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A new DVD box set shoots to capture the legacy of Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls.



# Big shot DVDs

## Rush to capture great sport legends

By MICHAEL GILTZ

DVD stores are flooded with hundreds of new titles every week. First came the movies. Then came TV shows in full-season boxed sets that fans could never buy on VHS.

Now, the digital discs have created a brand new demand for all sorts of other genres, from TV news specials (MPI just released "ABC Primetime — Mel Gibson's 'Passion'" for \$14.98) to music videos (which never really took off on VHS) and even commercials. (That Jerry Seinfeld and Superman "webisode" is being given away at some movie theaters on a mini-DVD with the purchase of a soda.)

But perhaps no genre is set to capitalize on the new opportunities of DVD more than professional sports.

Elaborate boxed sets are already out covering the first 10 Super Bowls and the first 100 years of the World Series. And any sport that doesn't already have multi-DVD sets in the works is frantically making plans to do so.

"Super Bowl I-XI" has done well," says Norbert Hudak of Warner Bros. Home Video about the five-disc set costing around \$65. "Our orders tripled since the street date. We'll have 'Super Bowl XI-XX' out for Father's Day and then we'll come back with the third decade by the end of this year and then as soon as we get to number 40, we'll release that as well."

The NFL is also releasing titles covering the history of their major franchises, such as the Dallas Cowboys and the Green Bay Packers.

The NBA is making a full-court press on DVD as well, with a four-disc set covering the '90s dominance of the Chicago Bulls, led by Michael Jordan, and a five-disc set covering the complete history of the Los Angeles Lakers. For the first time, complete games will be included in the package, with fans getting six of the best match-ups from each championship season of the Bulls and nine entire games featuring the Lakers.

That simply wasn't feasible with video, says Larry Weitzman, the NBA's vice president of production and programming.

"With VHS, you'd have to fast forward forever to find what you want,"

says Weitzman. "With the menu, if you want to see a 'Meet The Champs' tape of the 1953 Minneapolis Lakers, boom! Or if you want to see Magic Johnson or the baby hook, it's there."

Other professional sports leagues say they're also ready to make the mountains of footage they own into DVD boxed sets.

The United States Tennis Association currently doesn't put out a U.S. Open DVD set. But "we are actively trying to make that happen in the very near future," says spokesman Chris Widmaier.

Boxed sets covering the U.S. Open's complete history at Flushing Meadow, and then other sets covering the National Tennis Center era — not to mention sets devoted to stars like Chris Evert — are all possibilities they want to explore.

Major League Baseball puts out a quick, post-World Series title that recaps the best moments of the October match-up. But why not put out the *entire* World Series — every moment of every game in a boxed set with extras? Individual titles focusing on teams like the New York Yankees, stuffed full with enough footage to make Ken Burns weep, are only a matter of time.

"There's absolutely no doubt we're thinking about it," says Steve Fortunato, a senior managing producer for Major League Baseball. "The footage is at our disposal, and if there's a demand out there, we'll address it."

Hockey, NASCAR, the Kentucky Derby — there isn't a sporting event around that doesn't have a wildly passionate core fan base that would kill to have easy access to some of the great moments in their history.

Experts believe the Olympics are so completely untapped that any major effort to release the footage would be an instant hit. (The skimpy "2002 Olympic Games — Olympic Highlights" DVD with one disc and less than two hours of footage suddenly looks like a relic of the past.)

"We all knew that in the digital age, the value of a sports library was only going to increase," says the NBA's Weitzman. "All that talk is now coming to fruition with leagues having their own cable channels, their own websites and definitely DVDs."