

SPORTS

LaBron James: How Legends are Defined

LaBron James: How Legends are Defined

(AP) — He went to Miami and became a champion.

He went back to Cleveland and won another title.

He went to Los Angeles and now the Lakers are back atop the basketball world.

LeBron James, love him or hate him, is in his own category now. He has led three franchises to NBA titles, something nobody has ever done. His legacy was complete long before the Los Angeles Lakers became NBA champions for the 17th time by beating the Miami Heat and winning the title to cap a season like none other, in a bubble like none other.

But that legacy is just a bit shinier now.

He's got four titles. He's a four-time NBA Finals MVP, the second to win that many. He's done it all with the NBA's biggest target on his back, with every action and every word scrutinized and often



Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James reacts during the first half in Game 6 of basketball's NBA Finals against the Miami Heat Sunday, Oct. 11, in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. (AP photo)

criticized.

James has become the epitome of the independent superstar athlete, something many try to be but few even have a chance of pulling off. He does whatever he wants, whenever he wants, however he wants and makes it work. Bill Russell will forever have more

rings and Michael Jordan will forever be the choice of many as the NBA's greatest player. And that's OK with James, who has forged his own path.

"The game of basketball will pass me by," James said as the title loomed. "There will be a new group of young kids and vets and

rookies throughout the course of this game. So, I can't worry about that as far as on the floor. How I move, how I walk, what I preach, what I talk about, how I inspire the next generation is what matters to me the most."

He's never forgotten that he was once a broke kid from Akron, Ohio. If he's not a billionaire yet, he's trending that way. He's on a Wheaties box now, saying its unveiling last week was "one of the best moments of my life." He founded a school and stays involved with matters there. He's actively trying to get more people, particularly Black people, to vote than ever before.

"I just hope I make my guys proud and that's all that mattered to me," James said. "I make my guys proud, make the fan base proud, my family back home, I can't wait to get back home to them. Akron, Ohio, we did it again — and that's what it's all about."

Oh, if that wasn't enough, he delivered a championship to a Lakers franchise that went 10 years without one and did so in a year when they needed it most,

letting them cry tears of joy after all the tears of anguish that followed the death of Kobe Bryant in a helicopter crash in January.

"I think it's remarkable what LeBron is still doing at his age," Denver coach Michael Malone said of James. "The minutes he's playing, how effective he is on both ends of the floor, and the impact he has on both ends of the floor, his will to win is just incredible."

The 35-year-old James finished this postseason with 580 points; no one at his age had ever done that. He had 184 assists; no one at his age had ever done that. If he's slowing down, he's not showing it; he had 32 points in his first playoff game 14 years ago, he exceeded that six times in this postseason run.

James is 4,148 points behind Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the regular-season scoring lead, meaning he'll have to play at least two more full seasons to reach that mark. Sunday was his 260th career playoff appearance, passing Derek Fisher for the all-time record. He was All-NBA for the 16th time this season, a record. He started his 16th consecutive All-Star Game this season, yet another record.

Coping with
PROBLEM GAMBLING
Through the Holidays

Holidays Ahead!
Now is the time of year when many of us begin to review our options for the upcoming holiday season. And Portlanders have so much to choose from! Pioneer Courthouse Square, the Pittock Mansion, even the Oregon Zoo — all dress themselves up with

twinkle and glamour to help get us into the holiday spirit.

But this year, of course, will be different. As one popular holiday event site bluntly warns, "Most of the events listed here have been postponed or canceled." Trick-or-treating, Thanksgiving gatherings and more — all will probably be very different this year, if they happen at all. Ouch.

A New Holiday Reality
Of course, in all challenges there lies opportunity. For some, this will be a year to try on new traditions or to spend time in quiet reflection. But for many, the upcoming holidays are going to land awkwardly at best. For some, it will be wise to put new coping strategies in place long before December.

This is especially true for those struggling with problem gambling. Without the support systems and predictability of a "normal" holiday season, the urge to bet more than you can afford can quickly become insurmountable.

Free Help is Available
Luckily, here in Oregon, help is available. Through the Oregon Problem Gambling Resource (OPGR), gamblers and those who love them can get support from trained addiction counselors, often

right from home. Treatment is effective. And, best of all, it's free.

If you're worried about how the holidays are going to affect your gambling, reach out. OPGR can help see you through some of the challenges ahead and, hopefully, to a happier new year for us all.

For more information, visit
OPGR.ORG
OREGON PROBLEM GAMBLING RESOURCE