

NBA teams should draft more wisely

SPORTS

Yao. Wow.

For months, speculation has had Chinese superstar Yao Ming going first in the NBA Draft and Wednesday, the prophecies came true.

Too bad.

In a league where size matters, Houston spent its first pick on seven-plus feet of skin, bones and jump shooting. Did somebody in the organization forget to realize that a center without post-up moves is about as useful as Shaq shooting free throws?



Brad Schmidt
Sports editor

Sure, the big guy claims to make them when they count, but the

only reason he gets the opportunity to put up uncontested flicks-of-the-wrist is because he's a dominant force close to the basket.

Does Houston really believe that teams won't be smart enough to put a power forward, maybe even a small forward on Yao to frustrate the quick-bodied "center?"

As much as I hate to give free press to a movie, I think we've all heard of the "Great White Hype."

Remember Shawn Bradley? As much as we'd love to believe Yao is different, he isn't.

He's Chinese, taller than some trees, from overseas, but, really, please.

With a frame like his, Ming will be lucky to last past his guaranteed three-year contract. Big bodies like Shaq will pound Ming, athletic fours like Rasheed Wallace will rise above Ming, and quick and tall players like Kevin Garnett will abuse Ming in every aspect of the game.

A few years back, athletes chosen in the lottery made an immediate impact. No longer.

In last year's draft, only Pau

Gasol and Shane Battier — both of the Memphis Grizzlies — made significant contributions. Teams like the Bulls crossed their fingers and, in one humble sports fan's opinion, made huge mistakes by drafting kids who just graduated from high school and probably don't even know what B.A. stands for.

Judging by the Bulls' previous lottery picks, Jay-don't-call-me-son Williams will be a bust. The guy can't hit free throws when they count and his quick step will only get him so far on a team of throw-aways. Add to that potential chemistry problems with Jalen Rose, who was happier than a nun on Sunday to end up in Chicago — a team with no direction that allows him to shoot continuously.

While it is true that it takes kids some time to develop, when a player goes in the lottery, fans want to see immediate results. Not since 1999, when Elton Brand, Stevie Franchise, Baron Davis, Andre Miller and Jason Terry were drafted, have we seen impact.

Mike Dunleavy will, without a doubt, be named Rookie of the Year. He's still growing and adds bulk each year. His sharp shooting and pesky defense place him atop the forward-laden draft. Junior will get plenty of playing time with Golden State and with Jason Richardson still developing aside the always-shooting Antawn Jamison, Run-TMC could be resurrected as Gun-JRD.

And as for the Blazers?

The team that is always rebuilding, reworking and regressing chose junior college small forward Qyntel Woods, an unpolished player who will need a few years to develop. Judging from the Blazers' depth at just about every position, he should have plenty of time.

Another brilliant move by the Blazers.

And maybe, just maybe, he'll be good. If that's the case, he'll want out. Just ask Jermaine O'Neal.

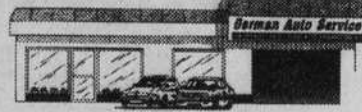
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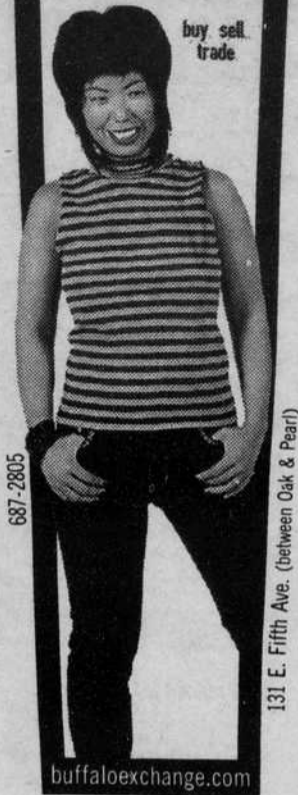
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