

“Shut Up & Dribble” Movie Notes

In spite of the claim that sports should be a politics-free zone, the history of the NBA shows that both the league and many of its players have long been activist minded.

Part I

1. **Bill Russell**

- a. What made Russell different from most (white) players in his time?

- b. What challenges did he face as a black player first with USF and later with the Celtics?

- c. How did he deal with these challenges?

2. **Lew Alcindor (Kareem Abdul-Jabbar):**

- a. After his first season at UCLA, the NCAA passed the “Lew Alcindor Rule” which did what?

- b. Kareem later became known as a sports activist. Give 2 examples of events early in his career that helped shape him as an athlete activist.

Context: The NBA was struggling in the 1970s. To increase attendance, interest and make the league more profitable, the NBA merged with a small competing basketball league, the ABA. (It wasn’t until the 1980s though that the NBA really took off.)

3. What was different about the two leagues?

NBA	ABA

4. **Larry Bird** and **Magic Johnson**: In the 1980s-1990s, the NBA was more focused on making \$ and filling seats than it had been in the '50s-'70s. How did Bird & Johnson help?

Part II

5. **Michael Jordan** made the choice NOT to get involved in politics and instead focused on his brand. Support this with 2 examples from the documentary.

CONTEXT: Black celebrities and athletes were profitable, idolized and glamorized. Yet this was not the reality for black Americans living in the cities. Many were struggling as the nation's cities crumbled under neglect, murder rates soared, the crack cocaine epidemic raged.

6. **Craig Hodges:** Hodges talks about the importance of being a conscious athlete and standing up for what you believe in.
- a. What did he do?

- b. What happened to him because of it?

NOTE: Hodges became a cautionary tale for athletes in the '80s and early '90s NOT to be outspoken about their political views.

7. Support the following statement with ONE specific example: "By the early '90s, open representation of one's politics had taken a back seat to promoting one's brand."

8. **Mahmud Abdul-Rauf**

- a. What made Abdul-Rauf like Kaepernick before there was a Kaepernick?

- b. What happened to his career in the NBA after his protest?

Part IV

CONTEXT: The killing of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner and others inspired renewed activism on the part of contemporary NBA (and WNBA) players.

9. How did NBA players respond to the killing of Trayvon Martin?
