

HATFIELD SPORTS SOUNDS OFF!

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Pistons Fans Proving To Be A Disgrace

Is it me or are the Detroit Pistons fans (and I'm not directing this at each and every one of them) rude, crude and just downright disgraceful to the National Basketball Association? With each incident that occurs they seem to be more and more apart of the problems in basketball today.

Five things have caught my eye in the past ten months, all of which involve the fans of one particular sports team. Now I know there are bad apple fans everywhere in sports in every venue. But come on? Five incidents since last June? That's absolutely inexcusable.

First it was a report in the 2004 NBA Finals between Detroit and the favored Los Angeles Lakers. LA has their share of celebrities, but the only thing you ever hear about is Jack Nicholson griping with the officials or cleverly bothering the opposing team's Head Coach (and that's only every now and then).

Detroit's fans gathered outside the Lakers team hotel and constantly made racket. Can't you let a guy sleep anymore? Nope. Not in the eyes of Pistons fans. Of course, I'll let one slide. What I won't let slide is what a Pistons fan did to Karl Malone prior to a pivotal Finals game.

One fan kept pestering the Mailman and eventually spat in the future Hall-Of-Famer's face. Kind of surprising that Malone didn't go over and deck the punk. Instead, the class act Karl is, all he did was stick his finger in the man's face and put him in his place. The fan originally wanted to press charges because Karl put his finger in the man's face. Guess he never went through with it because he later realized what a jerk he was being and deserved to have more happen to him.

It only got worse. In November of 2004, the Pistons and Pacers played a high-tensed regular season game at the Palace of Auburn Hills. What was originally a blowout in favor of Indiana turned into what is now known as the Malice at the Palace. Ben Wallace and an Indiana player got into it, and one did not appreciate Ron Artest taking a rest by laying down on the scores table. An object (cup, beer, whatever - I couldn't tell/remember) was throw at Artest, and connected. What Artest should've done failed to occur. Retaliation is arguably the worst thing in that situation and he ended up going into the stands after the guy he thought aimed for him. An all-out brawl, if you want to call it that, takes place and even one fan went onto the court to go after Jermaine O'Neal.

The videotape of it all... not so pretty, resulting in NBA Commissioner David J. Stern suspending a number of players, including Artest for the entire regular season and playoffs. Both O'Neal and Stephen Jackson, who also went into the stands, were

suspended for a significant period of time. Detroit's suspensions, however, were lenient. Wasn't it Ben Wallace starting it all, though when he was upset for a hard foul? What's right is right I guess, and since no Pistons did go after fans in the stands (simply because they were Pistons fans) makes some sense. As Indiana walked off the courts, referees included, it did not get prettier. Some threw beer, some threw popcorn, others just booed like never before. Not to mention, one ref suffered a rather tough injury, but he would later be okay.

Anyway, the next time Indiana visited Detroit there was a bomb threat supposedly in the Packers locker room. Hmm... wonder if it was a Pistons fan? Naw... you think? Finally, we come to the latest piece of corruptive behavior. On Tuesday night as the Philadelphia 76ers traveled to Detroit for Game 2 of their first round Eastern Conference playoff series, another fan dug real low. This time the victim was Philly guard Allen Iverson, who did not have his best night ever as the Sixers fell down two games to none in their best of seven series with the 'bad boys.' I emphasize bad boys because Rasheed Wallace, yet again, picked up another technical foul. I will admit, he's toned it down a bit. Still, what's up to now, 576? Anyhow, Rasheed, who should've been thrown out in my opinion for his choice of expletives, responded by scoring 11 third quarter points.

AI didn't respond. And by that I mean he did not respond to a fan throwing a coin at him and connecting with the former Georgetown star's noggin (back part of it to be specific). Tsk, tsk, tsk... another Pistons fan, what do you know? Once, maybe a coincidence. Twice, okay we'll give them another chance. Third time, okay we'll give them the benefit of the doubt again because a player came into the stands. But five incidents in a ten month span. The league needs to do something about this if you ask me before it gets stickier and someone really gets hurt badly. Commissioner Stern and the NBA need to do something immediately too, especially when you take into account the Pacers could be playing in Detroit's for games one and two of the Eastern Conference semis provided both make it out of the opening round.

And there are some other scenes fresh in our mind, particularly the Gary Sheffield/fan occurrence at Fenway Park not even a full month ago. Fans have been known to throw batteries on the field as they did at Bryan Cox years ago and still sometimes do it in the outfield. Also, the Cleveland Browns game a few years back when the ref made a bad call, causing the dog pound to pounce on them by throwing beer bottles onto the turf. Trust me I've been there when there were a number of questionable (in my opinion horrible) calls in the Jazz-Bulls Finals series in 1998. They're (refs and players) human beings that make human mistakes every once in awhile just like us.

Remember, just because you pay for your ticket doesn't mean you have the right to become part of the action on the floor. Nor does it excuse you to interact with those doing their job on the floor.