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'Sheed and Scottie score win

We were going to run a column about Rasheed Wallace today.

In fact, now we have no choice but to say something. But the column we had planned to print — by one of our sports writers, who will remain nameless — was about how 'Sheed is a cancer to his team.

Anyone who watched Game 1 of the Lakers-Blazers series would have no choice but to think 'Sheed would be the Blazers' downfall.

But that doesn't take into account the Mom factor.

After an inspiring pep talk from his mother, 'Sheed went out Monday night, kept his mouth shut and ripped the Lakers for 29 points — which coincidentally was his team's margin of victory.

So with 'Sheed's cancerous tendencies aside for one night, one of about a thousand crucial points to this series comes out. Rasheed Wallace isn't a disease waiting to kill Portland's championship hopes. He's the focal

point of the team and one heck of a problem for the Lakers.

If he can keep quiet for the rest of the series and play the way he did tonight (29 points, 12 rebounds), the Blazers just might find themselves closer to a championship than they have been since Bill Walton blew out his knees.



Jonathan
Allen

It was obvious tonight: the Lakers' power forwards didn't stand a chance. Much has been made in the past week of Shaq vs. three or four defenders, but how about 'Sheed against A.C. Green, Robert Horry and ... Rick Fox?

I mean, come on. Green's too old and slow. Horry is not strong enough. And well, Fox is a pretty boy who belongs outside guarding other tiny complainers (Damon Stoudamire?).

This is not to say that Wallace single-handedly dealt the Lakers their first home loss of the playoffs ... insert Scottie Pippen here.

Pippen was the man. Let's go back roughly one year. The Blazers were gearing up for Game 2 against the Spurs, waiting to get slapped in the face by Sean Elliot and his tippy toes. They barely got past Stoudamire's antics last year to have a chance to win that game. After Elliot's shot, they practically gave up right there. Well, they did. They got swept right out of the playoffs on their own home court.

But this is a different year, a different team and a different attitude. Now, I don't spend much time in the Blazers' locker room. OK, I'll be lucky if I ever set foot in there. But, I'd be willing to bet my entire month's salary that Pippen is the reason the Blazers didn't fold Monday.

They ran into Staples Center last night and went right at the Lakers. They were diving for loose balls, strangling the Lakers offensive game plan and nailing threes like they were the unconscious Lakers' bench in the second quarter of Game 1.

Pippen is the reason. Jackson said he needed to be the leader of this team if it was going to have a shot. Heck, Paul Allen traded six players and took on a \$14 million contract because he knew this man was the missing link.

His shot over Bryon Russel was pretty cool. But anyone can be Johnny on the spot and have a shot fall to win a game.

Pippen's true worth came out tonight. When Jackson said the Blazers needed a leader, he didn't mean someone who could go out and score 30 points a night, make the winning shot and dominate the game with his basketball abilities. The Blazers have 'Sheed to do that.

Jackson is too much of a genius to think a leader only scores. He meant a man who would grab his team by the horns in the locker room and at the hotel and convince them that they are the best team in the NBA. He meant a man who would bring the ball down the floor every possession of the fourth quarter and make sure they burn some clock. He meant a man who would dive for loose balls and single-handedly turn a good Blazers defense into Brutus 'the Barber' Beefcake's sleeper hold.

This series is far from over. If you're impressed with Pippen's leadership skills, just take a look at the Lakers bench and the greatest coach in NBA history. This is going to be a great one, but I can only wonder if Jackson is kicking himself for coaching the other team by accident.

Jonathan Allen is a copy editor for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily reflect those of the paper. He can be reached at jra2970@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Miller remains honest: he hates those Knicks

By Chris Sheridan
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — "I hate them."

Reggie Miller didn't hide his feelings Monday as he spoke about the New York Knicks and the Eastern Conference's other great rivalry.

The Pacers' guard stayed away from the "I respect them" line that had cushioned his remarks a day earlier.

"They always think they're bigger and badder than everyone," Miller said. "And we know they don't give us any respect. So why should I give respect or like someone that doesn't give us respect?"

This will be Chapter 6 of Knicks-Pacers in the postseason, a rivalry that has produced some of the most dramatic NBA theater of the past decade. The star of the show has often been the skinny, outspoken sharpshooter who so relishes playing the villain.

Miller has had some of the best performances of his career against the Knicks, most of them coming at Madison Square Garden.

He scored 25 points in the fourth quarter of Game 5 in 1994, eight points in 11.2 seconds to win Game 1 in 1995, and made a

3-pointer from in front of Spike Lee's courtside seat to force overtime in Game 4 in 1998 and spark Indiana to a series-turning victory.

The Pacers watched Game 7 of the Miami-New York series together Sunday afternoon, then held a practice in the evening. They held another practice Monday while the Knicks returned to New York from Miami and prepared to fly to Indianapolis later in the day.

"Personally, I wanted to play New York, somewhat exorcise some demons," said Miller, who has been playing some of the best playoff basketball of his career during this postseason.

"We have beaten New York, but it's never been in a conference final. Detroit had to get by Boston, Chicago had to get past Detroit. So there's always that team you've got to get by to get to the next level, and New York is that team for us."

Indiana and New York met in the conference finals in 1994 and 1999, the Knicks winning both times. The Pacers won second-round matchups in 1995 and 1998, and the Knicks beat Indiana in the first round in 1993, when their playoff rivalry began.

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