

Los Angeles Lakers

L.A. Lakers: 2009 Draft-Day Trade of Toney Douglas to the Knicks a Huge Mistake?

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By
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The 2009 NBA Draft was an uneventful one for the Los Angeles Lakers, who traded away No. 29 pick Toney Douglas to the New York Knicks for \$3 million and a second-round pick in 2011.

Two years later, it appears that the G.M. Mitch Kupchak made a major mistake, given the team's seemingly perpetual point guard woes.

Indeed, the 6'2" Douglas would have been the perfect point guard to unseat the over-the-hill Derek Fisher.

In an offense designed to have Kobe Bryant serve as the primary distributor, Douglas' minimal ball handling would have been well-suited for the Lakers.

Not only can Douglas fulfill point guard duties, but he is also a very explosive offensive player who has lit up Madison Square Garden more than a few times. Deadly from three-point range, Douglas also finishes well at the basket and possesses a solid mid-range game. He can create his own shot, a role currently only occupied by Bryant and Lamar Odom for the Lakers.

On the other side of the ball, Douglas takes pride in his defense, and is easily the closest thing to a lock-down defender on Mike D'Antoni's team. His grittiness would have been an instant upgrade over defensively challenged veterans such as Derek Fisher and Steve Blake.



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In fact, would L.A. have even needed to sign Blake a year later if they had had Douglas?

Needless to say, Douglas' point guard chops, spot-up shooting, and energy on defense would have shored up each of the three biggest weaknesses of the current Lakers team.

However, the Lakers drafted Douglas with full intention of trading him to the Knicks—New York had told the Lakers' front office to draft him to complete the trade. As a result, there is no way of knowing whether Kupchak would have selected Douglas sans the trade.

Additionally, D'Antoni's quick-strike offense probably overstates his offensive prowess, and so his numbers likely would have been lower on the Lakers, especially considering then-coach Phil Jackson's reluctance to call upon younger players.

Most importantly, though, the trade was more than shipping Douglas to the Knicks for extra disposable income in owner Jerry Buss' wallet. The money was used, in effect, to retain the versatile Odom and to bring a much-needed defensive player in Ron Artest.

The trade also helped the team enter the season with only 14 players under contract, giving them flexibility to reserve roster spots for draft picks, such as Devin Ebanks last year and possibly Darius Morris and Andrew Goudelock this year. Besides, Goudelock was selected with the pick received in the Douglas trade.

The bottom line is that while Douglas would have undoubtedly helped the Lakers the past two years, a smart decision in 2009 still remains a smart decision now, regardless of the outcome.



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