



# **Basketball Jones: America Above the Rim (Fast Track)**

*Todd Boyd, Kenneth Shropshire*

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It began with Magic, Bird, and Dr. J. Then came Michael. The Dream Team. The WNBA. And, most recently, "Spree" Latrell Sprewell—American Dream or American Nightmare?—the embodiment of everything many believe is wrong—and others believe is exciting—about the game.

Today, despite the NBA strike, despite home run derbies, despite football's headlock on network television ratings, despite the much-heralded return of baseball, basketball has assumed a role in American culture and consciousness impossible to imagine 20 years ago, when arenas were empty and the NBA finals were broadcast via tape delay in the wee hours.

So what happened? How did a "black sport," plagued by drug scandal and decimated by white flight, come to achieve such prominence? What are the subtle and not-so-subtle racial codes that define how the game is played and perceived, and the reception of its high-profile stars? What does the shift in popularity from the predominantly white, working-class ethos of baseball to the black, urban ethos of basketball suggest about contemporary life in America? What linkages exist between basketball and hip-hop culture and how did these develop? How has the arrival of women on the scene changed the equation?

Bringing together journalists, cultural critics, and academics, this wide-ranging anthology has something for everyone, from hard-core fan to casual observer.

Contributors: Todd Boyd, Kenneth L. Shropshire, Gerald Early, James Peterson, Susan J. Rayl, Davis W. Houck, Mark Conrad, Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., Earl Smith, Sohail Daulatzi, Larry Platt, Tina Sloan Green, Alpha Alexander, Tara McPherson, Aaron Baker.

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