

I love basketball. I've loved it as long as I can remember. I loved going to see the Pittsburgh Pipers and Condors play in the ABA when I was a kid. I love watching any NBA game today. I love going to the arena early now and shooting baskets before the guys get there on game day. I love getting to the gym and playing against guys half my age, knowing my body is going to ache the next day. The pain afterwards is far less than the painful thought of not being able to play. I love this game.

As much as I love this game, and know there are basketball junkies and gym rats across this country who love it as much as I do, I also know we are not the majority. We are the minority. There are about 50 guys that play basketball in my gym during any given week. The gym has thousands of members who don't play.

There are those around the NBA who think the business of the NBA is basketball. They seem to think that there are enough basketball junkies and purists out there, that if we "let the game of basketball alone", we would fill arenas, the games would be more enjoyable and TV ratings would skyrocket. They probably also think that the tooth fairy is real.

Reality is that basketball is not the business of the NBA. Entertainment is the business of the NBA. Every single night of the week we battle movies, books, restaurants, TV and Cable programs, talking a walk, everything and anything that is an alternative to going to or watching an NBA game.

Anything not branded NBA is the enemy, it's the competition for our customers attention. It has to be the mission of the NBA to make sure that watching or seeing in person an NBA game is the the answer to "what do you want to do tonight?" That is not an easy job. I think its finally dawning on a growing number of teams that we as a league have to sell fun, not jumpshots in order to fill the stands.

The purists of course hate the fact that we shoot t-shirts, that we play music during play, that we have clappers, or styrofoam fingers, that all game long we are stimulating the audience with every possible emotional trigger we can.

The purists fail to realize that an NBA game is one of the few places where people from every walk of life, every part of the corporate ladder, and every age group get to sit side by side and make friends and have a common interest. Where grandma, grandpa, mom and dad and the kids have a common bond. Where, they as a family, get to jump up and down, stand up and clap and scream at the top of their lungs for their team and against the bad guys. As a parent, what's better than looking over at your kids and seeing them with the biggest smile imaginable, cheering for their favorite team? Which do you think leaves the lasting impression on the kids and parents. The jump shot or the smile?

Then, when you get home, or to work the next day, you have a common bond. Your team. And that bond is for more than just the one game, it becomes an aligning force in a family and company. Every day there is something to talk with grandma about on the phone. Junior might have purple hair, makeup and a barbell in his tongue, but when you can't talk about anything else, you can talk about last nights game, or who they play tonight and how Dirk and Nash did.

I'm not trying to sell the NBA as the key to world peace or family unity, but there should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the business of basketball is not, and will never again be basketball, it is fun.

What led me to write this was an email I got this morning. I get a lot of these every week, but this one triggered me to write something

Dear Mr. Cuban,

I have to brag about my son today.

I attended the game last night with my son Jason (11 and a huge Mavs fan), my son Michael (9 and a huge NBA fan) and Michael's friend Thomas (10 and a huge Dirk fan attending his very first Mavs game). We got to the game early, but had to pick up our tickets at Will Call. By the time we went around the arena, picked up the tickets and got to the gate, all of the Dirk foam heads had been handed out (1/2 hour before the game).

Jason had asked a gentleman about where these came from and was told that they were all gone. This man was nice enough to give him an extra one that he had in the true spirit of Texans and Mavs fans!

Although I knew how much Jason coveted this item, within a couple of minutes he had given it to Thomas. Thomas was over the moon with this item! And as a father, I was over the moon that my son was so generous and giving to his little brother's friend!!!

As a father, I know you can understand the pride I feel. Although your child is too little for you to experience something like this yet, I hope that some day you would feel the joy and pride that I felt last night.

The three boys were an absolute joy and pleasure at the game. They had the times of their lives and were well-behaved, courteous and appreciative of the experience. The atmosphere at Mavericks games is so family-friendly that you can't help but enjoy yourself.

As for Thomas, he couldn't have had a better evening! We dropped off a happy boy at the end of the night.

I know this is not an earth-shattering story, but one that I felt strongly enough about to send you a note to let you know that your fan base is alive and well and growing up every day. I admire the things you do to make the game a great experience for the kids the true future of your Mavericks following!

Thanks again for a great experience.