



Jazz Best Voted Among the Dirtiest

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BY DAVID DuPREE
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Dirty is a matter of interpretation, and in the NBA, dirty isn't necessarily a bad thing. It translates into getting away with whatever you can. Fans who voted in a usatoday.com survey were right to look no further than Utah to find two of the all-time best at getting away with not-so-clean play.



Karl Malone edged Portland's Rasheed Wallace as the dirtiest player in the NBA in a usatoday.com poll. (Rick Egan/The Salt Lake Tribune)

Between them, Karl Malone and John Stockton got 46.4 percent of the vote as the dirtiest player. Malone led the way with 31.9 percent, Portland's Rasheed Wallace was a close second with 29.4 percent and Stockton finished third with 14.5 percent of the vote.

Stockton is my pick. He knows the little tricks -- pulling a defender down as he falls after a shot, slyly jumping into defenders and getting the calls to go his way, slickly grabbing and holding when no referee can see it and just being a physical, tough, no-nonsense guy. I want him on my team, definitely.

Malone is so big and strong. Opponents have a tendency to get knocked out of the way when he wants to rid himself of them. He also protects his teammates. Remember when Isiah Thomas knocked Stockton silly on one play, and the next time they played Malone went upside Thomas's head to the tune of about 20 stitches? He can watch my back.

Wallace: He isn't dirty; he just has a dirty mouth.

Chicago's Charles Oakley (13.2 percent). He is the original enforcer. He sets a mean pick and will call out teammates, opponents and coaches. Remember, he once slapped Jeff McInnis of the Los Angeles Clippers as his team was going onto the floor for a shootaround. But McInnis has company. Oakley also smacked Tyrone Hill, with Philadelphia at the time, in the face before the start of a preseason game last year.

Milwaukee's Anthony Mason (6.3 percent). He gets into more trouble off the court than he does on it.

Philadelphia's Dikembe Mutombo (4.6 percent). He is too awkward and clumsy looking to be dirty. His elbows just flail, and he catches teammates as often as he does opponents.

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