

Reggie Miller's Career Comes To A Close & So Does An NBA Era
BY MATTHEW HATFIELD - May 20, 2005

Karl Malone, John Stockton, Elgin Baylor, Patrick Ewing, Charles Barkley, George Gervin, and now Reggie Miller. Arguably the most clutch outside shooter in NBA history now joins an elite class of men to ever play the game of basketball who never won an NBA Championship. Hall-of-Famer? Why not? The only two things I can find wrong are that he didn't win an NBA title, which wasn't his fault, and that he was not a perennial All-NBA pick annually.

Miller may not have been the best shooting guard in the league at any point. Was he a guy you could build a franchise around and say will make you an NBA powerhouse? Somewhat debatable. Was he a go-to-guy in the 4th quarter and leader? No question.

I'll always remember his game-winner vs. Jordan and the Bulls in a pivotal game of the '98 Eastern Conference Finals, a series Indiana went on to lose. Also will always remember him finally getting to the Finals in 2000, but bowing to the Lakers. He had his moments in that series and just about every playoff series, including Game 3 this year vs. Detroit, Games 2 and 3 vs. Boston, and Game 1 against the Pistons last year. And who could forget those memorable plays at Madison Square Garden in the 90's opposite the Knicks when Spike Lee was barking at him the whole time.

One of the golden eras in the NBA is ending. One that included the likes of Malone, Stockton, Ewing, Barkley, and Miller playing their hearts out every time, but essentially coming up short in their primary goal. The man scored 27 points on 11-16 shooting Thursday night, indicating to us all that he was going out on his terms still with good game.

Just like last year with Malone - I believe Miller's final season was **HIS BEST ONE EVER**. Huh? Am I crazy? Yes, that's what I said - this season was Miller's best. Malone was the voice of reason and true leader of a Los Angeles Lakers basketball team last season that really defied pressured odds to get to the Championship. Of course, once they dethroned the Spurs and T-Wolves they were favorites to win it all, but it just wasn't meant to be as the Mailman had to watch his teams from the sidelines.

Karl once said, "You'd have to shoot me in the head for me not to play." He battled through injuries, won two MVP's, and in my opinion is the best player ever never to win it all. This year Miller was not at full strength, though healthy enough to make up the horrible circumstances Indiana had to endure. In November, the Pacers lost Ron Artest for the season, saw Jermaine O'Neal get suspended and later battle the injury bug, Anthony Johnson get suspended, Stephen Jackson get suspended, and the list goes on. Jamaal Tinsley, the team's point guard, play with pain for all of the series with Detroit. Finally, the first game after the brawl in Detroit the Pacers literally had only six players to play with vs. the Orlando Magic. My point is that Miller willed them to the playoffs.

He re-assumed the leadership role and said heck with logic and age. "I tried," Miller said at the end of his Press Conference Thursday night. Reggie, yes you did, and thanks for the pleasant memories!