

SPORTS

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How Jordan created rivals to conquer

By DAN WOIKE
Los Angeles Times

Washington Bullets rookie Don MacLean walked into the Capitol Centre in Landover, Md., on the second night of back-to-back games in 1993. The night before, his team, one of the worst in the East, played a tough game in Chicago, almost upsetting the Bulls thanks to 37 points from second-year guard LaBradford Smith.

One night later, they would play Michael Jordan and the Bulls again on the Bullets' home court.

"As I walked in, the security guard stopped me and told me Jordan had been here since 3:30," MacLean remembered this week. "And I was like, 'Oh (expletive) ...'"

"He was exacting revenge."

Seemingly offended by Smith's audacity to play well against him and the Bulls, Jordan locked his focus on the smaller, younger Bullets guard and went right at him, nearly equalling Smith's best game ever by scoring 36 points ... in the first half.

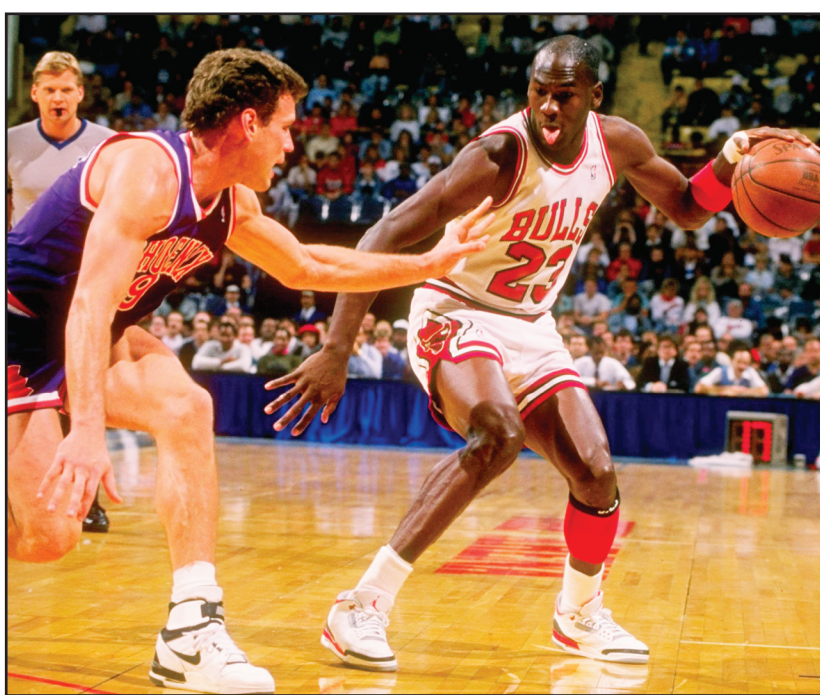
The response was swift, cruel and personal.

"I remember (John Paxson) talking to me about it. Somebody else, maybe Horace (Grant), said, 'Do yourself a favor. When Michael gets the ball, get the hell out of the way.'" Bulls center Will Perdue remembered. "... It was almost like the eulogy was already written, and you were like, 'Oh, ... I feel sorry for that guy.'"

When the latest episodes of "The Last Dance" air tonight on ESPN, Smith will join the list of those who have somehow wronged Jordan, the people who have provided the gasoline to a high-powered engine.

There's Leroy Smith, no relation to LaBradford Smith, the player who made the high school varsity instead of Jordan, who brought him to his Hall of Fame induction. There were Hall of Famers George Gervin, Magic Johnson and Isiah Thomas, the masterminds who allegedly froze Jordan out in his first All-Star game.

Jerry Krause's love for Toni Kukoc led to Jordan and Scottie Pippen trying to humiliate Kukoc, a future teammate, during the 1992 Olympics. We know comparisons to Clyde Drexler led to his famous "shrug" in the NBA Finals. We've heard Jordan say that Charles Barkley winning the 1993 Most Valuable Player award, along with Krause's appreciation for Phoenix guard Dan Majerle, fueled the Bulls' third straight title. Grant leaving for rival Orlando, Nick Anderson getting a steal and Gary Payton being regarded as one of the toughest defenders — they all pushed Jordan too.



Michael Jordan works against the Phoenix Suns' Dan Majerle during a 1989 game in Phoenix.

And for one sort-of-meaningless game in late March 27 years ago, it was LaBradford Smith, a story that perfectly illustrates Jordan's ability to motivate himself.

Smith has been recording "The Last Dance" episodes as they air at his Cincinnati-area home. He likes to skip through the commercials. Through three weeks, his story with Jordan hadn't come up. But then his nephew got a hold of the eighth episode.

"He was like, 'Unc, you know you're in 'The Last Dance?'" And I was like, holy (expletive)," Smith said. "I thought I was gonna just ease by, they were just gonna talk about the championship stuff and all that."

"And now I'm in Episode 8."

The legend goes that after Smith scored 37 against the Bulls he told Jordan, "Mike, good game." And this incensed Jordan.

The reality is Smith didn't seek Jordan out postgame. He ran off the court and tried to get into the showers at the Chicago Stadium as quickly as he could. He was briefly stopped by reporters.

"The shots were just falling for me. ... It happens like that sometimes," Smith told the Washington Post after the game. "Hopefully, it'll happen like that more often. I don't say nothing to (Jordan). Leave him alone. In the first couple of quarters he was helping out a lot and I was getting a more wide-open shot."

It wasn't like Smith was doing his scoring on Jordan, necessarily.

"You know, still to this day, one thing I can do is shoot the ball, you know, especially if I'm getting wide

open shots," he said this week. "I'm not gonna miss all of them."

There wasn't time to celebrate the game, and by opening tip the next night, Smith already knew that Jordan was fuming. Before the game, Jordan's teammates, B.J. Armstrong and Rodney McCray, found Smith stretching and relayed the same news that had MacLean cursing on his way into the building.

"You know, Mike's been here since about 4 p.m. shooting around," they told him. "And he told us to take the day off, so I hope you got to rest last night."

Jordan made his first eight shots, attacking Smith and whoever else had the misfortune of trying to get in his way. He finished with 47 points through three quarters.

"I remember his body language seemed different right from the start. And maybe I was looking for that because I knew he had been there for hours before the game," MacLean said.

MacLean would see that look a couple of summers later when Jordan was hosting the summer's best pickup games on the Warner Bros. lot after he finished filming "Space Jam" for the day. After a few weeks, MacLean decided to check out the games, he got hot, and his team somehow knocked Jordan off the court.

When MacLean returned a few weeks later to play, Jordan instantly said he would be defending MacLean.

"It wasn't like he wouldn't let me score. He wouldn't even let me touch the ball," MacLean said with a laugh. "This sums up the maniacal brain of Jordan."

COMMENTARY

Don Shula and 'Beli-cheat'

By DAVE HYDE
Sun Sentinel

A group of old-time South Florida sports writers and TV types now spread across the country had a Zoom talk Friday about Dolphins Hall of Fame coach Don Shula. Thoughts. Memories. Laughs. A virtual goodbye, of sorts, after his death on Monday.

Amid the storytelling Chuck Dowdle, the former host of "The Don Shula Show," provided more than a story. He gave the reason why Bill Belichick chasing down Shula's all-time win total would have been increasingly uncomfortable in one respect. Meaning, Shula's respect. Meaning, Shula's disrespect of Belichick.

Dowdle didn't mention this. Nor did anyone else. It wasn't the point of the story that came on the TV set in the 1980s. During a break Dowdle asked what Shula's epitaph should read.

"You mean when I die?" Shula said. Death wasn't on his 16-game schedule. He thought a second before saying: "He played by the rules."

That sums his coaching life. There are hundred stories, big and small. Here's one: Fullback Larry Csonka found an Oakland Raiders playbook in the visiting locker room before a big game. Shula threw it in the trash can, saying looking at it would be cheating.

Belichick, meanwhile, was caught videotaping an opponent's signals in Spygate in 2007. The Patriots were in the middle of Deflategate. The NFL is reportedly still reviewing a Patriots television crew videotaping Cincinnati Bengals coaches' signals from last December.

In his home for an 85th birthday story in 2015, Shula publicly mentioned his pejorative for Belichick the first time. My question wasn't pointed that way. I asked Shula if he remembered a young Belichick asking for a job in the mid-1970s to break down game film and save assistant coaches time.

"Beli-cheat?" Shula said then.

I was surprised. "Did you say, 'Beli-cheat?'"

"Yeah, it's Beli-cheat."

He constantly used that pejorative in his later years. Is it fair to Belichick's full timeline? That's a legitimate question. Is it right to quote an aging coach, as some inside the Dolphins asked, who wouldn't let that idea escape his notorious filter in younger years?

That's a question, too. Shula was strenuously careful with words. The worst I remember him

coming down on a peer was when Buddy Ryan was fired by Philadelphia in 1991. Ryan and Shula had a history. The history was of Ryan poking Shula going back to when defensive coordinator Ryan's New York Jets famously upset Shula's Baltimore team in the 1969 Super Bowl.

"I'm normally sympathetic when a coach is fired," Shula said that day.

That's as harsh as Shula publicly attacked peers with words. But in his later years it was different with Belichick.

"He called Belichick 'Beli-cheat,'" former safety Dick Anderson said on CBS Radio in discussing Shula. "He was straightforward. He was, 'This is how we gotta do it, these are the rules, and this is what we're going to follow.' He didn't like, I think, people that didn't follow the rules — and he did."

This would have been a growing topic in coming years as Belichick closes in on Shula's defining record of 347 wins. Belichick has 304 wins. He's 67. If he wins 10 games a year ... well, you do the math. It's do-able. And if Shula was asked about him?

Shula, to be sure, knew of his win total. The Dolphins great public-relations man, Harvey Greene, noticed as Shula crept closer in 1993 to breaking George Halas' record of 325 wins that he really had two more wins. His two wins weren't counted from the NFL's "Runner-Up Bowl" in the 1960s for teams that lost before the championship game.

Green mentioned it to Shula, who had him notify the league. Joe Browne, the NFL's communication director, said that for years Shula had mentioned those games. The league treated them like the Pro Bowl wins. They didn't count.

Belichick's wins count. Everyone will be counting them, too. Shula would have been called about it, too. He wouldn't have backed down, either. It wouldn't have simply been awkward for Belichick in some form. It would have come to define Shula to a new generation.

This next line won't sound right: But there's relief in Shula not watching Belichick break his mark in some form. That we're not going to have to witness the by-play of "Beli-cheat." That it doesn't overtake what Shula accomplished in today's world.

As it is, everyone remembers Shula for winning. And everyone knows how he won. Chisel it in stone:

He Played By The Rules.

Colleges thrown for big losses in sports budget crunch

By DAVE CAMPBELL
AP Sports Writer

MINNEAPOLIS — With the end of this virus-disrupted school year drawing nearer, a predictably bleak financial outlook for major college sports has emerged from the budgeting process.

The West Virginia athletic department announced Friday a projected \$5 million shortfall, with pay cuts for coaches and staffers queued up in response.

There's a \$4 million deficit in the Minnesota athletic department's forecast for the fiscal year ending June 30, and athletic director Mark Coyle said Friday "no doubt, everything is on the table" for cost-savings consideration. High earners there have already agreed to pay cuts and hiring and spending freezes have been enacted, but future measures like travel reduction could also lead to the elimination of sports programs.

In February, before the virus outbreak caused the cancellation of the NCAA basketball tournaments and the corresponding

sharp decrease in revenue, the Gophers were forecasting a \$1 million surplus for the 2019-20 fiscal year thanks in part to a surge in football ticket sales and fundraising related to a strong 2019 season for that team. Now they're likely to finish in the red, Coyle said at a Board of Regents meeting conducted by video conference.

Minnesota's \$123 million budget is the eighth-largest in the Big Ten, trailing in order Ohio State, Michigan, Penn State, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Michigan State and Iowa. The Gophers have 25 varsity teams, the fourth-most in the conference. Both regents during the meeting and reporters in a news conference afterward asked Coyle about cutting sports from an overall program that has enjoyed sustained, national success in sports like volleyball, wrestling and softball. Coyle kept to the script and did not offer many specifics, but clearly such a measure would be a last resort for a department that has long held a strong sense of pride in the diversity of

the Gophers program.

"I would argue we have maximized our revenue better than most across the country," Coyle said.

The Gophers were ahead of the curve in some areas. Three senior staff members departed the university for other jobs and were not replaced. Still, difficult decisions will have to be made in the coming weeks as the projected 2020-21 budget cycle approaches.

The cancellation of the NCAA men's basketball tournament cost schools a collective \$375 million. Minnesota's athletic department is bracing for a \$75 million loss of expected revenue in the worst-case scenario of no fall sports and thus no televised football games. Games played without fans admitted projects to a \$30 million drop in revenue. The best-case scenario of campus reopening in the fall and sports played as scheduled would bring an estimated \$10 million hit. Those figures don't account for reduced expenses in travel and other areas due to the pandemic.

"We're not alone in

this situation," deputy AD and chief financial officer Rhonda McFarland told the board. "There are only a handful of athletic departments that could manage a \$30 million loss and likely very few that would survive \$75 million reduction in revenue."

At West Virginia, athletic director Shane Lyons said he'll take a 10% salary reduction for the next fiscal year. Football coach Neal Brown, men's basketball coach Bob Huggins, women's basketball coach Mike Carey and baseball coach Randy Mazey also will voluntarily take the 10% reduction starting July 1. Coaches and athletic staff earning more than \$100,000 will take a 5% salary reduction, and those making less than \$100,000 will take a 2.5% reduction.

Wisconsin announced it is asking 25 of its highest-earning employees to volunteer for a 15% pay cut over the next six months. That group includes athletic director Barry Alvarez, football coach Paul Chryst and men's basketball coach Greg Gard.

Former Rockford Peaches pitcher dies

BRAINTREE, Mass. (AP) — Mary Pratt, who played for the Rockford Peaches and Kenosha Comets in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, has died. She was 101.

Pratt died on Wednesday. Her nephew, Walter Pratt, told The Patriot Ledger she passed away peacefully at a nursing home.

Pratt pitched in the women's league from 1943-47. The league was profiled in the 1992 movie "A League of Their Own."

She was believed to be the last surviving member of the original 1943 Peaches. The league said in a tweet that Pratt's "stories, her energy will be missed for a long time."