

I've writing about this mutple times before, but its been several years.

- – [NBA and the Olympics](#)
- – [Team USA](#)
- – [What we get for our money](#)

I've said it before and I will say it again, the NBA is making a huge mistake by letting our players participate in the Olympics and its qualifying competitions. Anyone who thinks the Olympics are anything more or less than a business ought to try to bid on the TV rights or talk to any of the many businesses who have been sued for trademark infringements .(they even [challenged a company for calling their Robotic competition](#) the RoboOlympics). Here is a frame of reference for you. The combined TV contract for ONE Summer & Winter Olympics is MORE than every year of the entire current NBA TV deal combined !

The Olympics may be litigious, but they aren't stupid. Where else can you get to use another compay's products for free ? Maybe CBS will lend Katie Couric to NBC every couple years. According to the NBA, its good business.

The underlying issue is how we buy into unsupportable myths.

1. The Dream Team Ignited Basketball around the world.

Wrong. There is no question the Dream Team was a big event. The first professionals to play. The NBA's big stars. It was huge in the USA. But to say it ignited the development of International Basketball is patting ourselves on the back a little too much.

The reality is that the sport of basketball has grown, as have other sports, over the past 15 years for quite a few reasons:

Digital Media– Sports that were not accessible to countries around the world suddenly were available in restaurants, bars , internet cafes and community centers around the world on Sports Networks and websites created entirely to sports. Every sport is available anywhere. The first Dream Team was 1992, the rise of basketball most closely matches the growth in digital media that really got going 3 or 4 years later.

Digital Media made it easier to share coaching techniques, tapes/DVDs of games and to watch the best in any sport. I played rugby in college, the only way our team could see the great rugby teams of the world play back then was by buying or renting tapes from Rugby Magazine. Now any basketball player or coach can get unlimited information and video online to anywhere in the world. That alone isnt enough, but it certainly helps.

The world has become a smaller place.

Money : Cash is king around the world, even in the most Communist of countries. As you can tell from the [Olympics own site](#), they give out a [TON of cash to international federations every year](#). The Olympics bring in 4 BILLION plus dollars every Olympic cyle. 92 percent of that money is distributed . International Federations that provide athletes to the Olympics get about \$10mm each. Thats a lot of money to spend on developing their sport. On the flipside, its still relatively cheap to rollout a basketball and put up a basic hoop on a telephone pole.

Money is an amazing motivator. Everywhere around the world young kids with special athletic talent are targeted for development by someone with a financial interest of one kind or another. Its not just basketball of course. The NHL has had a junior system that has worked out incredibly well. Soccer. Tennis. Boxing. Racing. Every sport has its vultures on the look out for the next "phenom"

If you can develop talent and get them to the NBA. NBA teams pay to get players out of their contracts to overseas teams. Those players often have contracts that require them to pay the team that hired them. Money, money, money.

Money also matters to the players and teams. Now that the USA has lost, its going to be really interesting

Reality: If you are 6'5" or bigger, and a good athlete living outside the US or Canada, just what exactly are your choices ? How many 6'5 or taller players were in the Soccer World Cup ? 1 that i could find. F1 is huge in Europe. Awful tough to fit in a car at that size. Tennis, hockey, baseball, track, horse racing, other than maybe boxing/cagefighting/sumo, if you are a big guy, your choices are limited. Just look at the rosters of NBA Teams last year. Out of about 87 international players, I found 6 from overseas. Tall guys play basketball. Just like they did before 1992, and have ever since

The reality is that if the NBA never played another basketball game outside of North America, none of the above would change.

2. The NBA makes a ton of money from international basketball.

We dont. And lets leave it at that. International basketball has lots of potential for the NBA... it always has and it always will.

3. How the USA performs in the Olympics and World Championships Matters.

It doesn't. Hardcore basketball fans like me are happy to watch. I love watching pretty much any and all basketball. But there arent enough people like me out there when it comes to the WC this year. An amazing All Star team of our best and brightest and there wasnt a blip of an uproar about TV schedules or replays. And when we lost, our Dallas paper thought it was enough to run an AP wire report as did most major papers reporting on the game. They didnt care enough to send someone to cover the games.

And the uproar on talk radio about the loss ? I must have missed it. With the start of the NFL season around the corner, the 53rd spot on a roster during cut down week was more discussed when I listened in.

4. Winning International Basketball is about national pride.

Maybe it is in other countries. Its not here. Maybe its like the soccer World Cup here. TV ratings were up considerably , even with odd ball playing times. I watched because I knew we were the underdog and it would be a major fete if the USA won. This is only a guess, but beating a team full of NBA All Stars. Guys with shoe contracts would be a big deal to me if I lived elsewhere.

The reality in the USA however is that its a corporate endeavor. USA Basketball is controlled by the NBA. Sure there is a committee, but the guy in charge is a former NBA owner. The last guy in charge was and is an NBA employee. The NBA thinks this is a good business move. I obviously disagree.

5. The Bottom Line

If anyone in the US really cared about winning international basketball grade schools, junior highs and high schools would change their games to mesh with the international game. Has anyone even suggested it ? Has there been one smattering of "Our National Pride is at stake" from a small town that wants to standup for US Basketball and volunteer to change the rules ?

Personally, I want what our fans and customers want. I love the NBA game. Sure there are rule changes I want to see, (Like move the charge circle further away from the basket to protect players in the air and allow any kind of defense) but the reality is that our game is very good. I dont care if the USA wins or loses., I care if the Mavs win or lose. Based on the response around the country to the WCs, it appears that most American basketball fans feel the same way. They care more about their team and the NBA than international competition.

Im also curious to see what kind of c

hanges they make to the team and how players respond. Since the team has to play again next summer, will they change personnel ? That might suggest that its not about "learning the international game", or "having time together as a team" as an issue. It will also be interesting to see what happens if any players happen to become Free Agents next summer, or during the Olympic Summer.

Im not against International Basketball. I think it can be a decent business if done right. Unfortunately for the NBA, this is the only place where we give away our trademark and assets and we shouldn't. If the game of basketball truly has grown to the level of interest we all think and hope it has, then we should just dump playing for the Olympics and hold our own tournament. If we were really , really smart, we would work with the NHL,NFL , MLB, the USA Track and Field organizations, Tennis and other sports with strong professional bases and create our own games. Then supporting the international development of the games would make sense. Then we could have bidding to host the SuperGames. To provide TV coverage. To sponsors. A Winter SuperGames, A Summer SuperGames every 4 years.

That would be fun.