

# On the Ball and Off the Wall: Puck off

*This column is for non-sports fans who would like some enlightenment and hopefully humor without being sports fanatics.*

## **Puck Off**

The National Basketball Association and National Hockey Leagues are in their playoffs modes right now!

Wow!

Bow-wow!

The NBA and NHL are and have always been, secondary to the gods of sports, notably the NFL and major league baseball, with international soccer sneaking up on both of them.

You need only see that the NFL draft gets more airtime on ESPN, and all the premier highlights on TV are walk-off home runs. Neither the hockey nor hoops players need to guess who rules the sports roost. Even blown-dry idiots like draft predictor Mel Kipfer offer their usually incorrect guesses – but are touted as prescient geniuses by their networks – take center stage over any piddling NBA or NHL results.

The NBA has become a joke. It is all three-pointers or rim-rattling dunks. The fact that players can do such formerly sacred and prohibited things like traveling (four steps for the stars but only three for newbies), palming and carrying the ball like a waitress at a chic restaurant full of desperate “models” and horny millionaires, has diminished any semblance of playing by the rules of the game.

I refuse to watch NBA games. That will continue unless the Celtics make the finals, in which case it will be worth seeing if Jason Tatum and Jaylen Brown can carry their team to an unexpected title. Hey, I’m a homer.

The best thing about pro basketball this year has been HBO’s series, “Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty.” Like any good Celts fan (*Salaam*, Cooz, Russ, Hondo, McHale and Larry Bird, and the rest of youse guys), I said I would never watch some LA ass-kissing tribute to a team I hate. But coerced into it by friends, it is a real treat, because it portrays the Lakers’ climb to prominence as full of assholes, pricks or both. Jerry West, their legendary guard (he’s the NBA’s logo, folks) and coach, makes them all come across so poorly – and he is reportedly threatening to sue HBO over his portrayal as a gold-plated dickhead – you can only exult in their professional and personal dysfunction.

But time to switch channels.

The real, true sport anyone should be watching right now is the NHL’s Stanley Cup playoffs. It is not just your basic hard nut, drop-the-gloves, regular-season game, that gave rise to the wonderful quote about Detroit Red Wings (et al.) player and Hall of Famer Gordie Howe. He had such respect from opposing players that he would have what they called a “Gordie Howe Hat Trick:” a goal, an assist and a fight.

Stanley Cup hockey is an entirely different animal from regular-season NHL bullshit. It is faster, more dynamic and incredibly appealing. It also does not feature the usual "Mine's bigger than yours!" fighting that goes on regularly all season. That's because in the Stanley Cup, if you get tossed into the penalty box for a cheap shot to show how tough you are, and the other team gets a power play and scores, you've just screwed your buddies. So keep your gloves on and skate away from any confrontation.

So eff the NBA, watch the Red Sox get off to their usual stumbling start, wince (and hope) at the Patriots' genius draft choices (take a bow, N'Keal Harry), and then support the Bruins until they flame out, or blow our minds with a legitimate run at the Stanley Cup.

Numbah Faw, Bobby Awe, we need ya baby.