

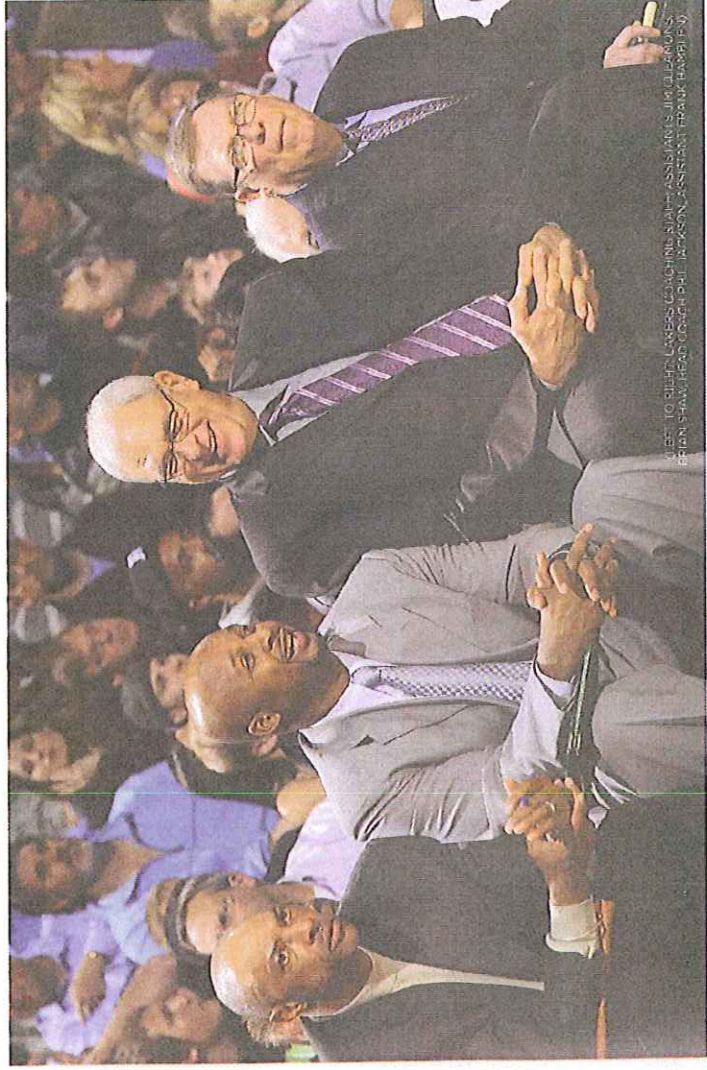
# Jim Cleamons

## TEACHABLE MOMENTS ON THE BASKETBALL COURT

BY PAMELA CORANTE-HANSEN

LAKERS KOBE BRYANT CONFERS WITH ASSISTANT COACH JIM CLEAMONS

IF YOUR SCHEDULE'S TOO PACKED TO EARN THAT PH.D. IN PHILOSOPHY, SPEND A HALF AN HOUR WITH LOS ANGELES LAKERS ASSISTANT COACH JIM CLEAMONS. YOU'LL COME AWAY WISER - AND READY FOR THE SECOND HALF OF BASKETBALL SEASON. QUICK TO QUASH RUMORS THAT HE IS A RHODES SCHOLAR, CLEAMONS'S QUIET WISDOM TRANSCENDS THE CONVENTIONAL AND LEAVES LITTLE DOUBT AS TO THE SOURCE OF HIS SUCCESS AS A TEACHER AND MENTOR. SOUTH BAY DIGS HAD THE HONOR OF SPEAKING WITH CLEAMONS ON A RESPLENDENT MANHATTAN BEACH AFTERNOON. IN THE PROCESS, WE LEARNED A FEW THINGS ABOUT LIFE, LOVE AND THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE.



LEFT TO RIGHT: LAKERS COACHING STAFF ASSASSIAN'S JIM CLEGGON'S, PHILIP SHAW, HEAD COACH PHIL JACKSON, ASSISTANT HEAD COACH PHIL WY

**You had a great win last night. What are the key factors for a higher percentage of wins in the second part of the season?**

Just prior to the All Stars break we lost three games in a row. Any time you lose three games in a row in Los Angeles, especially with the Lakers organization, you don't want to go out in public. You'd be surprised how many owners and bosses we have. Everyone wants to know what's wrong with their team. Fans have to understand that we want to win as much as they want us to win. A lot of what you do in sports, you're required to do as a team; it's not an individual competition. You have to coexist and sometimes there's a level of mental fatigue. These aren't excuses, it's just the nature of the business. We as a team know when we're not performing well. We're hopeful that we'll ride our ship after the All Stars break and play the way we know we're capable of playing.

**You mentioned mental fatigue. Certainly intellect is a part of the game. How do you think your academic achievements influenced your ability to lead a team?**

My senior year in college I was extremely fortunate to be named Athletic of Year at my university. Academically, I am fortunate and blessed. I just try to do a good job. But I am not a Rhodes Scholar. Let's nip that rumor in the bud.

**Got it. We're all about accuracy here. So how are academics and athletics related, in your opinion?**

I had a really strong mother, aunt and uncle. If you didn't cut the mustard academically, there was no way in the world you'd have an opportunity to participate athletically. I remember the first time I got a B on my report card. You would have thought the sky was falling. I was punished for six weeks. When I brought home that B in reading, my mom, who was an educator, made me read every night after dinner for six weeks. At the time I saw it as a punishment, but now that I am a parent, I realize the dedication and love [my mother had for me].

In her own stern way, she was giving love to me. I see athletics and academics as forces that work in conjunction with each other to help you add a certain amount of caring and passion to whatever you do in your life.

**It seems you've channeled that combination of discipline and dedication in your work with youth in the community.**

I partnered with the Brotherhood Crusade to do a summer camp called Books and Basketball. Young people come to learn basketball, but actually we teach them more about academics and life. We teach them about science and diversity. The younger kids take classes in chess,

etiquette and manners, also financial literacy. They still have time for basketball. We try to show them that there's more to life than sports. Especially with basketball, you use the sport; don't let the sport use you. All too often in these communities, young people grow up thinking that by the magic of television, careers are made. They don't understand the hard work and dedication that takes place before you turn on the television. It's my belief that if you expose them to what happens behind the scenes, it will help in the long run to broaden their horizons. Young people are resilient, and their curiosity about what happens around them is boundless. We tell them to ask questions of the adults and people who are their mentors and teachers, to use the resources available to them to enhance their lives.

**How much of what you instill in the kids translates to your effectiveness as a coach?**

One of the reasons I got into education to begin with is that I enjoy the light that shines when a young person really understands. I hesitate most of the time to tell people that I'm a coach; I like to refer to what I do as teaching. I see the basketball floor as a classroom. You're using certain parts of your brain to do an athletic action in the same way you'd use other parts of the brain for English, history or biology. It all works hand in hand. As a teacher I [help students] reduce the stress of learning through practice. [This applies] not only in the classroom as a student, but also in the 'classroom' on the basketball floor in front of thousands of people. If you can do it in practice, you can do it on the basketball floor. With the right heart, the right mind and a spirit of collaboration with your coaches, teachers and teammates, you can win. And winning doesn't always mean championships, but it means doing the best you can in each situation.

**Switching gears, your career has enabled you to live all over the U.S. How did you choose Manhattan Beach and what do you like most about living here?**

When Phil Jackson accepted the coaching job in June 1999 and asked me to join the staff, I had no idea where in L.A. I wanted to live. The Lakers were moving to [a new practice facility in] El Segundo and moving into the Staples Center. I had a newborn child and I didn't want to spend a lot of my time commuting. My wife and I looked at various communities and settled on Manhattan Beach. The reputation of the Manhattan Beach schools was one of the things that attracted us. Also, with a wife and two

young daughters, shopping is important. The access to shopping in the South Bay is tremendous. Plaza El Segundo is a crown jewel. We not only have shopping in downtown Manhattan Beach, you also have Del Amo and the Galleria. Then there are the restaurants. For someone who's on the road 90 percent of the time, when I'm home, I don't want to travel far to get to the services I need.

**Who was your real estate agent?**  
Ed Karminsky is the agent my wife and I work with exclusively. Ed does

what most successful people do: He listens. He is a problem-solver who addresses whatever challenges there may be. A lot of the Lakers use Ed for their relocations.

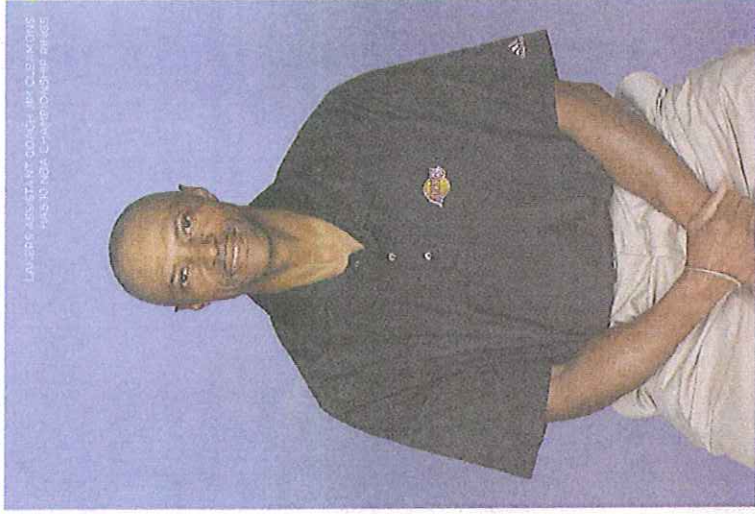
**If you had the chance to redo any decision you've made in your life, what would it be?**

We had a gorgeous home in Manhattan Beach. We both really enjoyed it, but in the late 2004 season, Phil was not re-signed by the Lakers and I accepted a job in New Orleans. So we sold this home. As I look back, we would have been better off if we had stayed. When we got to New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina hit. We had bought a gorgeous home there and we lost that house. I moved for the right reasons, but financially and emotionally, moving my family from a home we all loved and then experiencing Katrina was traumatic, but we survived. It makes you thankful you have family.

**After sitting with you these past 50 minutes, it's easy to see where your success comes from. You have this tremendous sense of what's important.**

I deal with people every day that have an effect on my life, but on whom I have no effect. If I can't communicate, and if they don't want to do what I want them to do, what am I supposed to do? Pitch a fit?

It doesn't solve the problem. You learn to control those things you can control, and what you can't, you give back to God. But you still try to work through it. If each person helped another, the world would be a much better place. The person that you help may not be able to give back to you what you gave to him, but your blessing is going to come back from someone you don't know yet. This is one of the things that athletics has taught me. People talk about Phil's Zen. Zen is just being in the moment. So if we cherish every moment that we have and do the best we can, we all can be successful.



PHIL JACKSON, LAKERS ASSISTANT COACH AND CHAMPION. PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY MAYER