

Jermaine O'Neal Responds To The Very Pointed Statements Made About His Character

Written by

Friday, 25 January 2013 08:47 -



To criticize Jermaine O'Neal for his age, ceiling or his ability to carry a team anymore is fair when assessing the off-season move the [Phoenix Suns](#) made this past summer to bring him here. That is in bounds.

O'Neal is north just north of 34 and his better days are behind him, as it is for most players that have dedicated 17 years to the sport. What he lacks in on court impact he makes up for with a veteran presence for a team that is void of those types of leaders with pedigree and experience after the departures of [Steve Nash](#) and [Grant Hill](#) . That is the role O'Neal signed up for with this team, to help bring along young players like

[Markieff Morris](#)

and

[Marcin Gortat](#),

to add a certain level of toughness to them on the court.

In the midst of the melodrama this past week arduous disgruntled "shock jock" radio hosts took to the air to vent their frustration towards the team in part by attacking the off-season acquisition of O'Neal and his character.

"To me that is crazy," O'Neal told me as this was the first time he was hearing about the comments. "Everything about this week is assumptions. Until you know exactly what it is, how can you speak about it?"

This week he has had to go to great lengths to defend, not only the paint, but himself, his illness (covered [here by Dave King](#)) and now his character.

Let's talk about the culture, because you want to change the culture, but it was these guys that are in charge right now that brought in Jermaine O'Neal who was a part of the worst culture team in the history of the NBA and brought in [Michael Beasley](#) . It was your general manager

Jermaine O'Neal Responds To The Very Pointed Statements Made About His Character

Written by

Friday, 25 January 2013 08:47 -

who wants to change the culture of the team, but on one hand he is bringing in guys that aren't Steve Nash and Grant Hill. Guys who have questionable character. -- John Gambadoro 620 KTAR Radio Host

Those were pointed words that are not hard to misinterpret. As the conversation continued, he put a finer point on his opinion of the former [Indiana Pacers](#) All-Star: "Jermaine O'Neal was the leader of the worst culture of any NBA team in the history of the NBA."

Throughout his career O'Neal is accustomed to defending the paint and his teammates, but other than one instance where unique blend of people and circumstance allowed fans and Pacers players to initiate in a brawl now known as the "Malice in the Palace" he is being referenced to as a bad character guy.

In that situation it was the imperfect storm where [Stephen Jackson](#) , Ron Artest and [Jamaal Tinsley](#) who all have had off the court issues that were in some manner tracked with mug shots, suspensions, arrests, fines, etc. Should simply being the best player on that team be the smoking gun to his character?

"Character? We had issues just like every other team," emphatically stated O'Neal. "One person isn't responsible for everybody. We are grown men, our responsibility is to come in and be as professional as we can possibly be, do our job, go home and lead our community. That is our job."

During his career O'Neal won the [Kia NBA Community Assist Award](#) four times for his work in the community.

One thing I say about people is that they speak from their seats in their houses. You take Peyton Manning, who, his team had all sorts of problems with domestic violence, with DUI's, and do you say the same thing about him? (Long Pause) So why would you say it about me? Same people that said that, ask them how many times I won the community assist award? Pumped millions of dollars of my money into the community, ask them about that. It is easy to sit down on your couch or where ever you are at and determine who this person is when you

Jermaine O'Neal Responds To The Very Pointed Statements Made About His Character

Written by

Friday, 25 January 2013 08:47 -

never even met him before. -- Jermaine O'Neal

Speculation, sources and sensationalism are elements of that are unavoidable in this day and age, they are only going to get worse. They are perpetuated by emotion. That can make or break a person depending on the situation and with thousands to millions of listeners those comments carry weight for a player that most fans do not know much about.

Sources come forth to give information, but a lot of time they are unreliable.

"Listen, here is how I feel about sources," stated an agitated, but smiling O'Neal. "Nine times out of 10 the sources are wrong. If you are a source why can't you say who you are?"

They cannot say who they are because usually they are within an organization and if the team knew they were pumping out info to the media they would be done, but I get the general sentiment. In regards to his time in Boston, where it was said the team was "excited for him to leave" and "only got better after he left" there was more to that than meets the eye.

"Boston was a situation where I tore my wrist taking a charge, at the time leading the league in taking charges. I gave up my body every single night and tore my wrist. Tell them to talk to Danny Ainge, get the real, if these sources are saying something tell them to call the people that really matter. Danny Ainge is one of my favorite people in the world and I guarantee he won't say anything different. No issues. I have never had an issue with the team. I came in, did my job, and went home."

In the end O'Neal understands the sensationalism, after all he is a 17-year veteran who has been in this circus for years. This week has been a new kind of circus adding more rings to the three with all the drama and "sources" reporting what he has called "flat-out lies."

"People call in and live off of these radio shows and that is there chance to get their five minutes of fame and say what they want to say, but at the end of the day I live what I say. My

Jermaine O'Neal Responds To The Very Pointed Statements Made About His Character

Written by

Friday, 25 January 2013 08:47 -

history states that. Before they say anything negative about me, look at my history. All the people that are talking from the couch, that is OK. It doesn't bother me, but if they ever want to know the truth, just ask me or tell the source to ask the real people that run the show."

There is no question that the "Malice in the Palace" will always haunt him, but one moment where he was not the antagonist should not define Jermaine O'Neal the person or even the basketball player. He is not that 27-year-old in a defensive stance as fans rushed the court in pandemonium. He is a seasoned vet of 17 years on the court and 34 years of life off the court. He knows that it is about more than basketball for him now.

"More than anything, it ain't about sports. I am a father, 13 and 6, that is what matters to me. So when my kids look at TV and tell me what their dad is doing I better be a great representative of my kids. The first thing on my list is that I do the things necessary so when tell my daughter you work hard and be the best person you can be, I can't come out and do anything differently, because I wouldn't be a good leader."