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Sports Stack

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It's Not Greg Oden's Fault

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Written by [kylestack](#) on 11/18/2010 11:58:15 PM

When the NBA's Portland Trail Blazers drafted center Greg Oden with the first overall pick in the 2007 draft, it was assumed he'd provide defensive excellence on the hardwood. Instead, all he's provided are unrealized expectations and medical bills. Oden is 22 years old, in his fourth NBA season and has just 82 games on his NBA resume.

It was announced this week that Oden will miss the rest of this season—he hasn't played one game yet—to undergo microfracture surgery on his left knee to repair damaged cartilage. It's his third knee surgery since entering the NBA.

Oden underwent microfracture surgery on his right knee before his rookie season. The operation's 6-to-12 month recovery time forced him to miss that entire 2007-08 campaign. A sprained right foot, suffered in his first game back, and a chipped left patella caused him to play just 61 games his second season.

His third season ended prematurely in early December 2009 when he fractured his left patella. That also required surgery, from which he was supposed to recover in time to begin this season. Then this latest microfracture surgery was announced. The Trail Blazers said the cartilage damage is unrelated to his formerly busted patella, but what does it matter at this point?

Cynics focus on the Trail Blazers passing on forward Kevin Durant to select Oden in the 2007 draft. Durant is the Oklahoma City Thunder MVP candidate who has a 25.4 career scoring average and is widely considered among the top five players in the game. Oden and Durant's careers couldn't have taken more divergent paths.

Yet it's fruitless to harp on the Blazers drafting Oden rather than Durant. The Blazers couldn't have predicted Oden's body wasn't built to be a professional athlete. Every person reacts differently to physical stress—Oden's body simply can't handle day-to-day pounding. That's not his fault. He shouldn't be castigated for his missed time. However, that won't prevent sports fans like me from remembering him as anything other than a disappointment.

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