen, and it's not even clear that this Memphis deal is a bad trade -- Memphis will have tons of cap room at the end of this year purely as a result of this deal.

In other words, shut your mouth, you fucking crybaby.

But you know, thank god Pops went and said something dumb. You know why? Because I haven't had someone in the NBA to hate in quite a while, probably going back to the Lakers-Kings rivalry of the early part of this decade. And now I do.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in L.A. Lakers at 17:06

Saturday, February 9, 2008

### **Lakers win again; where's Jerry Sloan?**

The Lakers avenged an earlier home loss to the Magic by beating them in Orlando. Phil Jackson can't be overly happy with the defense, as the Magic scored 113 points and had seven players in double digits. But when you shoot 53% (50% from three), score 117 points, and only turn the ball over nine times, you can win despite mediocre defense. Further, Orlando didn't do so much after the first quarter, when they scored 44 points -- they averaged 23 points over the next three quarters, which is acceptable.

It was the usual suspects on offense for the Lakers: Kobe had 36, 14 on free throws, and Pau Gasol scored 30 on just fifteen shots. Sasha Vujacic had one of those nights, hitting three of four from downtown in sixteen minutes.

L.A. is in the midst of their rodeo trip (except that there's no rodeo at Staples -- just a quirk of the schedule) of nine games on the road. They're 4-2 so far and have Miami, Charlotte, and Minnesota coming up, so they could quite easily end up with a 7-2 trip. That said, the Miami-Charlotte games are back-to-back, and while the Bobcats are a bad team (18-32) and have lost five in a row (likely six after they play in Detroit on Sunday), road-road back-to-backs are always tough. Amusingly, though, Charlotte actually has a more difficult travel schedule: the Lakers will be bopping up to North Carolina from Miami after a 3:30 start time in Florida, while the Bobcats have a 6:00 game in Detroit the night before.

Elsewhere in the league, why do the Clippers suck so much? Here's a group of good players: Corey Maggette, Chris Kaman, Cat Mobley, Brevin Knight, Al Thornton, Quinton Ross, Sam Cassell ... what's the matter with this group? Why have they only won a third of their games? They did beat Toronto last night without the suspended Cassell, though.

Jason Kidd had another triple double. Ho hum. (He also hit four threes, which is pretty good for a guy who shoots it at 33% from there for his career.)

Sacramento shot fifty free throws, compared to just 23 for Utah -- how on earth did Jerry Sloan not end up with a technical in this game?

On the Heavyweight front, San Antonio needed overtime to beat the Knicks by six. Speaking of ho hum, Tim Duncan had 21 and 14.

2007-08 Current beltholder: San Antonio Spurs

Next title match: at Boston on Sunday! That should be fun, with the two top Heavyweight teams going at it, but it probably won't be much of a game if Kevin Garnett can't go.

2007-08 Title Bout Records:

Boston91  
San Antonio72 Cleveland52 Milwaukee52  
Houston32 Phoenix32  
Utah32  
L.A. Clippers11 Philadelphia11 Miami23  
Washington23 Charlotte12 Chicago12 Memphis14 Sacramento14 Dallas01  
Detroit01  
Indiana01  
New York01  
Orlando01 Portland01 Seattle01  
Atlanta02  
L.A. Lakers03

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Basketball at 12:23

**That ain't all, Foulkes**

## Blog Export: Beaneball, <http://beaneball.org/>

Keith Foulke has apparently come back to Oakland, signing a one-year, \$700k deal. Foulke didn't pitch last year, and was terrible the two years before that after hurting himself, but that's not that big a deal because (a) the deal is cheap; (b) the A's aren't serious contenders anyway; (c) they have a ton of guys who can step in if Foulke is ineffective.

I like this quote from the AP's story: "I've never considered myself a closer. I consider myself a bullpen guy. There are times when pitching in the seventh inning is more viable." I don't know if he really said "viable", as opposed to "valuable", but the man sounds like a sabremetrician!

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Oakland A's at 10:00

Thursday, February 7, 2008

### Romney goes down swinging ... at Obama and Clinton

Mitt Romney, on dropping out of the Republican race: "In this time of war, I simply cannot let my campaign be a part of aiding a surrender to terror. This is not an easy decision. I hate to lose." And: "If this were only about me, I'd go on. But it's never been only about me. I entered this race because I love America, and because I love America, in this time of war I feel I have to now stand aside for our party and for our country." Really, Mitt Romney? "Aiding a surrender to terror"? That's completely cheap, utterly indefensible, and will, sadly, only endear him to a certain (significant) element of the Republican party.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Politics at 15:10

### Lakers lose by a pinkie; Earl Watson and Steve Nash triple-doubles

The Lakers blew a late lead to Atlanta last night, and then Kobe Bryant lost the ball because of his dislocated pinkie, which allowed the Hawks to take home the win. Kobe shot terribly for the second game in a row, probably not unrelated to his finger injury (although he did have ten assists and his late turnover was his only one for the game, so maybe it's not all his finger), but this time Pau Gasol wasn't the answer: 5/14 shooting, seven boards, and permitted Al Horford to dominate with twenty rebounds. Lamar Odom had a nice game with 19 points on 8/12 shooting and 11 rebounds, but the Lakers aren't a team that wins by having their leading scorer net 19.

L.A. remains sixth in the West, one loss behind San Antonio and two losses behind the triumvirate at the top (Phoenix, Dallas, New Orleans). My prediction for the remainder of Phoenix's regular season: they won't finish at the top spot -- they'll struggle to integrate Shaq and they'll miss Shawn Marion's defense. They'll adjust and still be dangerous in the playoffs, but it'll cost them at least a game or two in the regular season, and with the West as tight as it is (5.5 games separate #1 from #10), that'll bump them down to third, or maybe even fifth or sixth.

Elsewhere in the league, Corey Maggette had 33 and 8 with five steals and the Clips still couldn't beat the KG-less Celtics. Miami lost its first post-Shaq game (to Detroit) despite 30 points and 12 dimes from D-Wade. Former Laker Kareem Rush netted 24 points in 28 minutes to down the Knicks. Kyle Korver makes me very very afraid of Utah: he had 27 points off the bench in an OT win over Denver, helping overcome Carlos Boozer's 3/15 shooting night. Phoenix took two overtimes and still couldn't New Orleans, led by Chris Paul's ridonkulous line of 42 points, five rebounds, nine assists, and eight steals. Eight different players in the game scored twenty points or more, four on each side, and Steve Nash had a Kobe-style triple double: 32 points, 12 assists, and ten turnovers. Earl Watson logged a more traditional triple double for Seattle, 23-10-10. (Who on earth let Earl Watson grab ten rebounds?)

On the Heavyweight front, San Antonio defended its title in Washington behind Tim Duncan's 23 points. Damon Stoudamire again started and played 22 minutes for the Spurs. Twenty-two minutes in a row in his first two games is a funny coincidence.

2007-08 Current beltholder: San Antonio Spurs

Next title match: Friday, 2/8, at New York. Sigh.

2007-08 Title Bout Records:

Boston91  
San Antonio62 Cleveland52 Milwaukee52  
Houston32 Phoenix32  
Utah32  
L.A. Clippers11 Philadelphia11 Miami23  
Washington23 Charlotte12 Chicago12 Memphis14 Sacramento14 Dallas01  
Detroit01  
Indiana01  
Orlando01 Portland01 Seattle01  
Atlanta02  
L.A. Lakers03

## **Blog Export: Beaneball, <http://beaneball.org/>**

UPDATE: It was pointed out to me that the Suns did not actually win. I am dumbfounded as to how I messed that one up. The post has changed to reflect the realities of life.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Basketball at 08:54

Wednesday, February 6, 2008

### **Pau's debut; Heavyweight update**

Let me tell you how excited I am about this new Lakers team. Kobe Bryant shot 3-13 with seven turnovers and didn't get to the free throw line a single time, yet L.A. won by 15 on the road. That's why I'm excited.

How'd they do it? Pau! 24-12-4 on 10/15 shooting in your debut will endear you to a lot of the team's fans. Also Lamar Odom, having the kind of game that he can really have now that he'll be the third or fourth offensive option: 14 points on four shots (13 free throw attempts), 15 rebounds, five assists. That's a tremendous game. The best thing about that line is how typical it is of Odom to put up a 14-15-5-type line. To have a guy doing that consistently as your third or fourth best player is a tremendous luxury.

I probably didn't need to tell you this, but San Antonio successfully defended its Heavyweight crown with a 27-point victory in Indiana. New point guard Damon Stoudamire started for the Spurs and scored eleven points in 22 minutes. Seven players scored in double digits and Tim Duncan had an all-too-typical 19-15-6 line. (Note, though, how similar that is to Odom's line. Note now that Duncan is the best player on his team. Note again how far down Odom ranks on the Lakers. Note also how my giddiness about L.A. is making me actually make an honest comparison between Lamar Freaking Odom and Tim Duncan, one in which I start going, "Hey, you know, Odom's actually more versatile than Duncan, so ...")

The new Heavyweight data is below.

2007-08 Current beltholder: San Antonio Spurs

Next title match: Wednesday, 2/6, at Washington. This is a back-to-back for both teams. Don't be fooled, because that's the only similarity between these two teams. San Antonio will keep the belt for another day.

2007-08 Title Bout Records:

Boston91  
Cleveland52 Milwaukee52  
San Antonio52 Houston32 Phoenix32  
Utah32 Washington22  
L.A. Clippers11 Philadelphia11 Miami23 Charlotte12 Chicago12 Memphis14 Sacramento14 Dallas01  
Detroit01  
Indiana01  
Orlando01 Portland01 Seattle01 Atlanta02  
L.A. Lakers03

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in L.A. Lakers at 01:49

Tuesday, February 5, 2008

### **SVG on JJR**

About J.J. Redick, Stan Van Gundy had this to say: "People say, 'Well, this is a lottery pick.' Well, there's a lot of lottery picks sitting on the bench. Jermaine O'Neal sat for six years, you know? And then became an All-Star."

Um, first, Stan, Jermaine O'Neal actually sat for four years, not six. Second, Jermaine played 105 games over his first two years (and had nine starts), while if Redick plays every game the rest of the way, he'll have played 74 games his first two years. Third, Jermaine O'Neal was a raw high school big man who was 17 when he was drafted, while Redick was a polished college player, already 22, who has an obvious role he could fill even as a rookie: stand outside and shoot.

(Now that obviously over-simplifies things: Redick may not be ready to handle the NBA defensively (though query whether he'll ever be ready for that), they may think it's better to have him watching and absorbing the game than playing a mindless role, etc. But the point remains that Jermaine O'Neal is probably not an apt comparison for JJ Redick.)

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Basketball at 22:04

Sunday, February 3, 2008

### **NBA Heavyweight update**

Something crazy is happening with the sidebar version of the NBA Heavyweight Champion, so I'll keep it up-to-date in regular posts for the moment.

2007-08 Current beltholder: San Antonio Spurs

Next title match: Tuesday, 2/5, @ Indiana. The Spurs aren't playing great ball, but the Pacers have lost six straight to fall ten games under .500. Smart money's probably on the Spurs in that one. (One of my braver predictions.)

2007-08 Title Bout Records:

Boston91 Cleveland52 Milwaukee52 San Antonio42 Houston32 Phoenix32 Utah32 Washington22 L.A. Clippers11 Philadelphia11 Miami23 Charlotte12 Chicago12 Memphis14 Sacramento14 Dallas01 Detroit01 Orlando01 Portland01 Seattle01 Atlanta02 L.A. Lakers03

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in Basketball at 12:10

Friday, February 1, 2008

### **Pau Gasol to the Lakers!**

The trade of Pau Gasol to L.A. is the most exciting transaction the Lakers have pulled off since the Shaq signing. First, of course, he's a low-post presence to hold the fort until Andrew Bynum gets back. Second, once Bynum gets back, he has the kind of all-around game that should mesh well with Bynum (who's only effective in the paint). Third, the Lakers gave up almost nothing to get Gasol: Kwame Brown's expiring deal was the only important piece given up, and that's, of course, exactly what you're supposed to do with expiring deals: trade them for good players. L.A. also gave up Javaris Crittenton, who might be a good player but was stuck behind Jordan Farmar and Sasha Vujacic anyway, two first round picks (2008 and 2010) which should be quite low, and the rights to Marc Gasol, Pau's brother, who the Lakers took in the second round of the 2007 Draft.

The Lakers now run out, when healthy, a lineup of Derek Fisher, Kobe Bryant, Lamar Odom (at the three!), Pau Gasol, and Andrew Bynum. Chris Mihm and Ronny Turiaf are the backup bigs (and, I guess, DJ Mbenga when Mihm is hurt); Vladimir Radmanovic, Luke Walton, and Trevor Ariza are the SF/SG types, and Sasha Vujacic and Jordan Farmar are the backup guards. The weakness is at the backup big spot, but the Lakers have been perfectly content to have Turiaf run a lot of minutes at center, relying on his energy to make up for his lack of height.

One thing Phil Jackson must love is that this is a team with a lot of size: only Farmar and Fisher are small guys, and Jackson has always tolerated a little guy if he can shoot (Steve Kerr? Not that Farmar or Fisher are Steve Kerr-level shooters or anything). Everyone else is at least 6'7", with a lot of those being of the run-up-and-down-the-floor type: Vladi, Walton, Odom; even Pau isn't immobile.

This should be a fun, fun team, even in Bynum's absence. Assuming Bynum meshes with the new big-man, this should also be a force to reckon with in the playoffs.

Posted by Jason Wojciechowski in L.A. Lakers at 19:02