

JAMES ADDS FUEL TO DEBATE: LeBRON OR JORDAN?

He really didn't need to prove it again, but LeBron James has confirmed he is the face of the National Basketball Association. In fact, the 35-year-old Ohioan may have climbed the almost impossible mountaintop: As good as, or better than, Michael Jordan? Discuss.

Annoyed that he was overlooked again as the NBA's most valuable player after leading Los Angeles Lakers to first place in the Western Conference, James made sure everyone took notice of his greatness by taking the Lakers to the 2020 NBA championship, the weird one within a 'bubble' at Orlando, Florida's Disney World complex. Oh, he had some help from Anthony Davis and a few other minions but it was the LeBron James show from start to finish, as James won his fourth NBA title (with his third team) in the Lakers 4-2 Finals' victory over Miami Heat.

It was with the Heat — "I'm taking my talents to South Beach" — where James won his first two NBA titles, abandoning his hometown Cleveland Cavaliers to team up with Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh to win NBA titles in 2011-12 and 2012-13. Appealing his home state, the Akron-born-and-raised James returned to the Cavaliers in 2014, and in the spring of 2016, led the Cavs to their first, and his third, NBA title. But then Hollywood beckoned and ... well, LeBron and Hollywood simply go together. He starred in Space Jam and is involved in next year's Space Jam — A New Legacy. He has three mansions in Greater L.A. — reportedly valued at \$36 million, \$23 million and \$21 million. And oh, by the way, he can still play a little ball.

When he signed with the Lakers prior to the start of the 2018-19 season, the team was an also-ran, coming off a non-playoff season. After missing 27 games due to injury in his first season with L.A., LeBron was absent from the playoffs for the first time in 13 seasons.

But the supporting cast was improved, Davis the most important piece of the puzzle, and LeBron made the most of the opportunity. While the Lakers wanted to win another title for LeBron, they also wanted to win one in memory of Lakers' legend Kobe Bryant, killed in a helicopter crash in January.

No one has played more NBA playoff games than James. But some critics still say he doesn't qualify for the NBA's 'Mount Rushmore', something to which James takes exception. "I think personally thinking I have something to prove fuels me," James told Joe Vardon of The Athletic. "It fuelled me because no matter what I've done in my career . . . there's still little rumblings of doubt or comparing me to the history of the game . . ."

Different players, different eras. LeBron or Jordan? The discussion could go on forever.

- NOT SportsCenter, on Twitter: "Did You Know: This is the first time Lakers fans have had their team win a title since 2018, when they were Warriors fans."
- Funny guy **Steve Burgess** of Vancouver: Everything is different in 2020. For example **Canucks** fans are calling for **Jim Benning** to be carved up like a Thanksgiving turkey, whereas it's usually Easter when they want him crucified."
- **Jay Busbee** of yahoo.com, on the mid-October NFL game between Jacksonville and Detroit: "If you are not a fan of either of these teams and you willingly watch this game, seek professional help."
- **Phil Mushnick** of the New York Post: "Sunday has been declared **LeBron James Day** throughout Red China. All Nike factories will remain open late."
- Mushnick again: "MLB Network flatly reported that the Astros '**George Springer** had surpassed **Babe Ruth** for total 'postseason home runs.' Makes sense. Ruth went homer-less in wild-card, divisional championship and league championship games."
- Comedy writer **Brad Dickson** of Omaha: "Pinnacle Bank Arena is hosting a Husker Watch Party during the Ohio State game. Admission is free but they won't cover your funeral expenses."
- **Steve Simmons** of the Toronto Sun: "Leafs have signed **Joe Thornton**. They're aiming to win the 2012 Stanley Cup."
- **Greg Cote** of the Miami Herald: "What were the odds of **Tom Brady** forgetting it was fourth down? Only time **Greg Cote** gets mixed up on small numbers is when he shoots a six on a golf hole and 'mistakenly' writes five on his scorecard."
- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "The Ocean (N.J.) high-school football team once forfeited a game because six players had a skin infection. The boys were listed as healthy scratches."
- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: "A Zamboni resurfacing a hockey rink in Rochester, New York, caught fire and, with the operator still on board, wildly zoomed around the ice. No truth to reports they got it from the Calgary Flames."
- Perry again: "**Rafael Nadal** won the French Open for a record 13th time. Coincidence? The sun also came up east of Paris that very same day."

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