

Sports Wire

Blazers prepare for Utah Jazz this week

PORTLAND — Along with being the Portland Trail Blazers' coach, Mike Dunleavy is playing the role of acting critic in preparing for the Utah Jazz this week.

Specifically, he doesn't like Karl Malone in the role of "The Mailman," who seems to deliver flailing legs and arms along with jump shots, often drawing the foul after crashing to the floor following slight contact with a much smaller player.

The tactics employed by Malone and John Stockton — which also include masterful pulling, grabbing and locking arms of opposing players — were effective enough to get Sacramento flustered in overtime of Utah's series-clinching 99-92 victory Sunday.

"They're good at it," Dunleavy said following Monday's practice.

"When these guys get finished with their careers in the NBA, they can go right to Hollywood."

Dunleavy, whose team is nearly as young and inexperienced at playoff games as the Kings, doesn't want to see a repeat performance when the Blazers play at Utah in Game 1 of their second-round series Tuesday night.

"What I try to do with our players is to bring their attention to not getting caught up in a situation of taking any dumb fouls," he said.

The coach has told his players to defend the Jazz straight-up and notify the officials of any Utah "tricks."

"When Stockton starts flopping around and they start playing some of their tricks... [that's when] you raise your hands up in the air. That's the best way to bring the official's attention: 'Hey, this is not me bringing this on.'"

— The Associated Press

Pyle

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Maybe the fact that all of us would have rather had Portland meet Sacramento for the Blazers' sake had something to do with it, but I don't think that's the whole story.

It's deeper than that.

The Jazz represent things that many young people despise — things such as the established order and staunch conservatism.

In this age of no-look passes and windmill dunks, Utah keeps winning with the tandem of Stockton and Karl Malone. The two future Hall-of-Famers are spectacularly steady but anything but spectacular in style.

The two of them in action is like watching a pitchers' duel — although grandpa may think they're beautiful, we all crave a McGwire-ian blast or one-handed dunk between two 7-footers.

You don't need ESPN Classic Sports to see old school, just watch a Jazz game.

And Utah doesn't try to change its style because it keeps win-

ning, just like Mom and Dad's banal Miles Davis soundtrack tirelessly hogs the sound waves when we visit home.

What makes their success even more frustrating is that the referees seem to always be on the Jazz's side. Malone and Stockton are particularly adept at getting questionable calls in their favor.

It's almost as if the NBA powers that be want Utah to win, but the Kings nearly annihilated those wishes.

Now, the Blazers get the chance to oust the old and reclaim Western Conference dominance, although San Antonio and the L.A. Lakers probably have something to say about that.

So, for all of us young, reform-wanting fans, please turn the Jazz off, Portland.

It's time to put some Method Man on.

Tim Pyle is the sports editor for the Emerald. He can be reached via e-mail at tpyle@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

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