



Sports Talk

by Ron Sykes
Sports Editor

Americans, as a people, have always had a tendency to be believers. Collectively they've believed in baseball, bubble gum and apple pie.

Basketball fans for some reason are not following this seemingly inbred American tradition. For some foolish reason some still are disbelieving of the basketball skills of one Lloyd Free of the play-off bound San Diego Clippers.

Portland was victorious Tuesday night 115-109 in a must game for them if they were to keep their play-off hopes alive.

Thanks to a strong effort by the team in general and rookie Mychal Thompson in particular.

Mychal scored a team leading 27 points, added 10 rebounds and 3 blocked shots.

Lloyd Free is something else. Don't believe his critics when they tell you about his poor defense. Free, as a player can do it all. He's quick, strong and the possessor of the deadliest jump shot in the NBA.

Tuesday night Free was holing 35

foot jumpers, putting on dazzling moves to the hoop and playing, yes, playing good team defense.

"I've always played the game the same way," said a smiling Free, "and it's hard for me to understand why I receive bad press. Especially when I see guys like Maravich (Pete) being praised around the league."

I readily agree. Free can do everything Maravich can and do them better. The press can make or break a player.

A favorable press has made a superstar of a player like Maravich, while at the same time trying to knock a good player, Lloyd Free, down to his knees.

It's good to see the young man keep his head up and take the bad knocks, while continuing to do his thing . . . and believe me he's doing it.

San Diego, a team of misfits, are going to make the play-offs. They are a strong rebounding team with an abundance of quickness . . . and man

can they score. Offensively Randy Smith and Free are the best guard duo in the game. Together they launch jump shots from so far out that it would put downtown Freddie Brown to shame.

And, too, it's good to see Sidney Wicks, ex-Blazer forward playing his game again.

Sidney has apparently overcome a few personal problems that seriously threatened his career a year ago, and is now beginning to play the game the way we remember him in his days with UCLA and the early years in Portland.

Sure the fans in Portland town still boo Sid, but the reasons for that are obvious.

Why aren't the Wicks' and the Frees' of the NBA not appreciated more?

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The Big Ten, long known for its football prowess and seldom thought of by basketball followers as a strong conference, has now erupted as the best. Check this out: when post season play began the Big Ten was in a dilemma. Where most conferences automatically send their champions to the NCAA the Big Ten had not one, but three champions . . . tri champions — Michigan State, Purdue and Iowa. Michigan State and Iowa were selected to represent the Big Ten in the NCAA, while Purdue was joined by Indiana and Ohio State in the NIT.

Last Saturday a national television audience was thrilled by the magic of Earvin Johnson and Greg Kelser as the #4 ranked MSU Spartans destroyed the third ranking "fighting Irish" from Notre Dame. And while all this

was going on in Cincinnati the other three Big Ten teams in the NIT were fighting it out in the semi-finals and setting up an all Big Ten final.

Not only is it an all Big Ten final but even more important it's an all Indiana final.

Indiana, long thought of as the hot bed of basketball in the U.S. is certainly making that old cliché look good this year.

Larry Bird and his Indiana State Seminoles are trying this weekend to capture the NCAA crown and if that happens the Hoosier state will have acquired bragging rights for the next fifty years.

And Larry Bird, 6'9" forward for the ISU Seminoles was selected by the coaches as the best collegiate basketball player in the country. And if Bird is the best, then I'm a nuclear physicist and I know the struggles I had with high school algebra.

How good is Bird? Larry Bird is a good basketball player who can shoot the eyes out of the basket. But no better shooter than Lloyd Free. Bird is a step slow and will have trouble with defense in the NBA.

Remember a player out of Providence, Ernie Digregorio? Well, "The Bird" has the same skills as Ernie . . . only Bird is bigger at 6'9". Just wonder how good Lloyd Free would be if he had blond hair and blue eyes . . . Finally my picks for the NIT and the NCAA. First the NIT champion will be Purdue. L.B. Carroll, the big 7'1" center will be the difference. Purdue by five.

In the NCAA it's Michigan State. The magic and wizardry of Johnson will be too much. Michigan State Spartans will soundly whip Illinois State Saturday, and will beat DePaul for the championship on Monday night.

Only the strong survive

by Ulysses Tucker, Jr.

When "Fast" Eddie Jordan starred in basketball at Archbishop Carroll High School in Washington, D.C. he was one of several young athletes making the headlines throughout the talent rich area.

Among the players Jordan played against in high school were Adain Dantley and Kenny Carr of Dematha (Lakers), Larry Wright of Western (Bullets), Larry Herron (Belgium), Keith Herron (Blazers-Hawks), Duck Williams (Notre Dame, Jazz), Tony Martin (currently of OSU) and James "Turkey" Tillman of Eastern High, the fourth leading scorer in the nation this season at Eastern Kentucky, who was eliminated in the NCAA play-offs.

Not to mention the forerunners like Elgin Baylor, Austin Carr, Dave Bing, Fatty Taylor and John Tresvant to name a few.

"The competition was very intense," said Jordan, a former all-metropolitan in high school and all-American his senior year (1973). "And I'm not surprised at the number of athletes from the area who are now receiving national attention."

What is the playground like?

"If a brother had some type of talent, and could survive on the playgrounds he more than likely moved to higher levels of play. Street ball is more like a weeding out process, and only the strong survive. It taught me my basic skills," said Jordan.

"Fast" Eddie survived enough to attend Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey where new coach Tom Young was building a program. Young saw Jordan play at Carroll when he was the head coach at American University in D.C., where Kermit Washington (Clippers) had just graduated. Washington is also a native of the nations capital.

Jordan, along with Phil Sellers, Hollis Copeland, James Bailey and a talented Rutgers team rose as high as 30-0 record before falling in the final four twice in the 1977 NCAA tournament. (They played in the 1976 NIT also.) Jordan earned All-East, and All-American honors his last two years in college.

Jordan who was originally selected by the Cleveland Cavaliers in 1977, was released before the season. "There was a large group of guards that year, and everyone was pretty talented," he said. "I knew sooner or later that someone had to be released, so happens it turned out to be me, but that's how this game is."

Fortunately, Jordan regained new life in New Brunswick where the people always loved him from his days at Rutgers. The New Jersey Nets play on the same floor where "Fast" Eddie led his alma mater to glory.

"The people here are beautiful, and have been behind us 100 percent, they are really starting to pick up since we have a shot at the play-offs," he said.

Let Coach Kevin Loughery explain. "Ed can be labeled as one of the biggest reasons for our team being in play-off position," said the former NBA All-Star for the Bullets. "He's quick, plays great defense, and is the quarterback of the team."

Jordan's value to the Nets became obvious when New Jersey dealt Eric Money to Philadelphia in a mid-



EDDIE JORDAN

season trade. Loughery went on to say, "The whole team respects him because he's always giving a 110 percent all the time. Eddie brings out the best in the other guys," he said.

The Nets, who have dropped eight out of their last ten games are struggling to make it back to their natural habitat. They are the victims of an "almost impossible time schedule trying to make stops on the west coast." So far they've lost to the Blazers 124-113 and to a hot Clipper-club 110-98, but bounced back to beat the Pistons' last night behind Jordan's 29 points.

"It's been rough for us on the road all season long," said Jordan. "But I think that by the time we reach the end of the season, we will be regrouped enough to make a run in the eastern play-offs."

Against the Blazers, Jordan scored 28 points, had eight steals, and six rebounds in 48 minutes of play. What more can a coach ask for?

"A championship," he quickly replied with a smile. Jordan is currently averaging 12.0 per game but over the last twenty-five games he has scored at a 18.0 clip. He also leads in steals and assists.

The New Jersey Nets who sport players like "Sometimes Super" John Williamson, and the trouble plagued Bernard King have a record of 34-37 appear to be heading toward the play-offs — maybe if the Blazers moved back east with their 38-33 record, their chances would be better.

SHORT SHAKES . . . Linnton Community Center will sponsor its third annual basketball featuring the University of Portland Pilots. There will be movies, free "T" shirts (if Nike acts right), autographed Blazer basketball drawing, movies of the NBA play-offs, etc. Date: March 31st. For further information contact Ulysses Tucker, Jr., Activities Coordinator at 286-1344 (work), 287-7563 (home) or Micki Scott at 223-7413. Cost: \$1; Ages 7-11, 9:30-11:30 a.m.; Ages 12-16, 12:30-2:30 p.m. Spend a day with your favorite Pilot!

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10	695	1 in 9,475	1 in 729	1 in 364
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