

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



433 How the Clippers Beat the Lakers

The Los Angeles Clippers beat the Los Angeles Lakers in the opening game of the 2019-2020 NBA season. It's just one game but there's a story to tell on how it came about. I'm Jerry Roberts and today, we'll tell you how one organization won and the other one lost. That's next on The Extra Point.

You're the biggest brand in pro basketball, the franchise everybody writes and talks about. Your team is worth just shy of \$4 billion and growing at double-digit rates annually.

You're the team of Kobe Bryant, Shaquille O'Neal, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Magic Johnson, James Worthy, Elgin Baylor, Jerry West — and now LeBron James. Sixteen championship banners hang in the rafters of Staples Center in L.A. Yet, you haven't made the playoffs in over five years, and haven't played for the championship in almost a decade.

While the on-court product has been poor, the attendance at Lakers games hasn't changed a bit. Win or lose, the Lakers sell out and make big money. Yet, until this year they failed miserably in the effort to land a second star to pair with now retired Kobe Bryant or LeBron James. One by one, the biggest names would sign deals with other teams.

Some of those young superstars had no interest in coming to L.A. to play second fiddle to Kobe or LeBron. Some were kids when the Lakers glory days were playing out and they were more interested in how the team would win now. Some saw the dysfunction of the franchise, with internal power struggles and poor leadership choices — and likened the team to a dumpster fire. One by one, players who could have revitalized the Lakers, chose instead to sign deals elsewhere.

Across town, the Clippers had rid themselves of their expensive core players who failed to deliver a deep playoff run, and started over.

They assembled a management core as good as there is in the league, including West, the Lakers legendary star and once general manager. The team is a model of stability, with little to no drama surrounding them — whereas drama is the normal state for the Lakers. Again, players around the NBA took notice of that, plus the on-court success the Clippers enjoyed.

At the end of last season, both the Lakers and Clippers pursued Kawhi Leonard, the top free agent. He chose the Clippers, rejecting the dysfunctional fishbowl that had become the Lakers. Then the Clippers traded for another star, Paul George, to pair with Leonard. Both are Southern California natives, both growing up as fans of the Lakers. George had a deal in place to join them two years ago and pulled out.

Adding things up, a lot went into the Clippers beating the Lakers the other day. Mostly, it was about one team being clueless in so many ways; and the other being totally opposite, doing things right and inspiring confidence.

The message for us is, just as John Maxwell says, everything rises and falls on leadership. We can't lean on our successful yesterdays if we want to attract great talent today. We need to show they have legitimate opportunity right now. We also have to eliminate needless trouble in our organization. There are few secrets today. Top prospects have too many ways to find out what kind of place ours is to work, the kind of leaders who will influence their success and personal development. It's time to level up. Now.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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