



FROM NBA FINALS TO BITS AND PIECES TO BOREDOM

By Kerry Schmidt

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Well, since I'm writing again this week, I didn't croak, so that's worth something.

Had to wear a "halter monitor" for 24 hours. Maybe "halter" means your heart halts, thus they know something is wrong?! HEIL HALTER.

They put a zillion little snaps things on your chest and then ran wires to them. Makes for comfortable sleeping.

Anyway, nothing happened! So, now they want me to wear an "Event Monitor." For a month! This is a much smaller do dad with only 2 or three wires, and I can take it off when I wish.

Have no idea why it's called an "Event" monitor, unless your heart explodes or something. I guess that would qualify as an "event." Maybe I will take it off and plug it into an electrical outlet or the computer, like Ozzy Osborne in normal conversation.

Or maybe get real mile high on a big ole doobie. Wonder what that would do for an event. Really screw up the folks that have to read it.

Gotta have a sense of humor, even if it's about you kicking the ole bucket.

OK. Before I tackle the NBA finals, aka, tall glandular cases running around in their underwear, let me get a few quick knick knacks out of the way.

A major bodybuilding competition was all set to go in the Netherlands, when a group of drug testers arrived. All (as in 100%) of the competitors fled the scene. Contest over.

My man Sir Charles again: Barkley had been castigated for saying "b.s." on air last week. His "apology?" "If me saying b.s on TV after midnight is going to push your little damn brat over the deep end, you're just a crappy parent." Wow that's a good, precise apology. Keep up the good work, Charles.

In the college baseball regionals, Ohio State was ousted in two straight games. First they lost to Georgia, 24-8. They then recouped to lose to Florida State, 37-6! It was 24-0 in the third inning! F.S. kicked a FG out of mercy in the 3rd inning.

Reminds me of the couple of times when Ohio State went to the BCS football Championship game and was killed each time, by USC and LSU.

On the bright side, U of Washington won the women's softball title. So, you say? Well, that was the 23rd consecutive year that a Pac-10 team had made the finals of the College Softball WS.

Could be the California doobies?

The ever so anticipated Tour de France begins next month. They have announced that they will "intensify" drug testing. Head druggie Pat McQuaid said "A group of targeted riders, considered as race favorites" or, and I love this part, "whose biological passports" – what in hell is a biological passport? – data have raised suspicion, will be under more scrutiny."

I can put down a safe bet that Mr. Armstrong will be tested about a zillion times – a day! He'll give more blood than a headless chicken and pee like a race horse. If he gets a big lead, they may even stop him mid race for testing.

And to think we bothered to save those damn Frenchies back in '44.

Final funnies. ESPN will take on SI's famous "Swim Suit" issue.

According to reports, they plan on a drop all for the first "Body Issue" magazine, slated to hit the newsstands October 19.

Pro, amateur and Olympic athletes will pose only with whatever "equipment," he he, they would normally wear. Example A skier would only have boots, skis, gloves and poles as they push their booties down the slopes.



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ESPN says they will to use various “props?” to cover up “certain parts of the anatomy.” They also say one part will occur, in an operating room, where an athlete is having, for example, surgery to repair a broken, torn, et al body part. They say this will “explore the past, present and future of the athletic form”, of how the body can be “bent and pulled, tortured and broken, inflated and improved and made to excel.” I guess that will be filmed at Guantanamo. They add that one “very big star” – what part of him is big, will allow cameras in the operating room.

And get this phrase. “The things they do to their bodies for our spectating pleasure is extraordinary.” What will they call this episode? “Deep Broke?”

They say that the response has been enthusiastic. Viagra is the main sponsor. Their only question is will their owners, i.e. Disney, allow this type of “show.” Wow, nude Disney’s Donald and Daisy Duck. Times have sure changed.

OK, on to the NBA Finals.

Orlando really blew game 4 Thursday night. Ahead by 14 at halftime, they had another melt down, particularly in OT and lost, 99-91.

With just 14 seconds left in regulation, and Orlando up by 3, Dwight Howard was fouled, and then missed both FT’s, thus leaving the 3-pointer that Derek Fisher tied with 4.6 seconds left.

Note: Howard made only 6 of 14FT’s overall.

He wasn’t alone. Orlando missed 15 FT’s. This to go along with their 19 turn overs.

The Lakers surprised Magic Coach Steve Van Gundy (Phil Jackson smart? See below) by taking the ball in the back court, thus allowing them to spread the floor. The ball went inside to Kobe, causing the bad double team. He shot it out to the ageless Fisher who calmly swished the tying 3.

With only 4.6 seconds, Orlando tried a half-ass shot and nothing but OT.

Now some writers say Van Gundy can truly be faulted for this loss. The Magic had a foul to use and did not. Had they fouled someone, even if both FT’s were made, L.A. would still be down a point and Orlando would have the ball.

When asked about that ‘non-call,’ Van Gundy said, “That one will haunt me forever.”

As in game 2, OT, no contest. Simple explanation? Playoff tested experience VS. young, non tested playoff experience.

Lakers outscored Orlando 12-4 – the Magic made only 1 of 7 shots.

On the final breakaway dunk, Pao Gasol slammed one home just as the Magic’s forward Mickael Pietrus raced in from behind and delivered a vicious 2-armed shove into Gasol’s back, nearly sending him crashing to the floor.

That, pure and simple, was a sign of a young, frustrated and overmatched team that was being given a lesson in playoff basketball.

The refs called a flagrant foul. After a Friday review, no further action was taken.

I can assure you had that been a regular season game, a suspension would have been in order.

As senior ESPN writer Chris Sheridan said, “this is one of the toughest losses a team has ever absorbed in an NBA Finals” “the loss that seems almost destined to go down in the annals of the Orlando Magic’s history as the night they blew their chance at winning their first championship.”

He then added, “...this night will go down as a multilayered collapse of epic proportions, missed FT’s by Howard, mistaken strategy by Van Gundy and a mistimed emotional blowup by Mickael Pietrus.”

How much real “heart and fight” is left in the Magic, we will see tonight.

Sheridan added, “as great as Kobe, Fisher and Gasol were,”

Ariza, scored 13 points on 5 for 6 shooting, in the 3rd quarter to lead the Lakers big comeback), (NOTE: Trevor



“this game was about the Magic crumbling under the playoff pressure and making all those crucial mistakes.”

While Howard tries to say they still have a shot, take note: L.A. has not lost 2 consecutive games since early March, not lost 2 straight at home all season, and has not lost 3 straight all season. And, NO team has ever come back down 3.

Kobe still has that driving killer instinct, so if Orlando does not give their all, it will end tonight. If not, L.A. will win Tuesday in front of their crooning home town crowd. Jack Nicholson may give them one of his Oscars. Knowing Jack, he might just moon the Magic.

Thus, it is nearly a sure thing that Kobe will get his cherished 4th ring, the one he will have earned sans Shaq. (But remember, Shaq would surly NOT have won his 4th at Miami sans D-Wade). And with this title, Phil Jackson will win his 10th, thus overtaking legendary Red Auerbach and his Boston Celtics. Jackson has given Auerbach long and loud accolades, complementing him on his many skills and accomplishments.

No such mutual respect towards Jackson from Red, however.

He often openly scoffed at Phil’s accomplishments, giving him only a few “back handed” compliments.

His big bash on Phil, which was echoed by some others, was that he always had such great players.

In Chicago, Jordan, Pippin, et al. In L.A., Kobe and Shaq. And so on, they said.

Perhaps this is why Jackson has only one coach of the year honors. ONE time in his 18 seasons! Incredible.

Back to Red’s contention of Jackson winning only because he had great players.

What a bunch of b.s. (thank you , Sir Charles).

The entire time Red was piling up the titles, he had the likes of Bill Russell, Bob Cousy, Sam Jones, John Havelock, all Hall-of-Farmers, along with K.C. Jones and others.

And, he had them forever. Back then, there was no free agency, no salary cap problems. You got to keep the great team you had. Period.

Plus, and a big plus, there were only 12 teams back then. Today there are 30, with free agency making it very hard to keep a good team together, thus the talent is spread a bit thin.

Look at other aspects of Jackson’s 18 years. He has never had a losing season. NOTE: He left the Lakers after the 2003-04 season and took a year riding his motorcycle throughout the South Pacific. The Lakers went 34-48 under Rudy Tomjanovich.

Jackson came back for the 2004-05 season, made a couple of trades and drafted Andrew Bynum, and went to the playoffs. Again.

In fact, every one of his teams has made the playoffs. He has won 9 of the last 18 titles (Soon it will be 10 of 19).

He reached the Finals 3 other times. Jackson’s name is at the top of nearly every meaningful NBA coaching record. No coach in NBA history has won more often than Jackson. Including Auerbach. His 71% regular season winning percentage and 70% in the playoffs is way above any other coach ever.

He has 207 postseason victories, more than twice as many as any other active coach. Greg Popovich, San Antonio, has 102. Oh, and he has 70 more playoff wins than Red.

Thus, it really shames the sport that, as I said above, he has only one coach of the year award.

This win, not should it come but when, could be his most satisfying. He has made no mention of same, but many close to him feel it.

One reason is he did not have a large cadre of super stars. He had Kobe. That was it.

He took players like Pau Gasol, Andrew Bynum, Lamar Odom and Trevor Ariza, guys who other teams pretty much gave up on, yet he has made every one of them a star or rising star.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

You knew Gasol and Ariza had arrived when Kobe began trusting them totally. He is just about there with the other two.

Three of these players were on several teams, playing for different coaches, and they never had a winning season. Gasol, who now, next to Kobe, is the most important player on the team, wallowed on a Memphis team that never won more than 32 games!

But Jackson saw something in all of them. They were raw, but he brought them in and began to nurture them. It took 2-3 years (except for Gasol, who will be an all-star next season), but he stuck with them.

So, Red, rest in peace. Jackson will win one more than you did. and do it sans always a cast of great players, something you never did.

Yes, his personality is like not any other coach. He's into Zen, Middle East philosophy, karma and peace and quiet. He never rants or raves. During games, when his team gets in a bad spot, unlike other coaches who will jump up and call TO, then yell at them, he just "let's them play through it."

His "triangle offense" is different than that of any other team. It is built around "going inside first, then kicking it out." Most teams only want to take the ball inside. In its most simplistic form, he says quietly, "See the ball on defense, hit the open man on offense." Yes, it is more than that, but that is the core of such a successful game plan, one that has earned him and his teams more wins than any other coach ever, and more playoff wins and titles than anyone. You sure can't argue with such dominant success.

For several years, his star, Kobe, was not sure he fit into this. He even asked to be traded a couple of years back. But, as he says now, "I see what he is and why he is, and that what he does, and well, it works. He lets you be yourself within his system. He certainly is a calming influence on his players.

I will retire now to pay homage to Mr. Phil.

Could not find a picture of Buda, but did find a Star Wars DVD with Jabba the Hut. Close enough. I'll put it on the floor, turn the lights down, light some incense, finish the above doobie and, of course, pour some fine Single Malt. Then I will chant. HMMMMMMMMMMMM. HMMMMMMMMMMMM.