

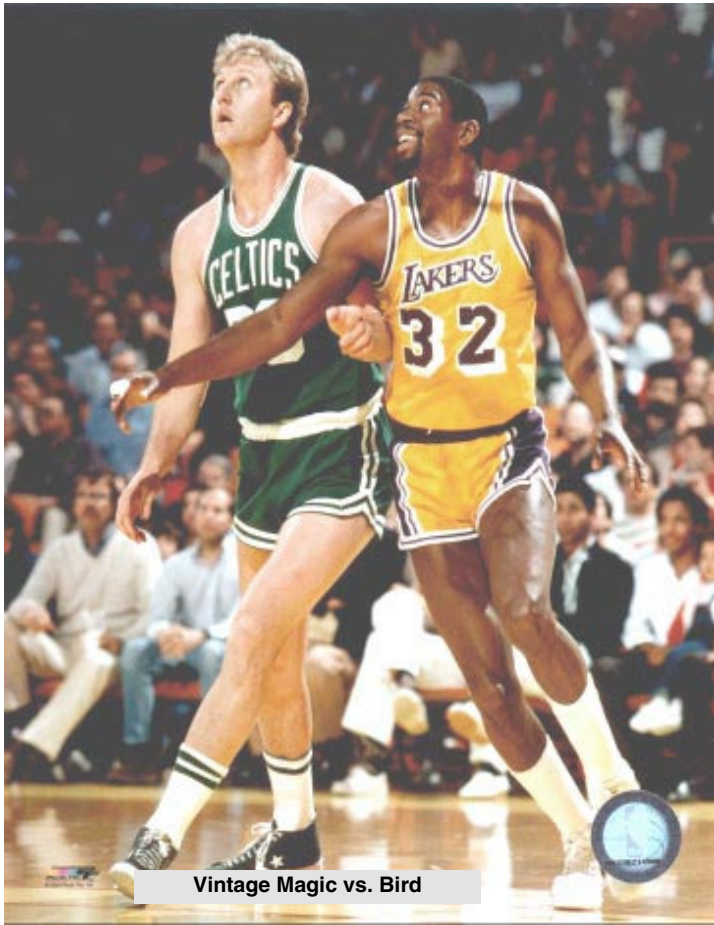


Sports

by Jerry Keys

It all seems like yesterday. We always knew who was going to the

Bird, the NBA's popularity was a distant fourth, behind major league baseball, NFL football, and NHL hockey. Their popu-



Vintage Magic vs. Bird

NBA Finals; it was just the matter of who would win. For over a decade, the Los Angeles Lakers and Boston Celtics dominated the NBA landscape. It has been 21 years since they last squared off in the Finals, but that drought looks to be over.

Before the arrival of Magic Johnson and Larry

larity was reflected by their trading cards; being virtually ignored by the public. Yes those cards today bring top dollar if still in nm (near mint) or better condition.

The NBA had numerous franchises relocate before the Magic/Bird era and faced stiff competition from the ABA (American

Basketball Association) before merging in 1976. Both the Lakers and Celtics had storied beginnings in the NBA but had fallen back to mediocrity in the 1970's. Magic and Bird faced off in college before going pro, setting the tone for a 1980's rivalry. Magic's Michigan State defeated Bird's Indiana St. 75-64 for the 1979 NCAA Basketball Championship.

From 1980 to 1991 Magic's Lakers appeared in nine NBA Finals, Bird's Celtics five. The Lakers won five titles, the Celtics three. These teams faced off in the Finals three times (1984, 1985, 1987), the Lakers winning the last two. From 1980 to 1988, either Los Angeles or Boston claimed the NBA title (except 1983, Philadelphia 76'ers).

Boston and Los Angeles are once again gearing up for another showdown. Each team captured the #1 seed in their Conference. The Celtics (66-16) should waltz through the playoffs until they "will most likely" face Detroit in the Eastern Finals. The Lakers (57-25) are in a loaded Western Conference, where a 50-32 team was the #8 seed. It may come down to the Lakers and San Antonio Spurs in the Western Finals (Spurs are defending champions, and have won four of the last nine NBA Finals after the true "Jordan Era" ended.

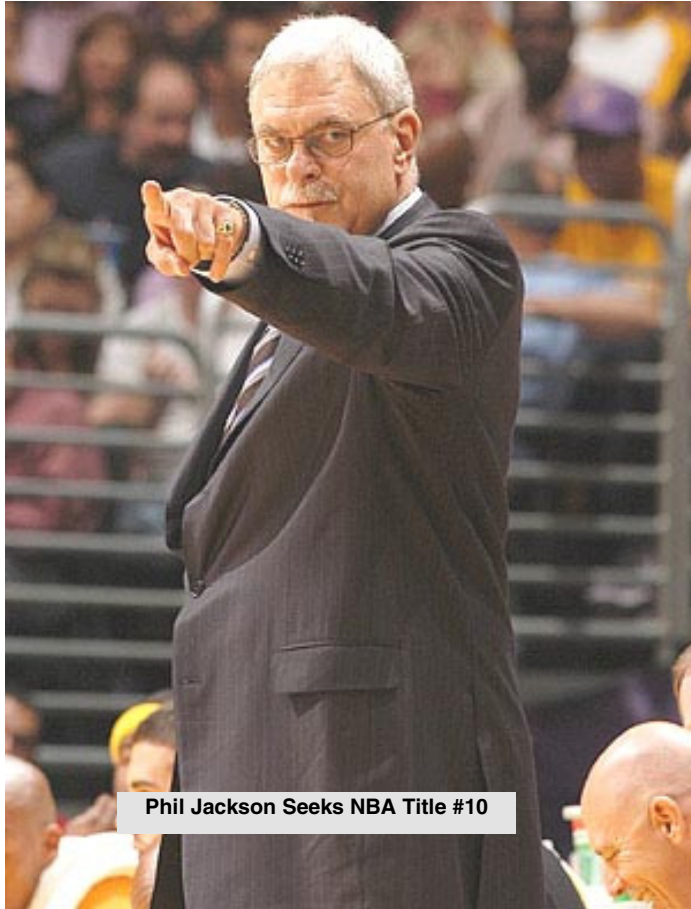
Boston is a well-balanced team with super-

NBA Finals

stars Kevin Garnett, Ray Allen, and Paul Pierce ac-

Bryant and hope he trusts his teammates. The Lak-

younger, fresher legs. If it turns into a shoot-out every night, "Showtime" returns and Los Angeles will prevail.



Phil Jackson Seeks NBA Title #10

In the November 2007 edition of *The People News*, I went out on a limb and picked the Atlanta Hawks to finish around .500 and get into the playoffs for the first time since the strike-shortened 1998-99 season. They made the playoffs (and will exit quickly facing Boston) but came up short on 41 wins. Keep an eye on these guys...they're in the Eastern Conference, a .500 record assures a playoff spot.

And on a quick note...Bob Knight resigned earlier this year at Texas Tech. He is best remembered for his years at Indiana (1971-2000). He brought the Hoosiers three NCAA championships (1976, 1981, 1987). After his last title, his teams were still perennial Sweet 16 teams until 1994. Was it just me

counting for about 60 points per game. Throw in veterans P.J. Brown, Sam Cassell, and James Posey and you have an overwhelming chance of

ers match Boston well in the starting five, Bryant, Pau Gasol, Lamar Odom, Derek Fisher, and Andrew Bynum.

If Boston can shut down



Bryant vs. Pierce

winning every night.

Los Angeles is not as deep as the Celtics coming off the bench. They will rely heavily on Kobe

Gasol and have Kobe win it on his own, the Celtics will prevail. Although Boston has more depth off the bench, the Lakers have

or did Indiana brass start belittling him at about the same time his teams were no longer championship-caliber?

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