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Bully. Flop. Elbow. Yank. Complain. Taunt. This is Dwight Howard's role for the Los Angeles Lakers.

The three-time Defensive Player of the Year is now essentially a hired goon off the bench against star Denver Nuggets center Nikola Jokic, and it has yielded mostly positive results in a Western Conference finals series the Lakers now lead 2-0. And one person is sure what he is doing is cool: Dwight Howard. Per Amick, several Nuggets staffers, including strength and conditioning coach Felipe Eichenberger, took offense and engaged in a war of words with Howard before the two sides returned to their locker rooms.

This is an attempt to be a bully by a player who everyone wished had been a bully throughout his career. It is a heel turn from an eight-time All-Star who spent his previous NBA stays trying to craft a cleaner image.

Before Howard ever checked into Sunday's game, upon learning Jokic was tasked with defending Lakers star Anthony Davis, the 34-year-old big man joined teammate JaVale McGee in calling the Nuggets center everything from "steak dinner" to "a glass of champagne, " according to Yahoo Sports insider Chris Haynes. It turns out Howard is still extremely annoying, just as he was during tours of duty for the Orlando Magic, Kobe Bryant's Lakers, the Houston Rockets, Atlanta Hawks, Charlotte Hornets and Washington Wizards. Only, instead of rubbing his teammates the wrong way, Howard has turned to pissing off his opponents.

It can border on absurd and turn ineffective quickly, but at least he is competing " the biggest criticism Bryant and other former teammates repeatedly levied against him over the past decade. He was wildly effective in Game 1, scoring 13 points on five shots off the bench and disrupting Jokic's playmaking, so much so that there was considerable discussion about whether Howard should start Game 2 against Jokic.

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