



THE NETS GO BIG ON BIGGIE

(Prelude To A Fairytale)

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November 14, 2018
New York

Amazing when we stop and consider the people who are honored, memorialized, and lionized in these freaky and often confusing times we live in.

The world of sports seems immune from the world of reality in many instances, we see this all the time.

Here in New York, the Nets are set to lower the bar with the introduction of their new 'City Edition' uniforms this coming Saturday night at Barclay's Center in Brooklyn when they play host to the Los Angeles Clippers. The irony of introducing these uniforms against this opponent (the Clippers) isn't lost on me.

When it comes to the NBA, this is a league that has introduced so many new uniform designs for every team in the league over the last few seasons that sometimes it can be difficult to immediately identify the teams that are playing at first blush.

But back to the Nets and their latest rollout of a new uniform design.

The Nets 'City Edition' uniform is in 'honor' and inspired by the memory of a deceased rapper by the name of Christopher Wallace, otherwise known by his stage name; The Notorious B.I.G.

Now I get the Nets wanting to identify and connect with the 'Brooklyn Vibe' and all, 'Biggie' as he was also known, hails from the borough, but in this case, the inspiration behind the uniform design, which features something known as 'Coogi print' adorning the sides of the jersey and shorts, is a little perplexing to me.

While 'Biggie' might be one of the best-known rappers ever to come out of Brooklyn, he's also one of the most criminally-oriented individuals to come out of the area as well.

Most know that I'm a Nets fan and a person who goes back with this franchise to its days as a member of the ABA, so while I want to see this franchise reach new heights and get better on the court (and that's happening) it pains me to also see this organization paying homage to an entertainer who I'll bet good money would not get within 100 yards of the upper east side apartment of Nets CEO Brett Yormark if Mr. Wallace was still alive.

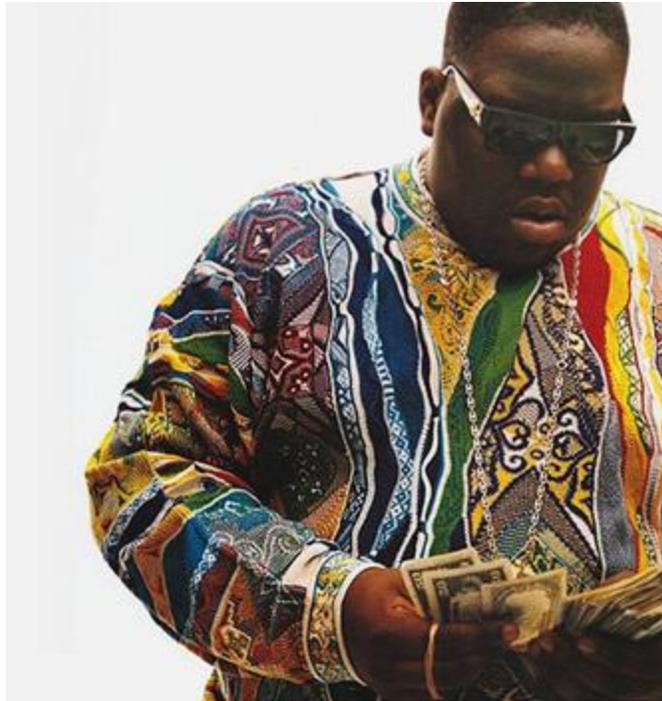
I also find it humorous to listen to various Nets television personnel talking about what their favorite Biggie song is during Nets telecasts on the YES Network. Most everyone on the Nets TV side of things points to the song 'Juicy', as their favorite Biggie melody.

This has me wondering if people like the very accomplished play-by-play voice of the Nets, Ian Eagle, rides to the Barclay's Center while listening to and singing along to the lyrics of his favorite Biggie diddy? Could you see Ian Eagle rolling down the windows of his car riding up Atlantic Avenue and chiming along to the tune and singing; *"Fuck all you hoes, get a grip motherfucker?"*

Perhaps Nets color analyst Sarah Kustock or Nets sideline reporter Michael Grady (who is excellent by the way) walk into the Nets arena rapping along to Biggie's 1994 hit; 'Gimme The Loot'? How long do you think Kustock and Grady would have jobs if they were heard singing; *"Yeah, mothafuckas better know, I'm a bad bad bad."* Or, in another verse of the same song they were caught singing; *"No need for that, just grab the fucking gat"*, or; *"Ni-a you ain't got to explain shit?"* Didn't the entire NBA community react with shock and moral outrage when it was revealed that former Clippers owner Donald Sterling spoke in similar if not exact tones before taking away his team?

Look it now, I don't like writing some of these lyrics that Biggie wrote never mind speaking them.

I guess that in the name of keeping it real at the Barclay's Center these kinds of words are overlooked and explained away as the methods of a 'lyrical genius'. But as we have moved into this new age of having the word police out there looking to dismember people for talking in such vulgar ways, Biggie's words in the songs he used to sing are looked at in a completely different light. I gather that in the name of selective convenience what is held against one person in one situation is explained away for someone else in another.



Even if the Nets wanted to look beyond the words of Biggie Smalls (and they have obviously done so), can they reasonably explain away his criminal conduct exhibited consistently throughout his life?

The Nets newest uniform was inspired by an individual who:

- Was arrested in 1989 for carrying a loaded and unregistered firearm and was sentenced to 5-years probation.
- In 1990 he was arrested for violation of that probation.
- In 1991 he was arrested for dealing crack cocaine and spent 9-months in prison.
- In 1996 Biggie was arrested outside a Manhattan nightclub for chasing and threatening to kill 2 fans who were seeking an autograph. He pleaded guilty to second-degree harassment and was sentenced to perform 10-hours of community service.
- Also in 1996 Biggie was arrested at his home in New Jersey for drug and weapons possession.
- In 1997 Biggie was ordered to pay someone \$41,000 following an incident involving a friend of a concert promoter who claimed that Wallace and a friend beat him up. He was also charged with robbery during the incident although the charges for this violation were later dropped.

Where have you gone to, Joe DiMaggio?

Take any other individual not named Biggie Smalls, assign the same exact rap sheet to that individual, and then tell me if the Brooklyn Nets would be inspired to do anything at all with such person with the exception of praying that such a person steer clear of their arena at all times.

Inconvenient truths abound throughout society these days as people and organizations are all too willing to look the other way depending on who that person is and what they did for a living.

While I begrudge nobody for their fandom of the late Mr. Wallace, the fact is that many people will celebrate the Nets decision to honor this fallen rapper and many will buy this new uniform while conveniently forgetting or not wishing to know who the real Biggie Smalls was beyond being a well-known rap star.

Juicy, anyone?