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# 2005 PLAYOFFS



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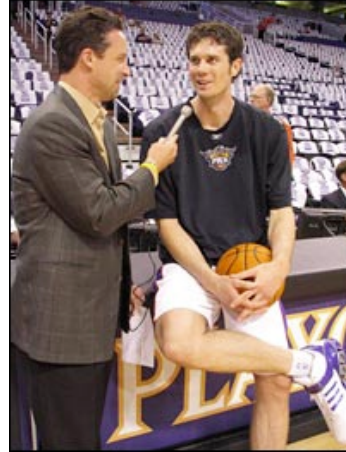
Related Content: [Suns Playoff Index](#) | [Shirley's Road Ramblings](#) | [Paul unplugged \(Video\)](#) | [Paul on Page 2](#)

## Paul on the Playoffs

Ladies and gentleman... back by popular demand... the "funniest man in the NBA," according to *Best Damn Sports Show Period*, we give you... Paul Shirley!

That's right, in spite of his complaints over being censored in his wildly popular "Road Ramblings" on Suns.com, the wildly witty 12th man has heard your heart-felt pleas for more online sarcasm and has agreed to offer up tidbits from time to time throughout the Suns' playoff run. The Suns.com staff, in return, has assured Paul that not one word will be censored without prior consent.

The 27-year-old forward -- who made the club's opening day roster, was cut before the opening game, but then re-signed in January -- originally kept an online diary for Suns.com during the team's five-game road trip in mid-March. A diary that created quite a frenzy in the national media, which was equally surprised and entertained by his unique and honest insight into life in the NBA. Shirley's daily journal (Paul doesn't like the word "blog") was mentioned on ESPN's "Cold Pizza" and on ESPN.com, and was covered in several newspapers around the country, including *USA Today*.



**Editor's Note:** In an entertaining interview with the *Arizona Republic* on Monday, Shirley said he wasn't sure if he was going to write for Suns.com anymore: "I do take the risk, and they get the reward." Did the *Republic*, *USA Today*, *ESPN*, *Best Damn* or any of those book publishers that keep calling, even know who you were Paul, before Suns.com published your ramblings? We think not. But we love you anyways.

Posted by **Paul Shirley**, April 24, 2005

The playoffs have begun. I have to admit that I am a bit excited. I am generally unfazed by most anything concerning a particular sporting event — I have seen way too many basketball games to be easily impressed by the addition of another to my list — but I can say that I was a little more juiced than usual by the prospect of yesterday's trip to the arena.

I am constantly amazed by the ability of others to get excited about sports. I understand being a fan — I grew up living and dying by the nightly fate of the Kansas City Royals. I do not, however, grasp the existence of the überfan. This is a touchy subject, though, as the fans are the people who pay my salary. I would re-iterate that I understand the idea of rooting for a team. We all need something we can get behind. But, enthusiasm seems to be easily overdone; I cannot help but wonder what makes the crazies tick.

During warm-ups last night, I noticed a couple of fans directly behind our bench. (For once neither was female.) One had painted a basketball on his nearly shaven pate; the other had dyed his longish hair orange. They were in their seats approximately four hours before the game, so I had plenty of time to analyze their behavior while assistant coach Phil Weber and I played our traditional pre-game HORSE match. (At some point in the year, Phil and I grew tired of drills and began playing the aforementioned equine-named contest at the conclusion of my pre-game workout. Strangely enough, our little game is quite the indicator for my team's fate. When he wins, the Suns win. When I win, we lose. Our regular season record was 62-20, which should indicate that I am just a fantastic HORSE competitor.) The two gentlemen with the creative hues on their heads kept calm throughout our match — perhaps they were just that enthralled by the thrashing Phil gave me. Little did they know how important that game was. (Nor how accurate a prediction it would provide.) When the game began, though, the two die-hards stood up and unfurled their trump card, a hand-written sign that said something along the lines of:

**Hair Dye:** \$8  
**Tickets:** \$500  
**Missing my first day of work to watch the Suns in the playoffs:** Priceless

Their placard inspired a few thoughts. First, who is more of an [word for donkey], the guy who is three years behind the times and thought of the "joke," or the guy who, back at the apartment, said, "Now that's funny,

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dude. You totally have to take that to the game”?

Next, if one of our heroes is starting a job that would have theoretically had him working on a Sunday night at 7:30, was \$500 for tickets to a basketball game really a wise fiscal maneuver? I understand that it is the playoffs and all, but was the abandonment of any potential cash flow worth the sacrifice? Maybe for the Finals, but even then I would be willing to bet the Texaco has a TV behind the counter.

Last, is missing said crappy job really worth the "Priceless" tag? I'm thinking "Priceless" should be reserved for: "Bailing on the birth of my first-born to watch the Suns in the playoffs," or perhaps for, "Breaking out of the county jail to watch the Suns in the playoffs." Let's keep things in perspective.

Fortunately for my own self-respect, I am missing whatever gene is required to do things like paint my head orange for a basketball game. I think the same set of DNA is responsible for those people who at Pearl Jam concerts scream out totally inappropriate [feces] like, "Eddie, you kick [gluteus maximus]!" (In other news, I hate exclamation points, and only used the preceding one because it was absolutely necessary. Therefore, I have used up my quota of one per month. I would like to see others adopt my rule concerning this form of punctuation.)

As I mentioned in an answer to a question lobbed my way by a reader of Bill Simmons, writer on [ESPN.com's Page 2](#), I recently attended a Local H concert. (Anyone not reading Simmons should be. His stuff is like mine, only funny and well-written.) The band played one of their crowd favorites at some point — a song called "High-Fiving [person who copulates with the matriarch of a family]." The tune is basically a fast-paced romp aimed at skewering the jockish types who think nothing of raising their collective hand and expecting a slap on the palm in return. Now, there is nothing wrong with a "five," high or low, if it is given in response to a well-performed athletic feat on the part of one of the participants in said "five." It is not, however, appropriate if neither party was remotely involved in the sporting contest. The enjoyable part of the song, for me, is that because it is a jaunty little number, some of the audience invariably will begin moshing (for those out of the loop, moshing is the random running into fellow concert-goers that often occurs directly in front of the stage). These idiots, of course, are exactly the personality types the band is making fun of. The irony there is very decent.

I feel like Local H at times. I want the crowd to thrill in the action and enjoy our games, but I do not want them to make fools of themselves. I like to see some dignity out there, and I do not think I am alone. I am not asking for a moratorium on signs or enthusiasm; I am only asking for the signs to be humorous (because, really, my personal enjoyment is the main goal here) and for the high-fiving on the part of crowd members to be reserved only for circumstances of the utmost basketball intensity, with notable exceptions given in cases of extreme drunkenness. I really don't think it is much to ask.

**<<< SUNS.COM DISCLAIMER: Not one word was edited, removed or censored in this first entry of Paul's playoff blog. >>>**

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