

Los Angeles Lakers

Andrew Bynum vs. Dwight Howard: Is Lakers' Bynum a Better Big Man Than Howard?

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At first glance, there is no legitimate comparison between big men Dwight Howard and Andrew Bynum.

Considered the best center in the NBA, Orlando's Dwight Howard is a five-time All-Star, a four-time member of the All-NBA first team and a three-time Defensive Player of the Year.

Andrew Bynum of the Lakers, on the other hand, has failed to make the All-Star team, has put up lower averages across the board and has played in more than three-quarters of a season only once in his six-year career.

Beneath the stats and the accolades, though, Howard and Bynum appear comparable in terms of skill level.

Even though he is younger, Bynum's fundamental skills are far ahead of Howard's at this point, and this edge translates to both sides of the ball.

Offensively, Bynum has a more polished and well-rounded offensive game than does Howard, even with less explosion and athleticism.

The Lakers big man has a consistent jump shot out to 15 feet and can use both of his hands to finish at the rim. Over the years, he has gotten better in the low post and has become a solid threat to score when the ball is in his hands.

Though the scoring stats point to Howard as a stronger offensive weapon, for all of his physical gifts, Howard's game lacks the awareness and savvy exhibited by Bynum.



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Mainly scoring off dunks and putbacks, Howard cannot play with his back to the basket and has failed to develop a reliable offensive move seven years into his NBA career. He does a poor job of protecting the ball, leading to costly turnovers.

His offensive game lacks any semblance of finesse, either in terms of touch around the basket, proper footwork in the low post or shooting from beyond the paint.

Moreover, the Superman-led Magic are virtually doomed to fail in close games because his scoring presence is largely negated both because of his penchant for committing fouls and because of his subpar free-throw shooting.

From a defensive standpoint, Howard is undoubtedly a stalwart, rightfully garnering the NBA's Defensive Player of the Year award the past three seasons. However, compared to Bynum, his man-to-man defensive skills are lacking.

Howard remains a great team defender and the league's best at slowing slashers at the rim, but he has demonstrated poor mechanics and footwork when forced to defend opponents one-on-one.

Conversely, under the tutelage of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Bynum understands the principles of solid

man-to-man defense in the paint. He possesses excellent defensive footwork and uses his length to disrupt opponents.

Granted, health remains a huge factor, and Howard dominates Bynum in this area. Howard has missed only seven games in his seven-year career, whereas Bynum has missed 28, 17, 32 and 47 games respectively since becoming a starter—124 games in four seasons.



Christian Petersen/Getty Images

As a whole, these comparisons notwithstanding, the most accurate conclusion is that Bynum and Howard are two legitimate centers and have different skills and playing styles.

After all, former Lakers coach Phil Jackson was never fond of comparing Bynum and Howard in terms of skill level, preferring to claim that they are simply different players.

“It’s a difference in just their physical makeup,” Jackson said. “I think Drew has great hands, great shooting touch, [but] doesn’t have that strength and quickness that Howard has, that physical makeup.”

“They use their particular characteristics to their advantage to play basketball right now,” Jackson said. “They are just different.”



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