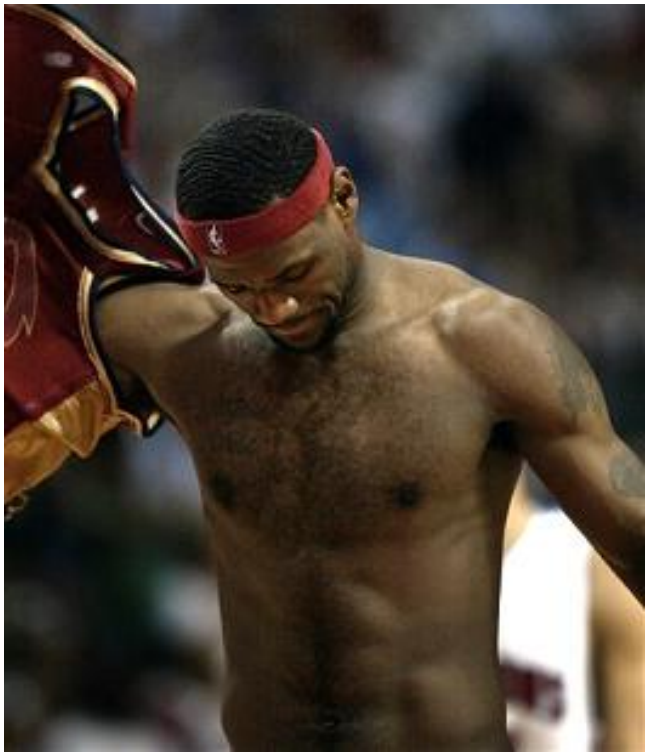
The issue: James walking off the floor after Cleveland was eliminated by Orlando in the Eastern Conference finals. James didn't shake hands with the Magic stars, he didn't offer any hugs, he didn't whisper the following in Dwight Howard's ear: "Beat L.A., Dwight. Beat L.A." When it comes to handshake-gate, Sam Amico sides with LeBron James. And he talks about why in his latest piece for us.



When it comes to handshake-gate, I have to side with LeBron James.

The issue: James walking off the floor after Cleveland was eliminated by Orlando in the Eastern Conference finals. James didn't shake hands with the Magic stars, he didn't offer any hugs, he didn't whisper the following in Dwight Howard's ear: "Beat L.A., Dwight. Beat L.A."

Big deal, who really cares and can't we all just get on with life?

Personally, I didn't even notice that James walked off the floor without so much as a congratulatory wave to the Magic bench.

As somebody who's lost many times in life, I appreciated James' pain. And I know when things don't go my way ... whether it's sitting at a red light that seems to take forever, paying $75 for restaurant food that tastes awful, or any other day-to-day unpleasantries ... well, I know I don‘t always handle it like I should. But I do know what it's like to feel rejected and dejected. We all do.

But when was the last time you congratulated someone who beat you out for a promotion at work? Or how about the guy who got the apartment that you really, really wanted?

If you did give the old "Way to Go, Joe," to your victorious competitor, did you do it the very second they had won? Did you offer a pat on the back as they celebrated in your face? Or did you wait until later that night? Or the following week? Or did you just never do it all?

And I don't want to hear about sportsmanship or how LeBron has never won a championship, blah, blah, blah.

Sportsmanship isn't defined as kissing an opponent's butt after they kicked yours. It's acting like a civil human being during the course of a competition, maintaining your composure despite the fact emotions are extremely high.

Shaking an opponent's hand after a game is good sportsmanship. But not doing it doesn't make it bad.

Now, none of this is to say the Cavaliers should get off scot-free.

My biggest problem involving their non-basketball shenanigans this season was something NBA writer Adrian Wojnarowski recently touched on is his excellent

column on Yahoo! Sports entitled, "King James left the playoffs as a loser."

Wojnarowski wrote that the Cavs' picture-taking routine during pre-game introductions "was belittling and beneath a championship contender" and insisted the Cavs "acted too entitled, too arrogant for a team that's won nothing."

Amen on both accounts.

It has also been suggested that the Cavs cater to their superstar way too much -- even in a world where catering to superstars is already downright repulsive. The thing LeBron may not understand is the Cavs existed long before he came around and they'll be here long after he's gone.

In fact, as a lifelong Northeast Ohioan, I can tell you that this team isn't loved nearly as much as the teams of Brad Daugherty, Mark Price and Larry Nance. Honestly, it's not really even close.

But in LeBron's defense, it may not be entirely his fault if he doesn‘t sometimes get it.

As Wojnarowski wrote, many Cavs' front-office types act "terrified of James. When you're around them, it's sometimes embarrassing to watch the way they tip-toe and grovel with him."

That is the most accurate sentence regarding the NBA I‘ve read this season.

Still, I don't fault James. In fact, he deals with everything extremely well. He rarely gets upset at even the most inane questions from reporters, and while he's in the limelight nearly as much as Michael Jordan ever was, LeBron comes across as considerably less arrogant.

It's the non-basketball people (who most of the basketball people don't really respect, anyway) who tend to paint James as something more than human. At least, they do until something goes wrong.

So, yes, for people who really love the game and have seen it flourish despite the retirements of greats like Chamberlain and Russell and Magic and Bird, all of today's hoopla can really get under your skin.

But that doesn't mean we need to condemn James -- even if he doesn't shake your hand and tell you "nice game." His snub after the Orlando loss was merely the action of someone who was ticked off that he lost, and there's not much wrong with that.

Basically, the world isn't sweating over what LeBron James might do in 2010 because he's such a great handshaker.