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LAKERS FYI

Lamar Odom has a plan to beat Denver

Forward says Lakers have to muscle up against the Nuggets.

February 28, 2010 | By Mike Bresnahan



Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times

Lamar Odom is well aware of what needs to be done.

The Lakers forward has seen the confidence in the Denver Nuggets, witnessed the swagger of the second-best team in the Western Conference, and was definitely on the court as the Nuggets easily took two games against the Lakers this season.

For those wondering about a solution to the pesky, pugnacious Nuggets, Odom has one for Sunday's game -- get physical.

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"It will be a hard game," he said Saturday. "We have to embrace the game being hard. I don't think we've done that the last couple of times we've played them."

The Nuggets pasted the Lakers in November, 105-79, as the Lakers set a team record for fewest points in a half, mustering only 23 after halftime, not to mention a pathetic two assists in the second half.

More recently, the Nuggets beat the Lakers on Feb. 5 without **Carmelo Anthony**, 126-113, the last game **Kobe Bryant** played before sitting out 18 days because of a sore left ankle. **Chauncey Billups** was the deciding factor, scoring 39 points and making nine three-pointers, both career highs.

"They should be confident right now," Odom said. "If the playoffs started right now, they probably think they have our number.

"This is a huge game for us. We need to keep that distance [in the standings] and we need to let them know that we can beat them."

The Lakers are 4 1/2 games ahead of the Nuggets in the West, but the Nuggets clinch a tiebreaker with a victory Sunday or April 8 in Denver.

The Nuggets have scorers -- Anthony and Billups average nearly 50 points combined. They have rebounders -- **Nene**,

Kenyon Martin and **Chris "Birdman" Andersen** are strong underneath. And they have wild cards on the bench -- **J.R. Smith** and **Ty Lawson** can conjure up momentum with a moment's notice.

"They're an offensive juggernaut as far as an aggressive tack," Lakers Coach **Phil Jackson** said. "They're all about taking that ball to the basket and not being denied."

They also apparently have no fear.

Martin might not play because of a sore knee, but Smith will be on the court a few days after a confident, and grammatically shaky, note on his Twitter feed: "Dont get me wrong kobe is great but not when he play me."

Smith didn't exactly back down from his comments, later chiding people who angrily wrote back to him by responding, "Here comes the hate! Yes! thank you ill take all the haters."

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