

## **Non-grumpy, wise, old men by NBA standards**

According to the Chinese Calendar this is the year of the dragon which has breathed renewed life into this past its prime cast of grizzled, old time baller's on the Knick's that make me feel older than Hubie Brown's liver spots.

It has to be the year of the dragon because old school vets such as Sheed and Kidd have helped set the Garden on fire as they continue to torch their overzealous grave diggers and swoop in for the kill.

If anything is clear, it's that these seasoned vets are determined to become the new kings of New York, knock Jay Z off his lofty perch and run this town tonight till JR Smith has drank enough for eight million strong.

Against the Washington Wizards, JR Smith did an incredibly sick reverse Alley-Oop before he blew a kiss to the Garden faithful in one beautiful, seamless, motion. For JR to achieve such a heightened state of grace, you would think he experienced an out of body of experience. But his smooth fall away gamer winning jumper against the Bobcats last night just made that premise more dated than Yiddish.

Back to the dunk, as JR Smith, basked in the instantaneous envelopment of ecstatic, Garden jubilee, I couldn't help but feel that this was more than just a celebratory kiss meant for the mere purpose of topping that dizzying, head spinning feat. It was more than that.

For me the kiss signified something deeper, something more soul cementing and life appeasing than that. I practically shed a tear from my couch after that out of nowhere, heaven sent dunk sent the Garden into ultra giddy, delirium in knowing that after all the years of heart scarring betrayal, seething resentment, relentless sighing and beaten down, resignation of inevitable, loser-dom, the Knick faithful might actually come out on top without having to fantasize about another partner in love.

I also saw the kiss as a goodbye to my age of innocence. It seems like yesterday that I saw a 19 year old Shawn Kemp manhandle the Knick's and enforce his manhood down the Knick's throat, jamming down one ferocious, drooled over stuff after another.

As I take a stroll down memory lane, along my age of innocence, I remember "The Dunk" by John Starks against the Bulls when he kept on elevating like a rocket launched flat top sporting, Jack-In -The Box.

I also remember tearing down that "The Dunk" poster the next year in my childhood room after Starks bombed out in the finals against Houston and couldn't find the rim if a cure to his lisp depended on it. But I still had a poster of Nicole Eggert from "Charles in Charge" showing her perfectly tanned lined, exposed naval which continued to remain the most marquee, untradeable piece of art work I owned anyway.

My point here is that while I grew up in my suburban bubble in Westchester County, sheltered from manhood or from balling on any level, super stars such as Camby was kicking around Tim Duncan when he played for Wake Forest like his own personal rag doll, giving him that cross eyed, deer in headlights look until David Robinson, the whitest sounding, most chiseled center black naval officer banged them back into place.

While I in the process of waning off my GI-Joe addiction in 9th grade, Rasheed Wallace was in the seventh grade getting addicted to the limelight after the Philly press already pre-ordained him as the next "Wilt the Stilt" the NBA dominator, not Conan's wooden, Mongolian dressing, lame ass sidekick player.

While I was being passed over in game of spin the bottle in Junior High, Jason Kidd was being anointed as the next Magic that could make virginites disappear by the mere snap of his finger.

At Sleep-Away Camp in Kent, CT when I won most improved basketball player among all the Jews and Persian Sheik's sons from Great Neck, Long Island., Kurt Thomas was leading the NCAA Division in scoring and rebounding at Texas Christian University without having to throw that baggy, air bag blown back into it either.

I'm bringing this all up to illustrate the fact that these current Knick's are the opposite of me because due to a combination of god given talent, desperate circumstances at a pubescent age, lack of any financial safety nets, these men were forced into manhood by thirteen if not way before and certainly didn't need a massive party with smoke machines and strobe lights and a DJ to sell us on the legitimacy of that passage of time or manning up milestone when their balls had been on display since they grew a pair and could throw it down with divine powered authority.

As these non grumpy, wise men by NBA standards make one last charge  
toward basketball immortality, riding the crest of this awe  
inspiring last wind that only the year of the dragon can produce, I'm  
just in the process of getting my writing career off the ground at 36 which makes me a grumpy never was  
been by a poor man's Rodney Dangerfield standards.

That parade down the Canyon of Hero's will bring more than a tear to  
my eye as I watch the passage of time before me that has brought me a  
luminous, wife, a lifetime partner in love, and a baby girl, that's  
the play pal, dreams are made of and an NBA crown for my city, as I  
draw out every last ounce of love from that final kiss goodbye to all  
that was pure and all that was perfect, from my age of  
innocence.

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