

Im pretty sure it was one of the first times the Mavs ever went down to San Antonio the first full year I owned the team. I remember hearing the whole arena booing and booing. I looked up on the board above, and there was my smiling face with some prompting of some sort and the fans were letting me have it.

Im looking up there, and Im listening, and it dawned on me. Im getting booed by 18k people, how cool is that ! I didnt know these people. It didnt matter what they thought or why they were booing. It worked for the home team. It got the crowd going, it made it more fun for everyone who came to the game. Someone from the Spurs came over like it was a big deal and apologized for it. I was absolutely fine with it.

Since then teams have morphed my face into who knows what. They have dressed me up or down, had me kissed by who knows what, played seperated at birth, threw a cake at me, you name it, its probably happened. If it helps them create fun for their customers, Im fine with it.

Those same teams usually also have invited me to come early and speak to groups, help them sell whatever, come take pictures and sign autographs and be a partner. All good things. All fun.

But what I really, really like is how much Im heckled. Some cities are great and heckle with style and humor. The Clippers have 4 guys who put on wigs and jokingly call themselves the mark cuban fan club. They are always there when we play them and they make it fun. One year they brought a chucky doll and put a black wig on him and all game long they kept on stabbing the chucky doll. It was hysterical. Utah , minnesota, Golden State are all pretty cool. They actually have people who can heckle with some wit and intellect and get laughs from the people around the bench area.

Then there are cities with zero sense of humor. No originality when it comes to heckling and often are just plain rude. Sacramento has its share of people who will let it rip and curse the hell out of me. This year in Memphis, they set up a student like section where kids had their Griz T Shirts and megaphones and they tried so so hard to heckle and be mean. But the harder they tried, the funnier it got to me and everyone around us and the more flustered they got. It was hysterical.

The worst ?San Antonio. There isnt even a close 2nd. Thebleacher bums have filtered down to the lower bowl and they are living up to their past.

San Antonio is the only place where I have brought my wife and she has been verbally abused. Of course she is 7 months pregnant , which made her an easy target for this onedrunken spurs fan last week who called her a choice name or two. Fortunately my wife is super cool and just brushed it off. Of course one idiot shouldnt and doesnt taint a fan base, or a city. We both know that. It didnt represent the city or Spurs Fans. But that doesnt change the fact that they are rudest and curse the most.

San antonio fans by our bench will curse early, often and loud. Personally, I dont care. My attitude at spurs games, and really anywhere on the road, is that i would much rather have themheckle me than the players. I want to be the center of their attacks. Better me than the players. Our last game in SA, every time I stood up to see the game better, the cursing and yelling would start. So I did the only smart thing. I started standing up only when the Spurs were shooting free throws at our end. It took the hecklers and yellers several free throws before they figured out what I was doing and why Tim Duncan must have been mystified why there was booing while he was at the foul line.

Which leads to the topic of rivalries. Every good rivalry has a healthy dose of animosity. There has to be booing. There has to be the fans on the edge who go a little bit overboard. There has to be the story about the pregnant wife, or that one argument your buddies got into. There has to be a least a little bit of dislike or there aint no rivalry.

Thats part of what makes sports fun. That we can "hate" the other team and its fans while the games are going on, but be best friends or work with them or even be married to them when the games are over.

I hate Purdue. I really do. Have ever since I went to Indiana University. To this day, if I meet someone who has Purdue on their resume, I have to say "Im sorry" to them, or they will say "dont hold it against me". Of course, it doesnt impact whether i hire them or like them or work with them. We went to rival schools. If I go to a Purdue Indiana game, the chants and rants going both ways are going to be flying and I will be smiling and yelling Purdue sucks along with everyone else. Its just part of the fun.

I remember when Dirk called Utah a city the first year we made the playoffs. Every time he touched the ball he got booed. When Nick Van Exel went back to Denver, he got booed. Before game six in Dallas, someone asked about the fans booing Michael Finley and if i thought it was a good thing. Absolutely i told them. They were'nt booing Dirk the person in Utah, or Nick the person in Denver. Mavs fans arent booing michael finley the person. They all booed the guy he plays on TV. Michael Finley the Spurs player. Fin is a great guy with a great family. But getting booed is part of what makes a rivalry a rivalry. Any player will tell you, they boo the jersey.

Of course, as every self proclaimed sports expert will tell you, if the teams arent competitive and the stakes for each arent comparable, that there cant be a good rivalry. And they are right. Good teams have a lot at stake when they play, and thats a requirement for a good, funrivalry.

If the teams are great, and championships are at stake, the opportunity is there for a great rivalry

A great rivalry is so intense and brings out such emotion that people who are fans of either team HAVE to watch it, for fear of being ostracized by their friends who are also fans. A great rivalry is so intense that people who don't root for either team, or may not even be more than casual fans of that sport will watch anyway. They know the rivalry is so intense that it's combustible and that could lead to anything happening on the field.

But great rivalries also take personalities. Tommy [Lasorda](#) carried [on the Giants Dodgers rivalries](#) of years past. [Steinbrenner will do things to assure the Yankees](#) and Red Sox have a great rivalry.

If the Cowboys and Eagles are good this year, think there might be a heated rivalry with Terrell Owens at its center ? Think the ratings might be through the roof as fans see what Owens pulls out of his jersey to incite the crowd ? I promise you that they will be far higher than a regular season Steelers-Seahawks Superbowl rematch.

That's the problem. Great teams going at it aren't enough to create a rivalry that generates national interest.

The NBA doesn't have one of those rivalries right now. We used to. The Celtics and Lakers. Bulls and Knicks. Magic and Shaq. Dennis Rodman being Dennis Rodman. Jordan talking trash and being Jordan. Was there really a rivalry of national interest between the Knicks and the Heat until Van Gundy took a bite out of Alonzo's leg ?

We need that in the NBA today. Our best rivalry is Kobe vs Shaq. doesn't matter what teams they are on, as long as they are playing each other. It's combustible. Anything can happen. Both teams could have terrible records, but it would be the marquee matchup as far as TV is concerned over Spurs Mavs, Pistons Spurs, any combo of teams.

I'm hoping the Mavs vs Spurs can be one of those great rivalries of national interest. This series has been amazing. Regardless of how it turns out, and hopefully the good guys win, I couldn't have ever imagined there being a more competitive 7 game series. But great games aren't enough. Its intensity of emotion from fans on both sides that will leave a lasting impression on them. Its taking each game result and everything and anything said relating to the game personally that will make this a rivalry in Texas. Its all the war of the words and back and forth that will make this a rivalry of national interest.

Last week when we were there, there was a front page article about how much better San Antonio was than Dallas. Red McCombs saying that "people live in SA because they want to , but no one lives in Dallas because they want to, they live there because we have to" The article took shots at all things Dallas, and me. I thought it was great.

When I got the chance to return to the river the other night during an ESPN radio interview, I certainly and happily did. The Riverwalk river is nasty. I know it. Everyone who lives in San Antonio knows it. I said it. I just know that on crowded nights, everyone who walks that thing is afraid to death that some drunk is going to stumble by and knock them into the water. Its that nasty. I mean come on folks. They can clean up Lake Erie, but not the riverwalk ?? Fighting words , right ?

Of course not. Its meaningless. Unless it comes from a rival.

Why say it at all ? Because San Antonio is our rival. There is nothing more fun than a great rivalry. Unless of course its the fun that comes from tweaking a rival. There is nothing better for the NBA than a great rivalry. Purdue is always going to suck in my book. Sorry boiler maker fans. So will the Spurs.

I'm going to get cursed more than I have ever been cursed before in my life when we go to play them on Monday. I've already gotten hundreds of emails from Spurs fans calling me things that I had never heard before. Without exception, when I say something nice back in an email, they respond nice right back as well. Like Rivals do. Its on during the game, real world after.

For the players and coaches and people who get paid by the industry, its a job. For the fans, its supposed to be fun. We all love our teams. We love the intensity of a great rivalry.

Its not personal. Its just that you support the wrong team.

I didn't turn on comments, because I didn't need all the cursing that would come along with it, but there have been some great emails. So I have decided to turn comments back on.

If you talk about rivalries. It stays. Everything else gets deleted for being off topic.

some samples

I am a spurs fan, and I love the idea of making this the best rivalry in

all of the NBA. Keep it up Cuban, lets make this the second best rivalry in the state of Texas! Behind only the A&M vs Texas rivalry!!!! Make us hate you, and hopefully we will return the favor!

Hey Mark,

I think you hit the nail right on the head with your blog on rivalries. Rivalries are a pretty simple equation: two good teams/players/whatever performing very well plus a strong, loyal, fan base to reward their competition.

You've done more to steer the NBA in the right direction than anyone working at the commissioner's office. It's a shame they fine you every time you say something right. While I myself have no fidelity to the Mavs (being a Lakers fan), I would love to see the Mavs develop a rivalry with the Spurs. It would be wonderful for basketball. I'm sure you're well aware that rivalries have to grow endogenously, with the fans actually buying into it. Shaq vs. Kobe rivalry? Nope. Maybe the idiots at ESPN were buying it in Connecticut, but not in Los Angeles. But at the same time, there's a lot the league can do to promote rivalries. I'd imagine that ever since the Mavs got good, the heckling in San Antonio grew monotonically vulgar with each passing game. This is normal! It sucks for your wife to get that kind of crap, but it's a sign of something truly powerful about sports. More power to her for not letting those guys ruin her night.

Being a Dodgers fan, I can't walk into AT&T Park (nee SBC, nee PacBell...maybe those yuppies will stop changing the name of their ballpark after every telecomm merger) without some middle aged investment banker giving me a hard time for sporting Dodger blue. Another example: rivalries make people go out in large numbers to watch Stanford vs. Cal in fencing. Fencing!

Make the most of this opportunity. You don't need anyone to tell you this, as you're already doing it, but continue to encourage the Mavs-Spurs rivalry. Throw some fire on the flames in your next radio interview. It's all in good fun. It's all about sport.

ok, i read about your blog and i guess you are trying to backpeddle a bit which i think i might be ok with but why??? did you hear that heart wrenching press conference with FIN? wow, that really hurt! did you see the pain when he was saying what he felt? ouch! i think, well, poor guy but obviously the mavs dont deserve him nor did they appreciate him (obviously!). just sad for him and his family! so, we will certainly have him and treat him the way he deserves to be treated! you are the one who has to try and sleep at night for hurting a fan and a great guy!

as for the friendly rivalry! i totally get it! that is what i thought BUT then you tried to turn it UGLY! why? noone else goes on public radio, tv, internet, EVERYwhere and tries to start HATE. the fans will take care of the rivalry without you adding bad fuel to fire. dont you get that? the players on both teams are amazing and

awesome and wonderful to watch. what a beautiful game, fun series, darn that this isnt the conf finals.....dont mess with it!! i know thereare so many idiots in dallas and so many idots in SA (i'm from neither), let idiot fans take care of the idiot stuff! you and me, let's just be GREAT fans, ultimate rivals and have fun "hating" each other on the court and that is all! we dont want this to be a detroit/indiana brawl, please say that! one thing i will say is SA has great pride, great loyalty and great spirit when it comes to the love they have for their team and players and do you hearthe LOVE wegive avery when he comes in to the center?much! he is coaching the ENEMY and he still got an ovation. now that is what it is all about! try it, you might like it! we dont Boo ourold players, we thank them for all they did for us! kobe,ray allen,vince carter.....never played for us, no love there, those are the kind of people you BOO! they expect it from strangers, not the loved ones! remember that! havefun, let's enjoy game 7 and as you said....let's hope the goodguys win...we ALL know who the GOOD guys are!!!

I just wanted to let you know that I really enjoy your blog. I wish you could teach Mr. Holt a thing or two about being one with the fans.I hate the mavs with a passion, mostly because of Jason Terry; and not because of his low blow, but because of his timely shooting. I think the Spurs will win Monday, becausethey know what it takes to get to that championship game. I love the rivalry that has been created. I go to Baylor University, so I have a lotof Mavs friends. Wewere justtalking about how this series is developing into a classicCeltics v.Lakers matchup. Your latest post on your blog about rivalries was right on the money. I agree that my fellow fans need a lesson on creativity when heckling. They should take a pointer from the little kid behind the basket that had that big picture of Eva Longoria. I was laughing each time he would waive itwhen Tony was shooting. One more thing,I am throwing out an offer to you to buy you a meal on the riverwalk and show you just how nice our beautiful city is. That offer is standing until you tell me no. I have only been to Dallas once, and it was only a day trip. All I hear is that is has a lot of concrete with nothing to do. I would love for you to prove me wrong.

To good times and great rivalries!

As a die hard Spurs fan I enjoy reading your blog. I think so many people lose sight of the fact that basketball is simply entertainment and the outcome will have to be decided on the court. I think the I35 rivalry is a great thing. I'm tired of Kobe, Shaq & the 'coronation' of the NBA's 'new king.' The Spurs and Mavs have been great teams for a long time and I wanted to thank you for being an owner who is outspoken about caring for his team and players. I'll probably boo you on Monday from our corporate suite at the AT&T if I get to go, but I think you 'get it' more than most other owners. I also think you've done many positive things for the league and for Texas NBA teams. May the best team win and congrats on your new child!

Mark, I had the same experience with the "Baseline Bums" recently at a Houston Rockets game. They were bussed in and sat behind the goal in a huge pack. They are total fools. Some drunken woman, her sister, and her 12-yr old daughter sat behind us and started cussing at my 16yr old brother and heckling him. They spilled beer on us, swore, heckled, you name it. Luckily when we were leaving outside the arena I saw them all in their bus, I knocked on the door and said "Open it you forgot me!!!" so they opened it, I got onboard and yelled "ROCKEETTSSSSS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" and ran off.

Great Blog, I'm a first time visitor and everthing you just wrote is hysterical. The big networks would lead you to beleive that only Rivalries exist on the West and East Coast. That only players like Kobe and Labron are keeping the NBA alive. The truth is player like

Dirk,TimVP,Ginobili,Stack,Parker and this series is alot more of what the NBA is and should be about. Truthfully, when I heard what you said on ESPN radio I was like, WOW! He did not just go there. Then, while listening to sports radio 760, and Pop was asked to comment he made me realize how humourous and intelligent not only he was but what a great sense of humor you and Pop have. Pop said,"after one margarita I dont know whats in the river maybe he should come down and have one and he (Mark Cuban)can look at life a little more maturely. Awsome! Great comeback. You have done a great job of creating attention to where its deserved. This Series!This Rivalry!

That said, I hate the Mavs. I'm glad that we took the dallas chapparals from yall. Dallas does not deserve an NBA Championship, like one ESPN reporter said B4 fridays game.I will be in Dallas on Business on Sunday and I cant wait to wear my vintage Spurs 99' Championship jersey through D-FW Airport. Another thing dallas fan quit complaining about the punch that Terry through at Finley. Dallas Fan don't you remember the Horry Gumming incident,he was also suspended one game, because of YOU. Now were even. You know Thanks Dallas fan, You couldn't support your Basketball team when it counted, so people like red Mccombs, Angelo Drossos took them to a Wonderful place on the banks of the San Antonio river, The Hemisfair Arena.The loudest Arena in the NBA at the Time. Great Atmosphere. Where fans learned how to cheer for their heroes. Thats where I saw my first NBA basketball game back in 1978-1979. I'f you would have supported your team back then,you could have been the city bragging about 3 NBA Championships.

But, Not even in an elimination game , Dallas fan does't have the experience or maturity of knowing how to cheer or "WILL" their beloved team to VICTORY. But we do!

Maverick fan it will be many more years of dissapointment b4 you reach the pinnacle of the NBA.The Finals. I went through it with George Gervin, Larry Kennon, Jame silas, in the 70's and 80's, David Robinson B4 Timmy.I still have my Spurs video losing to the Kareem Abdul-Jabar, Magic Johnson Lakers. I would watch that video for many dissapointing years, we would have made the Finals with the Dr. J Sixers that year. We lost the series in game 6 in a great magical series, that we should have won.I was miserable like you will be.Now, Lets get it on!

P.S.In a Series against the Washington Bullets back in the late 70's, we were UP 3-1 in The Eastern Confernce Finals and Dan Cook sports legend in San Antonio and around the country coined the phrase, while the Washington Bullets, led by Wes Unseld, Big E- Elvin Hayes were creeping back into the

series, given credit by The Oxford Book of Quotes that

"It ain't over till the Fat Lady Sings".

Guess what, we lost that series 4-3. Dan Cook was right and he taught Spurs

fan a lesson. But we never ever gave up on our team. And we never will.

Plus the San Antonio fans here know how to cheer their team and give them

that legendary direction to Will them to victory. We know how to do that.

We've been here before. The Ghosts of all Hemisfair, Alamodome spurs Fan will

rise at the AT&T Center on Monday. It will be a magical moment for Spur Fan.

GO! SPURS! GO!

Your blog entry on rivalries was reminiscent of this opening monologue to a

"Seinfeld" episode:

"Loyalty to any one sports team is pretty hard to justify. Because the

players are always changing, the team can move to another city, you're

actually rooting for the clothes when you get right down to it. You know

what I mean, you are standing and cheering and yelling for your clothes to

beat the clothes from another city. Fans will be so in love with a player

but if he goes to another team, they boo him. This is the same human being

in a different shirt, they *hate* him now. Boo! different shirt!! Boo."

(source: <http://www.seinfeldscripts.com/TheLabelMaker.html>)