

The Last Dance? Well it is My First Time!

Netflix's *The Last Dance* by Jason Hehir was my first experience with a sports documentary. To my surprise, I loved it!

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Sports and I are not friends, we are not even acquaintances. For most the names Michael Jordan, Scotty Pippin, Denis Rodman these names echo through the halls of basketball history but for me they spark question marks. So why was *The Last Dance* so much fun to watch?

The Last Dance by Jason Hehir is Netflix's newest binge worthy documentary series, no not the *Tiger King*, that explores the Chicago Bull's last run at the NBA Championship under the helm of head coach Phil Jackson. The Bulls had previously won five championships lead by all-time great Michael Jordan and were battling for the sixth and last championship with this legendary team.

While some would say, "yes, of course this season was basketball history", my response would be, "wha..?" Despite my having absolutely no interest in organized sports I found this documentary series to be an absolute blast! The level of depth that the documentary offers paired with a mound of behind the scenes footage that is organized in a dramatic fashion really makes *The Last Dance* a must watch series if you are a sports aficionado or not.

The documentary was caulk full of fascinating information that was totally over my head and found it is was riveting! I'm rather certain that this was not only just my lack of knowledge that made it so interesting because the documentary seemed to explore every nook and cranny of the game. Every episode told a new story and charted a new history of each of the all-star players of the Chicago Bulls and The Bulls "the organization" itself. I was shocked to learn that not only is there politics between the coach, the manager and general managers but throw in some of the greatest players and things get really complicated. The fact that the history and the dynamics of the team were reflected on in such detail was accentuated by the fact that the players were interviewed today and reflected on the drama and events with ten years of hindsight. It is so interesting to see Michael Jordan pondering some of his choices and the choices of his opponents with a glass of scotch and a cigar like a weathered general.

I was amazed by the footage the documentary team was able to dig up and the depth it gave to the players. It was fascinating to me to see what MJ was like when the cameras were turned off in the locker room with his security or in his hotel room. This footage gave me insight to the pressures faced by MJ and what it was like to be the most popular figure in the world. It whole new light to the player and gave the documentary as a whole a great deal more versatility and insight.

But MJ wasn't the only player to get the behind the scenes treatment. There was also a great deal of footage on Scotty Pippin and Denis Rodman that exposed their inner world. Rodman was particularly interesting because of how he truly lived the "bad boy" lifestyle. I couldn't help but giggle at a particular story about how Rodman ran away to Vegas during the playoffs. The behind the scene footage of him going crazy in Vegas and returning to the team worse for wear was pretty hysterical. The fact that

Rodman was able to come back after all that and play a fantastic game demonstrated the talent at the core of this player. The insight that the documentary gave to all of these players really went above and beyond a regular old doc and revealed the many personalities of the Chicago Bulls.

The mastery of the documentary was not only in digging up great footage of the Bulls but also weaving their stories together in such a way as that the insight and tension is created. The fact that the documentary was able to focus on the last season of the Bulls under the leadership of Phil Jackson while consistently going back to the players, the franchise and star's back stories was made all the more impressive by the tension it created. Exploring the trauma of MJ losing his father and then relating it to the relationship to his fellow teammate Steve Kerr and his loss was really interesting and informative. The doc then focused on their relationship and then culminated the episode with Jordan making a final pass to Kerr and Kerr making the final basket. The weaving of past and present to create greater tension was a brilliant way to raise the stakes of the documentary and make the success of the Bulls that much more rewarding.

Netflix has a fantastic record of riveting documentaries series. *How to Make a Murderer* (2015) *Icarus* (2017), *The Keepers* (2017), *American Factory* (2019) and more recently *Tiger King* (2020) are just some of the critically acclaimed documentaries that Netflix has put out. *The Last Dance* though sets the bar even higher giving a dumb, dumb like myself a full and immersive screening experience in a subject I know absolutely nothing about. The Last Dance is a slam dunk! That's a good thing right?