



Oregon Softball

Friday, April 7
#22 Ducks vs. #3 UCLA
2:00pm

Saturday, April 8
#22 Ducks vs. #1 Washington
2:00pm

Sunday, April 9
#22 Ducks vs. #1 Washington
1:00pm

**All games played at Howe Field,
next to Mac Court.
FREE with a student ID.**

K.O. Kobe proves his point

It was a few days ago already, but that's OK. It's never too late to let someone know you're proud of him.

Kobe Bryant, way to go.

When New York's Chris Childs retaliated after you inadvertently elbowed him, you didn't back down.

Childs had some choice words for you, and a head-butt too, which he followed with two quality jabs to your exposed chin. And you, who had never been ejected from a game and who had only drawn one technical foul in 3 1/2 seasons, didn't turn the other cheek.

No, not with Denzel Washington — fresh off his Oscar-nominated performance as heavy-weight Rubin "Hurricane" Carter — sitting courtside.

And not on national television. Not with the playoffs just around the corner.

Hell no, you didn't walk away.

You yelled back. Even tried to return Childs' shots. You had to be restrained. Shaquille O'Neal's personal bodyguard had to escort

you off the floor while you, in the words of a New York Times writer, "continued to buck and snort like a bull in a rodeo chute."

It doesn't get sexier than that.

Especially considering that two days later, while you sat at home serving a one-game suspension, the Lakers managed to pull out a win in Phoenix on Tuesday — despite foul trouble keeping Shaq on the bench for most of the fourth quarter.

The win proved the point (to everyone, including second-place Portland which trails L.A. by eight games). There's no stopping you guys.

This is your year. You have too much talent. You're too well coached.

New York head coach Jeff Van Gundy said it before his team mixed it up with the Lakers: "You know what? Teams were closer to the Bulls [in the last years of the dynasty] than they are to the Lakers. Like the early Bulls, no one is close to them."

Y'all are just too good.

And too tough? They didn't think so, did they?

Little Chris Childs thought he could bully you, a most-marketable 6-foot-7 guard who is averaging more than 22 points per game. Thought it would fluster you and your team. Certainly didn't expect the Lakers to back you up like they did.

"It's excellent," O'Neal reportedly said and grinned when asked about your willingness to exchange blows — or at least try to. "That's one of the differences from this team to the teams in years past," you were quoted saying in the Los Angeles Times. "We're willing to take a stand. We're willing to show teams that we're fighting for one another, point blank.

"Suspensions or not, we'll do what we've got to do. You're not going to push our guys around — whether it's myself, whether it's Travis Knight, whether it's Shaq ... whoever it might be, we've got each other's backs."

Even your don't-call-me-a-

'Zenmaster' coach wasn't all that perturbed by your response.

"It's pretty much a natural reaction for a player that takes a punch that he doesn't see coming," Phil Jackson said.

And not that this matters, but the writers down there were definitely digging it all as well.

LA Times columnist J.A. Adande: "They probably could use a good elbow now and then to keep them alert."

Besides, you were protecting yourself.

"I was just defending myself," you said. "I'm a non-violent dude. ... I'm not pro-fighting by any means. But sometimes people push you to that point; my mom's side kind of comes out of me.

"Guys always want to hold you and grab you and try to cheap-shot you, so you've got to send 'em a message."

Exactly.

Childs is one of those cheap-shot artists, then? That's not what he said.

"You have to defend yourself," the 6-3 guard said. "I got a couple of elbows and the referees never said anything. So I had to defend myself."

Indeed, sometimes you just have to get defensive. It is the manly thing to do.

Moreover, it was, like, the only thing you could do, really.

"Everyone knows Kobe's a clean-cut guy," Shaq said. "But he had somebody punching in his face, he had to do something about it.

"You can't let a guy punch you in the face on national TV and just walk away."

Because that would be silly. Unimaginable. No NBA player would do such a thing.

Except that 15-year-vet and Laker teammate A.C. Green has.

In a first-round playoff game in 1994 for example, when Green played for Phoenix, he and Latrell Sprewell — then with Golden State, now with the Knicks — got tangled up.

And Green said to Spree: "God bless you."

Spree's reaction: "I worship the devil."

But hey, Kobe, that's Spree for you. Doing us all proud.

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Mirjam Swanson

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