



Things Done Changed

By Nathan Lee Adamus

The NBA is changing at a feverish pace. Gone are the one-dimensional point guards who only run the offense. Gone are the pure shooters who spend most of their time glued to the three-point line. Gone are the days when you could easily distinguish between a point guard and a shooting guard. If you want to succeed in today's league where slow and steady never wins the race, you better be quick and aggressive... and you damn sure better be able to score.

When Allen Iverson entered the league, NBA fans didn't know what to think. This was a guy whose job was to run the offense. Instead of doing what he was paid to "practice," he was jacking up threes and testing 7-footers using his 165-pound frame. His first year in the league he averaged 23.5 points per game while putting up almost 20 shots a night. Based on the media outcry alone, you'd assume that the only thing he was good at was scoring. But don't get it twisted. He also averaged 7.5 assists per game.

His assist average dipped to about 4.5 a game for a few years, but it also spiked at 7.9 in 2004-05. In fact, in four seasons between 2004 and 2008, his lowest average was 7.1 APG. In 2006-07, when he averaged 33 points a game, he also averaged 7.4 assists. Not exactly the stats you'd expect from a guy who wasn't sharing the rock.

Today, those numbers would have NBA fans crowning Iverson the greatest point guard ever. But when Iverson entered the league, the climate was different. Instead of praise, he encountered frequent crit-

icism. "He was ruining the game." "He wasn't passing." "He was shooting too much."

Well take a look at the stats of today's guards, and you'll discover that most of them average around 5 assists per game, excluding of course Chris Paul and John Wall. His 6.2 APG average for his career is on par with Curry, Teague, Rose and Lillard (to name a few). It's actually higher than Lowry, Thompson and Wade. But you don't hear people complaining that Steph Curry is taking too many shots. That's because this type of guard play is now standard.

During his 17 years in the league, AI was the red-headed stepchild of NBA point guards. Truth is he was simply ahead of his time—a baller sent to the past to guide the next generation of guards to the future. He's the Godfather of the modern ball handler: fast, unpredictable, slippery, cocky, valiant, unapologetic and plastered with tattoos. Perhaps he always had "the answer," we just weren't ready for it.

The older generations look at today's guards like they're an abomination. They miss the days of Magic, Stockton, Gary "The Glove" Payton, Oscar "The Big O" Robertson, Mark Jackson, Jason Kidd and Steve Nash. If the election year social media posts aren't a good reminder of why this new breed of guard is frowned upon, let's just say that most humans don't enjoy change.

If you're one of those salty NBA purists, you can shut off the TV and complain all you want, but you're going to miss something exciting. So "let go of your feelings." The future is now. The changing of the guard has begun.

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