

Los Angeles Lakers

L.A. Lakers: How the Team's Three-Peat Chances Depend on Andrew Bynum

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By
Daniel Lewis
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Since he entered the league, Lakers center Andrew Bynum has been discussed in deals for big-name players, such as Carmelo Anthony or Chris Bosh, at the trade deadline.

Yet, the Lakers have held onto the young seven-footer, despite the voices of fans clamoring to send him away.

The Lakers' current seven-game win streak shows exactly why the Lakers were intent on keeping the budding big man.

Kobe Bryant has brought his spectacular play each night, but the Lakers' rough stretch before the All-Star game showed that L.A. needed someone else to step up.

With Bynum's energy on defense, the Lakers have rediscovered the stellar play that earned them back-to-back NBA titles.

It took about five months, but the 23 year old looks to have completely shaken off any remaining rust from his most recent injury. He looks comfortable with his knee, which has translated into confidence in his game.

It's unfortunate, though, that Bynum's impact is rarely recognized. His stats are not remarkable, but his impact on the defensive end makes beating the Lakers a tough task.

The last seven games have shown that Bynum knows his job and that job is to be the anchor of the defense.

What would you have done as the Lakers' GM?

- Traded for Jason Kidd in 2007
- Traded for Chris Bosh in 2010
- Traded for 'Melo in 2011
- Held onto Bynum Submit Vote vote to see results

When the Lakers finally ended their inexplicable losing streak to the Charlotte Bobcats on Friday, Bynum was the linchpin of a stout L.A. defense. His six blocks and 17 rebounds were impressive, but hardly capture his dominance.

He was aggressive, quick and downright daunting, visibly intimidating Charlotte's ballhandlers, who for long stretches simply abandoned dribble penetration for fear of Bynum's presence.

Indeed, Bynum has demonstrated how he can dominate a game without touching the ball much on offense.

"I'm just being active defensively," Bynum said. "I can really, really help the team there by erasing mistakes that we make defensively."

Hall of Fame coach Phil Jackson was very impressed by the defense the Bynum is anchoring.

"Defensively, we stayed pretty true," Jackson said. "A lot of blocked shots, a lot of rebounds."

During the Lakers' rout against the Western conference-leading Spurs on Sunday, Bynum swallowed up nearly everything the Spurs tried to get around the hoop.

He collected more than 10 rebounds in the first quarter alone, in which the Spurs scored a measly 13 points. In all, Bynum scored only four points on 2-2 shooting, but posted a monstrous defensive performance with 17 rebounds and three blocked shots in only 26 minutes.

Though Bryant and Pau Gasol get a lot of recognition as L.A.'s top offensive weapons, it is Bynum who has helped the Lakers tower over the rest of the league since the All-Star break.

He has shown that L.A.'s front office was wise to keep him, despite repeated opportunities to ship him out in exchange for a jersey-selling name.

A seven-foot behemoth who can defend the paint, rebound well and score inside is a key piece of a championship team.

Bynum's recent defensive dominance has made the Lakers again look like the team to beat come playoff time.



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Who Is the MVP for the Lakers? Hint: you can use arrow keys to navigate through this channel.