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Orlando Magic

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At long last the peculiar dance that has been the Orlando Magic coaching search has ended with the personable and hard-nosed Chuck Daly being named the new head coach of this team which is still in search of an identity. Whether or not Chuck can accomplish this formidable task remains to be seen, and if he can not, the explanation will be simple. He will be declared too old for the job.

Certainly Daly, at age 67, has the resume the Magic are looking for, even though he is not Phil Jackson. In the neighborhood of \$5M worth of the Amway fortune enticed Daly out of retirement and into the O-rena. Daly's main problem is that Shaquille is no longer here, something Brian Hill never seemed to figure out. The Magic are now a good team, not a great team. Magic fans must come to realize that, Magic players must come to know who and what they are, and the forging of a new identity which began in the last three games of the Miami playoff series, must continue.

What Daly can bring to the Orlando Magic is a vast knowledge of the game, an understanding of players, and an ability to cope with the national media. The addition of Julius Erving to the Magic and DeVos team further enhances the public relations arm of the organization, although it might have been more helpful if Dr. J. was still lacing 'em up.

In an interview this week Dennis Rodman said that he would not go to play for his old friend Chuck Daly in Orlando, because there are too many babies in Orlando who suck pacifiers. Michael Jordan said that the Magic franchise seems to be in disarray, but that Daly can restore its credibility. This perhaps more than anything is what the Magic need at the moment, but nothing is going to change dramatically in the win column unless this team can add and subtract some of its personnel and eliminate the pacifiers.

As for the front office, again we have been treated to a round of Kremlin watching that rivaled most anything from the darkest days of the Stalinist period. The GM seemed to have mastered Magic-speak, the current head coach became a non-person, and prospective coaches seemed to be appearing and disappearing in mirrors.

Like Brian Hill before him, Richie Aduvato was left twisting in the wind. Unlike Hill, Richie twisted for considerably longer than three days. During the weeks since the end of the season while all the coaching speculation went on, Richie Aduvato was never mentioned as the likely head coach. In fact his name was seldom uttered in connection with the team by his "good friend" John Gabriel.

In one of the most disingenuous moments of the press conference called to announce Daly's signing, Richie's existence was finally acknowledged when Gabriel referred to Aduvato as his "good friend." It is now a certainty that Richie has no need for enemies.

In one of those grand moments of humiliation worthy of the gratuitously arrogant, John Gabriel called his "good friend" on Sunday and asked him to come to the office. With no one left on the horizon for this job, Richie went to One Magic Place thinking he would be offered the head man's position. Bob Hill had withdrawn his name, Chuck Daly had withdrawn his name, Phil Jackson seemed to be backing away, if indeed he was ever serious about this job, and so Richie was ready to fulfill his dream. When he arrived his "good friend" John Gabriel pulled the plug, cut the rope, stuck in the knife, and Richie was left gasping for air as he was told Daly was the man.

According to Richie, Daly came back into the picture on Thursday or Friday, and on Sunday he was hit over the head with the news. Well, at least his "good friend" no longer kept him twisting in the wind.

On Tuesday it was announced that Magic Owner Boss DeVos had undergone a successful heart transplant in London. John Gabriel should be next.

Among those of us who were surprised by all these developments were the NBA reporters and columnists at The Orlando Sentinel and other local media types, who apparently had no clue what had been going on at One Magic Place late in the week. Sunday morning my newspaper contained not a word about Chuck Daly, and Sunday afternoon none of the local stations I was watching interrupted their sports programming with any big news. By early Sunday evening NBC and the other national sports networks were reporting Daly as the new Magic coach. It seemed like deja vu all over again as in the firing of Matty Goukas, a story broken on ESPN rather than locally.

John Gabriel must have a large number of his "good friends" working in the local media, as he kept them so well informed on the Magic coaching situation. Of course, it was Sunday, and nothing newsworthy ever happens on a Sunday--except in Hawaii.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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