

HUMOR

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Written by David Amack

I'm writing early to avoid the I-told-you-so crowd that surely will come streaming forth once the Lakers are knocked out of the playoffs. You can get out your tomatoes and rotten eggs right now because I'm going to say some things that will make you mad enough to throw them.

Am I the only guy who seems to notice that the emperor has no clothes? The emperor is, of course, Shaquille O'Neal, slam-dunker and world-class perspirer.

The trouble is, sportswriters and commentators obsess about Shaq as if he were a supermodel in a string bikini, never mind that she tips the scales at 300 pounds. Can't make free throws? (So what—he's a giant!) Can't shoot past six feet? (Who cares—he weighs 300!) Sporadic performer? (What's the problem—he wears a size 22 shoe!) Can't guard anybody outside? (Aren't you listening?? This is America where bigger is better!)

Is everybody too busy gawking to actually watch the Lakers play? They went much of the early season sans Shaq and had the best record in the league. What's more, they played as a team and displayed great promise. The adoring sportswriters couldn't wait for Shaq to return and blast the Lakers into a higher orbit. When he rejoined the club, it was goodbye team play, so long best record in the league. The Lakers went out and played teams with smaller centers, less expensive centers, no centers — and Shaq the Great disappeared.

This is Shaquille O'Neal's sixth year in the league. He has dabbled in the post-season, but never managed to win even one game in a championship series, let alone a title. Still, his admiring legions voted Shaq one of the 50 greatest of all time. All time? Listen, there are 50 guys playing today I'd take over Shaq, starting with most of the players on Seattle, Utah, and Chicago. And speaking of Seattle, Utah, and Chicago — their centers are who, again?

The truth is, the Lakers have hitched their wagon to the wrong star. This year should prove that having Goliath doesn't mean anything when the world is full of Davids. Yes, it's time to unload Mr. *Against The Law* and start looking for Mr. Clutch, or at least somebody with some genuine magic. His teammates deserve better and so do we.

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