

First, what a great , great series to watch. There has been everything that a basketball junkie could want. Passion, intensity, athleticism, how did he do that shots, team play on both sides of the ball, lots of surprises and a coaching chess match between the two best coaches of this decade.

Which leads me to the pre game shows. I don't want to hear what Mike, Tim, Bill, Steven or Greg think the teams or players should do. I want more information on what they are doing. Why is it that only football pre games or in game analysts talk about plays? Why can't we get some basketball analysts who break down games and tell us what plays are being run, how the defenses are reacting to them and whats working or not working?

Give me something of substance beyond "Duncan has got to show up". "Joe Dumars told Rasheed to take his shot when they were in the elevator together."

We have gotten some in game analysis about where certain players like to shoot from... mostly Bruce Bowen and Tim Duncan, and that Chauncey Billups likes to shoot 3s in the 4th quarter, but beyond that it seems like the announcers assume the fans not only know nothing about the game, but they want to keep it that way.

One of the best features, I think in Sports Illustrated is the scouting reports on teams and players. Give us some knowledge from the people who get paid to scout the league. The more we can give insights from insiders rather than listen to what Ben Wallace's wife told him for the 9th time (it was ok as a fun fact the first time), the more involved fans will be with the game.

Which is not to say that ABC hasn't stepped up. The halftime series have been phenomenal! I have seen the ones of Rip, Manu and Horace Jenkins and they have been great TV. The only missing piece is that they weren't in HD.

Anyone who thought the series was over after the Spurs went up 2-0 had already forgotten what happened to them in the Seattle series. They just haven't been great away from home this year. Not great, but capable of winning when pushed hard. Which makes tonight's game 5 all the more exciting.

I understand why the NBA wants to bring in the legends of the game. That's what the focus groups said. That older potential viewers missed the legends of the NBA. Well, beyond the fact that 18-34 is the coveted demographic for our TV partners, to paraphrase Rick Pitino "Larry Bird, Dr J, Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan aren't playing in an NBA game anytime soon". Putting the legends in our commercials isn't going to convince older viewers that they might, or that our current players are their peers.

The NBA product is amazing right now. The games are fun to watch. Every playoff matchup has had drama and excitement. The product is good and not only that, it is working for our advertisers. So why in the world are we selling what we don't have?

The last time a mashup of old and new worked was when Aerosmith and Run DMC re worked Walk This Way. The NBA attempt at a mashup of old and new just isn't working.

The first thing any salesperson learns is "Sell what you have".

Can we please market and sell what we have... Drama, intense action, passion, fun, excitement, rabid fans, athleticism, and great guys playing a great game in a way that can appeal to all demographics. If we market the fun and benefits of the product we have, more people would get into the games. Trying to show off the Legends of the game might be great for ESPN Classic Sports, but it's not going to get prospective fans, and those on the cusp to make an appointment with their TV to turn on ABC tonight at 9pm EST.

Our biggest challenge is in those cities who don't have NBA teams. So how about this for an idea this upcoming season. In addition to sending teams to Europe and around the world to build interest, why not start camp a little early and send teams to cities like Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, St Louis, Kansas City, Columbus and others of similar sizes to build awareness and excitement for our game and players? Start off the week with an open tryout in that city, pick one or two players to work out with the team for that week and build some local excitement. It would build and extend our fanbase in those cities. It would expose the local media and fans to our players, where they can see what we are really like. It would be selling the product we have to the fans and customer we need the most... What a concept!

Finally, the ratings. It seems like that's a big topic as the games themselves. I personally have been pleasantly surprised at how good they were. I didn't expect them to match last year. As I have said before, people love trainwreck TV and that's exactly what last year's finals were, the trainwreck of the Lakers, which I enjoyed as much as the next person.

This year is about the games, the players who play them and what fans look for in a World Championship Series.. It's all there.

Now if we had combined great marketing with all the great things we have seen on TV, who knows how good they could have been the first 4 games. From here on out however, I think the games will more than compensate for other mistakes. It's a best of 3 series between two great teams, and that will make for great TV and ratings.

[What bloggers are saying about the NBA Finals](#)