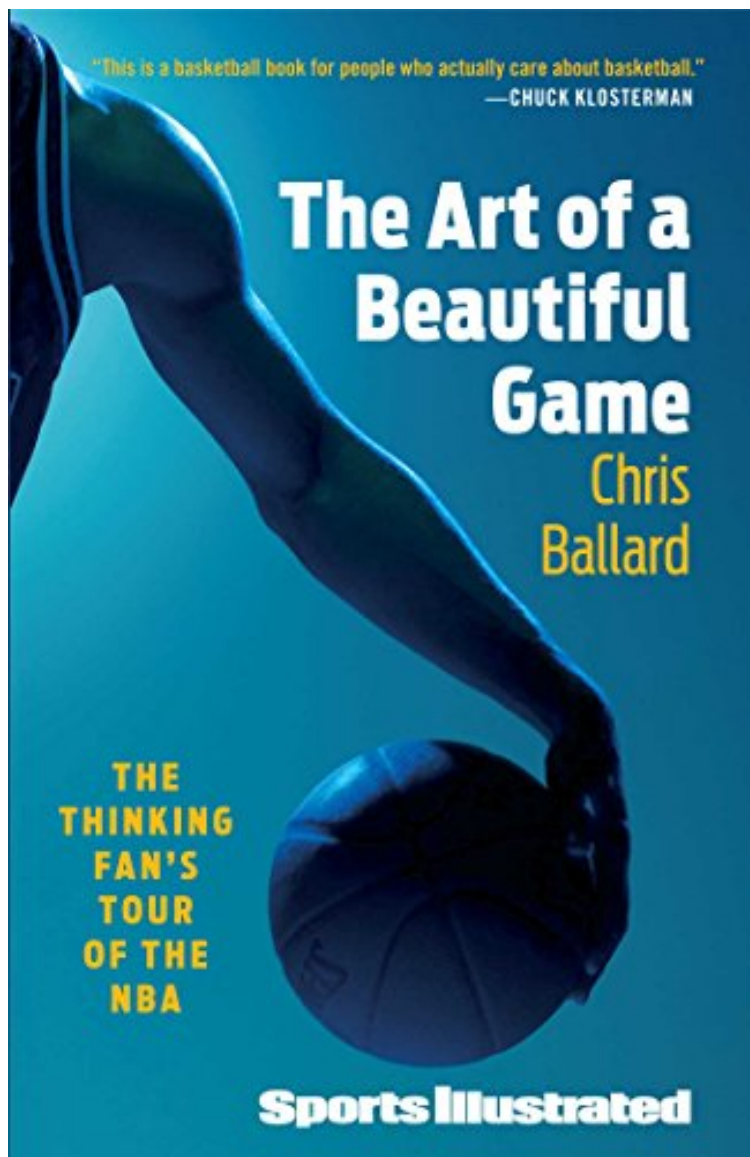


(Ebook free) File size: 24.Mb

The Art of a Beautiful Game: The Thinking Fan's Tour of the NBA (English Edition)



Par Chris Ballard
**Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks*

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #928324 dans eBooksPubli le: 2009-10-23Sorti le: 2009-11-03Format: Ebook Kindle

(Ebook free) The Art of a Beautiful Game: The Thinking Fan's Tour of the NBA (English Edition)

Par Chris Ballard : The Art of a Beautiful Game: The Thinking Fan's Tour of the NBA (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Art of a Beautiful Game: The Thinking Fan's Tour of the NBA (English Edition):

Download

Read Online

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn The Art of a Beautiful Game, Chris Ballard, the award-winning Sports Illustrated writer who has covered the NBA for the past decade, goes behind the scenes to examine basketball in ways that will surprise even die-hard fans. An inveterate hoops junkie who played some college ball, Ballard sits down with the NBA's most passionate, cerebral players to find out their tricks of the trade and to learn what drives them, taking readers away from the usual sports talk radio fodder and deep into the heart of the game. Ballard talks to Dwight Howard, a prolific shot-blocker, about the enervating feeling of meeting another man

at the height of his leap; challenges Steve Kerr to a game of H-O-R-S-E to understand the mentality of a pure shooter; reveals the roots of Kobe Bryant's unmatched killer instinct; and spends time with LeBron James to better understand both his mental game and his seemingly unlimited physical skills. He tracks down renowned dunkers from Dominique to Shaq to explore the impact of the dunk on the modern game, shadows Shane Battier during his preparations to defend LeBron, takes lessons from a freethrow shooting guru who once hit 2,750 in a row, and attends an elite NBA training camp to feel the pain that turns a prospect into a pro. Packed with lively characters and basketball history, and grounded in superb writing and the reportage that is the hallmark of Sports Illustrated, *The Art of a Beautiful Game* is an often witty, always insightful look at the men like Steve Nash, Yao Ming, and Alonzo Mourning who devote themselves to this elegant and complicated sport. It ultimately provides basketball fans what they all want: an inside read on the game they love.

Extrait Introduction Some years ago I had the unenviable task of guarding Mark Aguirre in a pickup game. I'd like to say I held my ground as he posted me up, absorbing each of the bargelike blows he delivered with his hips and prodigious backside, holding strong against the Noreaster of Ass he unleashed upon me. But I did not. Like so many opponents during Aguirre's NBA days, I slid and stumbled and shuffled backward until he was essentially standing under the basket and I out-of-bounds. At which point he could merely reach up and lay the ball into the basket. How I came to be guarding Aguirre was a matter of circumstance. I was in Indianapolis writing a story for Sports Illustrated and had wandered over to a local health club looking for a run. Aguirre, then an assistant coach for the Indiana Pacers, arrived a half hour later. My teammates, kind souls that they were, agreed that I should be the one to guard Aguirre. This was what an NBA coach might refer to as a matchup problem. Aguirre was a 6'6", 230-pound NBA legend who averaged 20 points during his 13-year career with the Mavericks and the Pistons, and even at 43 years old, he was still in remarkably good shape. I, on the other hand, was a 6'1", 175-pound former small-college player who had a difficult enough time defending the guys in my local rec league. For the most part Aguirre took it easy on me in the post, backing me down only a handful of times. Not that it mattered; he turned out to be just as adept on the perimeter. At one point I was guarding him on the wing and he fooled me so completely, using a ball fake together with a subtle push on my leg and hip, that I actually turned around to try to beat him to the baseline. In mid-sprint I heard Aguirre chuckle behind me. He was standing in the same spot, having not moved an inch, and calmly fired up and swished a three-pointer. (He was a much better outside shooter than I recalled.) What in the world, I asked him, did you just do? He only smiled.

Mark Aguirre did not get where he was by giving away his secrets to random dudes he meets at the gym. That night I saw him at Conseco Fieldhouse, before the Pacers game, and his face lit up with recognition and amusement. Hey, still waiting for that baseline drive? he asked. I laughed, then asked if I might pick his brain at some point, this time in the name of journalism. Check back with me after the game, he said. I did, and he was true to his word. That night, after a Pacers win, Aguirre spent nearly 45 minutes in a back corridor of Conseco showing me the secrets of his post moves: how to leverage a defender, which arm to use to swim past an opponent, how to lock in an opposing big man on a lob pass and, best of all, how to push the refrigerator (that is, use your outside leg to drive into a defender, as if he were a Frigidaire). As Aguirre talked, I realized that in all those years of watching him play, I'd never fully appreciated what he was doing. I just figured . . . well, I don't know what I figured. That he just used his butt to move guys out of the way? That he'd been born a little quicker and trickier around the basket than the rest of us? Unmistakably, though, there was an art to what he was doing, one honed over years, one only certain players have mastered, one only certain players can master, for it requires a rare combination of dedication, talent and intuition. To appreciate it, you need only watch one of those young, springy big men who enter the league each year. You know the type: long-limbed, imposing, throwing down monster dunks. These players may be freakishly athletic, but their post moves are so rudimentary as to be nonexistent. Pump fake? Never. Freeze fake? What's that? Moving the refrigerator? They're not even good at moving their feet. Still, it is the resplendent jams of these high-flyers that we see on the highlights, and that 10-year-old boys mimic on Nerf hoops. And there's nothing wrong with that. I admire the dunk as much as anyone but it is a shame that few fans are privy to a true craftsman like Aguirre breaking down his art. Instead, we often hear about how the pro game is flawed, full of remarkable athletes who boast unremarkable skills. As a writer who covers the NBA, I run into this mind-set on occasion: No one plays defense, no one passes and it's all about getting paid, some people say. How can you enjoy watching that? In response I'll usually mumble something about Chris Paul and drop steps and bank shots, but that's not much of a comeback. What I should say is, Sure, there's a lot about the pro game that's messed up, like guys who can hit their head on the rim but can't dribble with their

left hand, and, yes, there are some lackadaisical millionaires; but its still a beautiful, complicated game, the best ever invented in my opinion, and there are plenty of guys who treat it as such. Then I could explain why thats true. I could describe the way Ray Allen squares up on his jump shot so perfectly that, were he on sand, he would spring up and, upon returning to earth, land precisely in his own footprints. I could talk about underhand scoop shots that rise like helium balloons. I could describe nine seconds left, the floor spread and the arena roaring like a 747 as Kobe Bryant holds the ball at the top of the key, about to break thousands of hearts. I could talk about reverse layups with so much spin they hit the backboard and then shoot sideways as if yanked on a leash. I could evoke the ka-smack of the one-handed rebound and the ka-thunk of a three-pointer from the top of the key that sinks off the back of the rim as it drops in. I could mention The Noooooo!-then-Yesssss! Shot and the way bench guys in the NBA hold each other back, as if saving one another from oncoming traffic, because that last play was just too damn exciting. I could relate how, after 40 years of pulling out a little pump fake to the right before shooting a jump hook, my 70-year-old father still employs it every time he plays, not because it works (though occasionally it does) but because its like catching up with an old friend. I could describe shots so pure the net snaps up and has to be untangled from the rim, and the way an NBA three-pointer arcs so high it looks as if it was shot from the moon, and seeing a play on Sunday afternoon on NBC, then seeing it again a few hours later down at the playground, reenacted a hundred different ways. I could talk about back picks you can practically hear through the TV, especially when they result in alley-oop dunks, and how the only thing better is when a help-side defender comes flying over to block that alley-oop. I could confess that I can spend an hour talking to someone at a dinner party and never make the kind of real, true connection that comes from running one seamless give-and-go with a stranger during a pickup game. I could talk about the most compelling moment in sportsone second on the clock, down two, first of two free throws and how it has made mens careers as well as ruined them. I could explain how the pick-and-roll can be the oldest play in the book, or even the only play in the book, and people still cant stop it. And I could pull out tape of an old Princeton game to illustrate what is perhaps the most beautiful play in sports, a perfectly executed backdoor cut. But I dont say any of that, of course. Instead, what Ive done is write this book. And while its not necessarily about all the aforementioned things, it is a celebration of the game and those who play it at the highest level, the players for whom it truly is both an art and a science. Because while the majority of what we read and hear about the NBA may be the day-to-day dramawho wins, who loses, who might get traded, who threw whom under which busthis doesnt mean that NBA stars dont adore the game in all its myriad intricacies. All you have to do is ask one. Not in vague generalities, but speaking his language. Ask LeBron James for the umpteenth time about his impending free agency, or his friendly rivalry with Dwyane Wade, and he will likely say one of the same things hes said the umpteen other times hes been asked. But sit down with James and watch film and ask him to dissect a pick-and-roll, or how he draws a weakside defenders attention, and its amazing what happens. He leans forward, he gets excited, he talks quickly. He becomes a teacher, eager to explain. Gone are the marketing catchphrases and one-game-at-a-time clichs, replaced by staccato observations. He becomes like anyone else talking about something he loves: passionate. This book is about passionate players. It is not about one season or the inner workings of a team or the genius of a coach, but rather about the beauty of basketball, because even the ugly aspectslike, say, defense and reboundingbecome beautiful in the hands of the masters. The material herein comes from research conducted over the course of nearly three years, some of it while working on stories for SI. I gathered much in league arenas and locker rooms, but just as often my work was done over beers (as with Rockets forward Shane Battier, who graciously broke down his approach to perimeter defense while sipping pale ales at a bar in Portland), or in a coffee shop in Washington, D.C. (as with Idan Ravin, the NBA trainer known as the hoops whisperer), or in the case of Steve Kerr, while shooting jumpers together at AmericaWest Arena. But no matter what my method, for a week or two after researching each chapter, almost without fail, I became obsessed with whichever aspect of the game Id just explored. And because of that, Id like to publicly thank the noon hoops crew at the Berkeley YMCA for putting up with these obsessions. For no sooner had I returned from reporting on, say, rebounding, than I was suddenly trying to grab every weak-side board at the Y by jumping laterally, the way Ben Wallace does. Three weeks later Id be trying out Kobes jab-step-fake-and-go, even though a simple rocker step would have worked fine. And, of course, I preached to all who would listen. I became the Deepak Chopra of the drop step, a Mormon missionary of the motion offense. It is my hope that, in writing this book, I might inspire some of you to feel similarly: to see the game from a different perspective (or a dozen different ones), to gain a renewed appreciation for the at-times misunderstood giants who roam our nations arenas and, above

all, to revel in the art of what is truly a beautiful game. 2009 Chris Ballard *Revue de presse*" Chris Ballard has written a ten-drum honor song to the intricate blue-collar poetry of NBA basketball. You should always be inspired by an amazing assist, three-pointer, dunk, free throw, or blocked shot, but after reading this book, you should be even more inspired by the years of hard work it took any player to get to that moment. I love this book." -- SHERMAN ALEXIE, NATIONAL BOOK AWARD WINNER" The game has needed a smart, witty, cool-eyed deconstruction for decades. Now it's here." -- S. L. PRICE, AUTHOR OF HEART OF THE GAME" The perfect storm -- great athletes collide with great writing. Sets the literary standard for getting inside the head and heart of greatness." -- LARRY COLTON, AUTHOR OF COUNTING COUP"

Some chroniclers specialize in breaking down the technical finer points, while others are poets and soul-searchers, explorers of the inner game. Only a precious few do both well, and Chris is at the top of that list, as he shows in *The Art of a Beautiful Game*." -- JACK McCALLUM, WINNER OF THE CURT GOWDY MEDIA AWARD FROM THE NAISMITH BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME" Much has been written about the strategies of great basketball coaches. Chris Ballard tells us about the strategies of great basketball players. After reading Ballard's book, you will watch an NBA game differently -- with a new kind of understanding." -- BILL BRADLEY, FORMER U.S. SENATOR" People love to claim that pro athletes never have anything interesting to say, but that's because they're usually asked stupid, nonessential questions. Yet ask any talented man about the details of his craft and he will inevitably tell you everything you need to know, including who that man truly is. And that's what Chris Ballard has done. This is a basketball book for people who actually care about basketball." -- CHUCK KLOSTERMAN, AUTHOR OF EATING THE DINOSAUR