



AP Photo/Nathan Denette

Rapper Drake, left, says something to Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green (23) after the Toronto Raptors defeated the Warriors in Game 1 of basketball's NBA Finals on Thursday in Toronto.

Column: Let's ignore Drake for the rest of the NBA Finals

By PAUL NEWBERRY
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Obnoxious sideline celebrities are as much a part of the NBA as slam dunks and getting away with an extra step or two.

From Jack Nicholson to Spike Lee to Jimmy Buffett, we've grown accustomed to boorish, entitled superstars doing their best to make themselves part of the game.

Welcome to the club, Drake.

The Toronto rapper-slash-superfan has gotten as much air time as anyone on the court with his antics during the playoffs. He mocked Philadelphia's Joel Embiid. He rubbed the shoulders of Raptors coach Nick Nurse during a game. And, after the opener of the NBA Finals, he exchanged some heated words with Golden State's Draymond Green.

Here's an idea: Let's ignore Drake for the rest of what could be a memorable series between the Raptors and Warriors.

That goes for the TV cameras that can't seem to turn away from him. That goes for those of us in the media who can't seem to quit writing about him (I promise, this will be my one and only Drake column). And it most certainly goes for the Warriors, who need to stay focused on the important task at hand — trying to win their fourth championship in five years — when Drake starts hurling his childish taunts.

Green insisted the incident in Game 1 was no big deal.

"You got a question about basketball?" he shot back when a reporter brought it up afterward. "It wasn't really a scuffle because I didn't hit him and he didn't hit me, and I didn't push him and he didn't push me. We talked. We barked a little bit, but I wouldn't necessarily consider that a scuffle."

No doubt looking to move records and build his brand, Drake was in his full troll mode for the start of the first Finals held outside the United States, turning up at his familiar courtside seat in a replica of the

Raptors jersey worn by Dell Curry at the end of his career — a jab, of course, at Dell's son, Warriors star Steph Curry.

After Toronto secured its 118-109 victory, Drake confronted Green on his way off the court. It's not clear all that was said between the two, but Drake could be seen mouthing "trash" as a smiling Curry stepped in to make sure Green went on to the locker room.

With a night to sleep on things, Green was downright diplomatic during the off day Friday. He knows the best way to answer Drake's insults is to play better than he did in Game 1, when he contributed a mere 10 points on 2-of-9 shooting and struggled to contain the Raptors' emerging star, Pascal Siakam.

"He talks and it gets more attention because he's Drake," Green said.

While the NBA certainly loves the off-the-court attention that it celebrity fans generate, Commissioner Adam Silver made it clear that there's a line Drake should not cross — which he clearly did in the Eastern Conference finals by briefly grabbing Nurse's shoulders as the oblivious coach looked up at the scoreboard during Game 4 against the Milwaukee Bucks.

"We certainly appreciate his superfan status, and I know he's beloved in the community of Toronto," Silver said. But, the commission quickly added, "Certainly we don't want fans, friend or foe, contacting an NBA coach during a game. I think that even as Nick Nurse later said, 'I didn't even realize it was Drake or hardly was aware that I was being touched,' and I think those can lead to dangerous situations. You're in the middle of coaching a game and you're completely focused, you obviously don't want somebody who is not on your team touching you."

Better than any other league, the NBA knows how to nurture and protect its superstars — a philosophy that has extended to its most famous fans at least as far back as the days when Nicholson was razzing Los

Angeles Lakers' opponents during the Showtime era, or Lee was getting away with far more than most fans while taunting Reggie Miller during playoff games at Madison Square Garden (yes, kids, the New York Knicks were once a competitive NBA franchise that made the postseason on a regular basis).

Silver said the league spoke with Drake and his management team about avoiding contact with players and coaches, apparently coming to an understanding that he wouldn't do it again.

"Given Drake's relationship to the team, it's not the same as just any fan who happened to be courtside touching a coach," the commissioner said. "But I think that's an absolute bright line that we have to draw. So that's one example and I would also say that I think the issue for the league is that he has this ambassador-type role with the team. So he is viewed a little differently than any fan sitting there. But at the same time, I think there are appropriate lines that shouldn't be cross in terms of how a competing team is addressed or the officials for that matter."

While a case could certainly be made that Drake should be banished to a less-prominent seat during the remaining games in Toronto (as Buffett once was during a Miami Heat contest for cursing at the officials), even Green said that wasn't necessary.

"So many people are complaining about it, like, 'You don't let any other fan do that,'" the Warriors star said. "Yeah, any other fan is just not Drake, so they probably shouldn't be able to do that. That's just kind of how the cookie crumbles. He's worked his (butt) off to be who he is. I think we all know when you do that, you get more leash than others. I think there's so much talk and the NBA needs to ... no, they don't. He worked to be who he is, (so) you should get more leash. I don't mind it. It's fun for me."

The best way for Green and the Warriors to shut Drake up is to win another title.

As for the rest of us, let's just ignore him.

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- Photos only — preferably original (no newspaper clippings or photocopies).
- Photos taken in Umatilla County.
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SCANNING SESSIONS

Saturday, June 22 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Tribal images only
Tamástslikt Cultural Institute
47106 Wildhorse Boulevard, Pendleton

Sunday, June 23 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Echo Bank Building and Historical Museum
230 W. Main Street, Echo

Monday, June 24 3 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Athena Public Library
418 E. Main Street, Athena

Wednesday, June 26 10 a.m. - noon

Umatilla County Historical Society
Heritage Station Museum
108 SW Frazer, Pendleton

Thursday, June 27 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Milton-Freewater Area Historical Society
and Frazier Farmstead Museum
1403 Chestnut Street, Milton-Freewater

Jets interview Seahawks exec Scott Fitterer for GM vacancy

NEW YORK (AP) — The Jets have interviewed Seattle Seahawks executive Scott Fitterer for their general manager job.

The team's announcement Friday that it completed its meeting with Fitterer marked New York's first interview to fill its front-office vacancy.

Fitterer has been the Seahawks' co-director of player personnel alongside Trent Kirchner since 2015. He has worked with Seattle since 2001 and served

in various roles, including as the team's director of college scouting.

Mike Maccagnan was surprisingly fired by Jets chairman and CEO Christopher Johnson on May 15 after four seasons — just 2½ weeks after the GM oversaw the team's draft. Johnson said he was looking to hire someone who was "a strategic thinker" and added that "it's more than a talent evaluation guy."

Head coach Adam Gase

is the acting general manager and has an active role in the Jets' process of finding a new GM.

Joe Douglas, Philadelphia's vice president of player personnel, is expected to interview with New York over the weekend. He is largely considered the favorite to land the gig. Terry Fontenot, New Orleans' director of pro scouting, is also expected to be among the candidates to meet with the Jets.



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