

[Kobe vs Kevin] vs [Magic vs Bird]



The shorts are longer, the venues are different, but the rivalry is still there. The two most storied franchises in the NBA are back at it in the Finals. For a purist and traditionalist like myself, I'm glad to see it. Although I'm not too happy to see Kobe rewarded for his offseason whining and posturing.

This series has all the promise of two champion heavy weights lining up toe to toe. But will it live up to the hype and the match ups of the past?

The Celtics and Lakers will meet up for the first time since the 1987 finals this year. While the Celtics loaded up in the offseason grabbing Kevin Garnett and Ray Allen off the free agent market making them the favorites in the East the Lakers made a mid-season trade to land Pau Gasol saving their season from being surefire first round playoff victims and turning them into instant contenders. Granting Kobe his pre-season wish.

The styles of these two teams are not as diametrically opposed as the matchups in the 80's with Boston's slow it down, grind it out half-court offense and the Lakers "Showtime" fastbreak offense lead by Magic and Worthy. Neither are the personalities and socio-demographic make ups as distinctly different as those teams. The Bird Celtic teams of the 80's represented the blue collar, tough it out mentality of the Boston Southies while Magic's lead Lakers could not have a cast better assembled by Hollywood to show off the run and gun glam ball of the sunny west coast. This year's teams lack those differences with neither team really having an "identity" per se.

While watching these two teams square off in the 80's I always rooted for the Lakers (being a west coast guy, and a Warriors fan, which says it all). But this time around I find myself pulling more for the Celtics. Maybe it's the Irish in me. But maybe it's more about being tired of athletes holding their teams and fans hostage to get what they want. Garnett, Pierce, and Ray Allen have done it the old fashioned way. Hard work, no complaining, and devotion to the game, paying their dues with over a decade (9 years for Pierce) of service a piece without sniffing a championship.

In this era of glamorizing the villains I'm rooting for the good guys. Boston in 6!