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NBA Trade Rumors: L.A. Lakers Should Trade Andrew Bynum, Not Pau Gasol



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Trade scenarios for L.A. centered around Pau Gasol are [in vogue right now](#). The consensus in Lakerland is that the much-maligned Spaniard must be shipped out this offseason after the L.A. Lakers fell in the Western Conference Semifinals for the second time as many years. Names such as Carlos Boozer, Andre Iguodala, and Josh Smith are being heavily discussed as pieces in exchange for Gasol in potential trades. It only takes a quick glance at such names to see that Pau's trade value is at an all-time low right now.

Indeed, moving Gasol does not appear to land any group of players that would go toe-to-toe with the Big 3 in Miami or [Oklahoma](#) City. The Lakers need another certified All-Star instead of one of the aforementioned second tier players who might barely make the All-Star team in a good year.

Lakers general manager Mitch Kupchak would be wise to heed the stock-trading adage "buy low, sell high" by shipping out the team's other big man: Andrew Bynum.

Longtime considered as the foundation of the Lakers' future, Bynum would fetch a number of building blocks for the franchise in return. Gasol's name might be popular in the rumor mill, but Bynum has the higher trade value.

Bynum did the Lakers' front office a favor this offseason by increasing his own trade value with a breakout season that culminated in his first All-Star appearance. In his seventh [NBA](#) season, the center posted career-high averages in nearly every category. Most importantly, he stayed healthy for the full season.

As a result, fans are excited to see what Bynum has in store for Los Angeles in the coming years. They see in Bynum the potential to grow into a dominant center in the mold of former Laker great Shaquille O'Neal.

Therein lies the reason why Bynum should be traded. He has the trade value of a MVP-type player, but much of this value comes from potential instead of performance. Minus the first playoff game this season in which he hosted a block party in his L.A.'s paint with double-digit sendbacks, Bynum failed to put his imprint on this Lakers team in the postseason.

Moreover, Bynum does not appear to be the centerpiece that the Lakers can build around in the future. Issuing dangerous elbows, avoiding team huddles, and parking in handicapped parking spaces are a just few examples that encapsulate his immaturity and lack of leadership and commitment to the game.

These are the types of shortcomings that will not help him lead L.A. to championships after Kobe Bryant finally leaves the limelight.

And who's to say that Bynum would actually stay healthy, even just for next season, much less the rest of his career? At age 24, he is already having significant knee problems-he is visiting the same German physician that operated on a player that is a full decade older than him in Kobe.

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Whereas Gasol would only net Boozer, Iguodala, or Smith, Bynum would command truly elusive All-Star players such as Dwight Howard, Rajon Rondo, or Deron Williams, all of whom are franchise-type players whom Bynum might never reach.

Indeed, Bynum should be moved even if for someone other than Howard. The Lakers' focus must be on fielding a championship contending team for the next two years while preserving as much available cap space for 2014.

The Lakers have a two-year window in which to compete due to the heavy contracts of Bryant and Gasol handicapping the team's maneuverability and financial flexibility. Alongside the Mamba, a duo of Gasol and Rondo or Williams is equally good, if not better than, a combination of Bynum and Iguodala or Smith for the next couple of years.

The only strong case to be made for holding onto Bynum is his youth. At age 24, Bynum would serve as the cornerstone for the post-Kobe era, leaving the team with a better foundation.

This reasoning, though, ignores the potential for the Lakers to land a new cornerstone player in the loaded 2014 [free agent](#) market, which might end up featuring marquee players such as Dwayne Wade, LeBron James, Carmelo Anthony, Chris Bosh, Dirk Nowitzki, and Amar'e Stoudemire.

Furthermore, the perception among NBA fans is that Gasol's pure basketball ability has begun to decline as he continues past the wrong side of age 30. In reality, though, Pau's trade value has declined more than his actual play.

Although Gasol has deservedly drawn sharp criticism for his play that contributed to early playoff exits in the past two years, he is still the most skilled pivot man in the game. He will likely play at a high level for another few years because he remains so crafty, skilled, and fundamentally sound.

In fact, even though he will be one year older next season, Pau's game is actually more likely to improve sans Bynum. If his frontcourt mate is traded, Gasol would slide into the 5 position, where he led the Lakers to three consecutive championship runs while Bynum nursed injuries.

"You know, Andrew is an All-Star center. He was-did a wonderful job," said former coach Phil Jackson. "But, you know, it-what happened was, [it took Pau out of his game](#). And it took the team away from some of their game. So they changed the style dramatically."

Only in the last two years did Gasol primarily man the power forward position, and the season ended with a thud both times. Therefore, the apparent decline in Gasol's game can be plausibly attributed to playing out of position and roaming on the outside instead of down low.

If the Lakers' front office is smart, they should refrain from pulling the trigger on a less than spectacular trade involving Gasol. Making a trade solely for the sake of ridding the team of Gasol would be a mistake.

Kupchak has long been one of the best front-office executives in the league by making smart deals that increase the talent on his team. Here's hoping he avoids the pressure to just give Gasol away and ring in another year of Lakers mediocrity.

1. Josh Benjamin. "[Pau Gasol Trade Rumors: Latest Word on Hawks, Grizzlies, Rockets and More](#)", Bleacher Report.

2. "[Jackson: Increased Role For Bynum Took Gasol Out Of His Game](#)", A Basketball Jones.

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why?

Smith has slightly better stats across the board. Smith is younger. Smith plays a much more athletic game.

also,

After the last Olympic run, Gasol "ran out of gas" by the end of the 1st round of the playoffs.

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