



CHICAGO BULLS

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VOLUME 1- SPECIAL EDITION



"SOME PEOPLE WANT IT TO HAPPEN, SOME WISH IT WOULD HAPPEN, OTHERS MAKE IT HAPPEN."

-MICHAEL JORDAN

STATS

PPG: 30.1 RPG: 6.2 SPG: 2.3
APG: 5.3 BPG: 0.8 TG: 1,072
FGP: .497 3PP: .327 FTP: .835

HIGHLIGHTS:

11 MVP'S

14 ALL-STAR
GAMES

3 TIME STEAL'S
LEADER

ROOKIE OF
THE YEAR

10 TIME SCORING
LEADER

6 NBA TITLES:

1991 1992 1993

1996 1997 1998

1. THE BIGGEST QUESTION FACING THE BULLS IN 2013-14?

Doolittle: Assuming the questions about Derrick Rose's knee have been answered, the next phase of that saga is how much his presence will improve the offense of those around him. It's an unselfish team that lacked shot creators a season ago. Can Rose's return open up the floor for a solid roster of complementary players?

Friedell: Can they stay healthy? It's a question every team faces, but it's more pressing for the Bulls given Rose's return from a knee injury and Joakim Noah's and Luol Deng's struggles through the years to stay on the floor. Rose's status will obviously hover around this team all season, but the health of Noah and Deng is almost as important.

Herbert: Can Rose return to his preinjury form? If he does, and he meshes with this group quickly, Chicago should be scary good at both ends and a legitimate title threat.

McHale: Can the core players stay healthy? The Bulls have won 85 percent of the games that Carlos Boozer, Derrick Rose, Joakim Noah and Luol Deng have played together. And Chicago has the league's best regular-season record against the Miami Heat (7-4) over the past three seasons. If the Bulls can avoid injury this season, anything is possible.

Rivera: Will Rose regain his MVP form? Now that "The Return" is over, the question on everybody's mind in the Windy City is whether or not Rose will play the way he did before tearing the ACL in his left knee. If his first preseason game is an indication, the answer to that question is probably yes.

2. WHO'S THE BULLS' MOST INTRIGUING PLAYER?

Doolittle: Rose is the obvious answer, so I'll step over to the next guy, Jimmy Butler. He's got all-defense potential, and he's shown a knack for making shots. He uses a very low amount of possessions. Can he take a step forward and become a secondary shot creator next to Rose?

Friedell: Jimmy Butler. The coaches love his work ethic and believe he can take the next step in his progression playing alongside Rose. If he continues playing solid defense and improves his long-range shooting the Bulls will be in good shape.

Herbert: Jimmy Butler. Even if Butler is the same guy he was last season, he should be more effective with the open looks provided by Rose's presence. There's also a chance he takes a leap if he continues to gain confidence in his ability to create.

McHale: Derrick Rose. He is the foundation on which everything has been built, but nobody knows whether Rose can regain his MVP form after missing all of last season. For his part, Rose has vowed to be even better. Butler's continuing development will be well worth watching, but all eyes will be on Rose.

Rivera: Jimmy Butler. He emerged as one of the NBA's best 3-and-D players last season, filling in for an injured Deng at small forward and then starting alongside him at shooting guard once the postseason rolled around. The question now is how good can Butler be? That's a storyline to watch.

3. WHAT'S ONE BOLD PREDICTION ABOUT THE BULLS?

Doolittle: Marquis Teague will push Kirk Hinrich down a notch in the rotation, and will usurp his minutes at playoff time. The Bulls love Hinrich, but his metrics are in decline and injuries have taken their toll. During summer league, Teague looked like a player ready for more playing time.

Friedell: Rose finishes in the top five of MVP voting. It shouldn't be much of a surprise given how talented he is, but it seems like all the criticism leveled against him at the end of last season made people forget just how talented the 25-year-old point guard is. He is ready to prove all of his doubters wrong.

Herbert: Chicago will trade Luol Deng. If the Bulls don't want to commit major money to the veteran forward, they'll lose him for nothing next summer in free agency. Deng is integral to Thibodeau's defensive system, so trading him midseason won't be easy. But it might be an unavoidable reality.

McHale: The Bulls will have the best regular-season record in the East. They did it in 2010-11 and 2011-12 when Rose was healthy. Given Thibodeau's inexorable drive, Rose's motivation to prove he's still one of the best players in the league and the team's consistency, I think the Bulls will do it again this season.

Rivera: Chicago will finish with the No. 1 seed in the East. The Miami Heat will pace themselves during the regular season, opening the door for the Bulls -- with a healthy roster again -- to take the top seed for the third time in four seasons.

4. HOW FAR WILL THE BULLS GO THIS SEASON?

Doolittle: Even though their projection is probably for 45-50 wins, I think they'll be closer to the general expectation of 50-55 wins. They'll contend for a 2-seed, and lose in the Eastern Conference finals to Miami.

Friedell: Eastern Conference finals. The Bulls are going to be a great team and should rack up close to 60 wins in the regular season. But they don't have LeBron James and I believe that will be the ultimate difference in the end.

Herbert: Eastern Conference finals. The semis would be a safer pick given the talent of the top-tier teams in the East, but these Bulls are more than capable of advancing past the second round with a healthy Rose.

McHale: Eastern Conference finals. The Heat haven't gone anywhere, the Nets have become a threat and the Pacers are a lurking danger as well. But if Rose regains his form and everybody stays healthy, the Bulls could end up facing the Heat in the East finals. And that's where the season will most likely end.

Rivera: Eastern Conference semifinals. With the Pacers overhauling their bench and the Nets reloading their roster, not to mention the Heat on a quest to three-peat, the Bulls' path to the East finals, let alone the NBA Finals, is going to be a difficult one.



L.A. LAKERS

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VOLUME 1- SPECIAL EDITION



THESE YOUNG PLAYERS ARE PLAYING CHECKERS. I'M OUT THEIR PLAYING CHESS

-KOBE BRYANT

STATS

PPG: 25.5 RPG: 5.3 SPG: 1.5
APG: 4.8 BPG: 0.5 TG: 1,245
FGP: .454 3PP: .395 FTP: .838

HIGHLIGHTS:

3 MVP'S

16 ALLSTAR
GAMES

17 TIME PLAYER
OF THE MONTH

8 BUZZER
BEATERS

2 TIME SCORING
LEADER

5 NBA TITLES:

2000 2001 2002

2009 2010



1. THE BIGGEST QUESTION FACING THE LAKERS IN 2013-14?

Adande: Kobe Bryant's Achilles tendon. When he comes back and how well he plays determines the ceiling for this team. It's strange to have Bryant be the variable after so many years of serving as the constant.

McMenamin: Can their core of Bryant, Pau Gasol and Steve Nash stay healthy? Natural aging aside, if those three can play at 80 percent of the standard they set in their Hall of Fame careers and actually play in 80 percent of the Lakers' games, then L.A. will be OK. If Bryant's Achilles or Nash's ankle and back or Gasol's knees limit their production or availability or both, then it could be a long season.

Shelburne: Health. You don't need to hire an actuary to tell you this roster is injury-prone. The Lakers are counting on bounce-back seasons from Gasol, Kaman, Bryant, Steve Blake and Nash. You have to figure they'll stay healthier than last season -- in an ascension-to-the-mean kind of way -- but the odds of all of them staying healthy all season aren't favorable.

Soriano: How good will Bryant be? When he returns is obviously also crucial, but how well he plays when he does get back on the floor can mean the difference between challenging for a playoff spot or being in the hunt for a high lottery pick.

Verrier: What's the next step? All signs point to a full-on, tear-it-down rebuild, but a cocktail of hubris, feeling beholden to Kobe and Buss family drama will keep that from happening. So, what now? Trade Gasol? Fire Mike D'Antoni? Pray for a 2014 free agent? Play for a lottery pick? Re-sign Bryant at a discount next summer? All reasonable options, but all half-measures.

2. WHO'S THE LAKERS' MOST INTRIGUING PLAYER?

Adande: Young. No one's embracing the extra shots afforded by Bryant's absence as much as Swaggy P. And in his mind there's no drop-off. The Lakers can actually use that dose of (over)confidence these days, since no one else seems capable of giving the team a persona while Bryant sits.

McMenamin: Kobe. It's always Kobe. He keeps the Lakers not only relevant, but fascinating. When will he come back? What level will he be able to perform at? How will he fit in D'Antoni's system without Howard? How will he respond if he's lost a step? How will he take it if the Lakers end up tanking? What kind of extension will the Lakers offer him if it is a tough season for him?

Shelburne: Gasol. He's back to being featured in the Lakers' offense like he was during their back-to-back championship run, he's developing a nice chemistry with Kaman and Nash, and he's in a contract year with something to prove. If he stays healthy-ish, he's all set up for another All-Star season. If he doesn't, the Lakers could look to move him at the trade deadline to get under the luxury tax threshold.

Soriano: Kobe's the obvious answer, but I'll go with Nash. The former two-time MVP turns 40 in February and is coming off an injury-riddled season. If he can resemble the Nash of old, the Lakers' ceiling goes up significantly. But if he's just

an old Nash, he may end up a reserve by season's end.

Verrier: Kobe. Always and forever. He's a fading gunslinger waging war not only against age and science, but against a game that once so cherished his heroics but now largely dismisses them in this age of efficiency. His empire is crumbling around him, and his demanding ways and millstone contract will likely ward off any of the help he needs to keep his ring quest going. How will he respond? (Spoiler: aggressively.)

3. WHAT'S ONE BOLD PREDICTION ABOUT THE LAKERS?

Adande: They'll make the playoffs. What used to be the safest prediction in sports now counts as a minority opinion. But I believe they'll emerge from the pool of the Mavericks, Blazers, Nuggets and Timberwolves to grab one of the last two playoff spots in the West. They still can score (even if they're not the best at stopping other teams from scoring).

McMenamin: Young will have the best season of his career. After being buried on Philadelphia's bench last season, Young finds himself in a perfect situation. He'll get to do his best Mamba impression while Bryant is out (he took 15 more shots than any other Laker through the first six preseason games) and D'Antoni will give him plenty of freedom to tap into his limitless offensive potential.

Soriano: They'll make the playoffs. Smart people predict a campaign with fewer than 40 wins and a steep drop into the abyss of hoping for lottery luck. But I see them having better health, a top-10 offense and a middle-of-the-pack defense, which will be just enough to snatch the eighth seed.

Verrier: Bryant will come back sooner than later.

Quite the tepid sports take at this point, but consider how Kobe spent his summer: being dissed by Dwight, sitting idly while the Lakers signed only middling veterans, watching Nick Young take 13 shots a game, changing his Twitter avatar to a grizzly bear like a total weirdo, and flying to Germany mid-preseason for PRP treatment while STILL RECOVERING FROM AN ACHILLES TEAR. An opening-night return wouldn't surprise me at this point.

4. HOW FAR WILL THE LAKERS GO THIS SEASON?

Adande: The same place they went last season: the first round of the playoffs. If they do grab a low seed there's no favorable matchup for them among the upper-tier teams in the West. That doesn't mean they couldn't provide any fascinating matchups. How about Lakers-Clippers? Or Lakers-Rockets? Just a reminder that even if the Lakers aren't great, they can still make for great discussion.

McMenamin: First-round exit, just like last season. They'll finish seventh or eighth in the West if health is on their side (and after all the bad luck of last season, they deserve some things to go their way in that department), but it's tough to see them pulling off an upset over one of the top seeds at that point.

Verrier: The road to the playoffs is very shaky but if all goes well, they might just make it to the second round taking in that Bryant's health is top notch.