



Sports Talk

by Ron Sykes
Sports Editor

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The Blazers are playing very sound defense and limiting opponents to an all time low average of 84.5 per contest. The current Portland entry in the NBA is a bunch of hard working non-stars, who are willing to give their all, on defense, for every minute of the game.

People ask, are the Blazers for real? Well, they're 6-0, and off to the best start in club history and I believe they're for real.

First-the chemistry of the team is right. It has been proven that this ingredient is far more important than trying to assemble a bunch of so-called super stars, or big name players. What is more important is complementing each other. And that they are doing.

Now with such starters as Maurice Lucas (broken knuckle), Lionel Hollins (sore knee), Dave Twardzik (bad back) returning to the lineup, this chemistry will certainly change. Or should it? Some coaches in the past have been reluctant to break up a winning combination. Ramsey has publicly stated that Lucas "would have to work his way back into the flow of things, but he wouldn't return as a starter." Can't blame him, because Luke hasn't been the most cooperative player, the past few weeks.

Add to that, the strong play of newly acquired power forward Kermit Washington, and now Luke's problems become two-fold. Washington adds so much to the Blazers that it will be really hard to put him down. Kermit is a force on Defense and has been more than impressive. The guard situation won't be that hard for Ramsey. T.R. Dunn is doing a fine job, but when Hollins is healthy, he'll move back in. Dunn will make a strong back up for Hollins and with the knee problems suffered by Lionel, T.R. will play more minutes and this alone will ensure that Lionel won't have to log excessive minutes until the knee is adequately healed.

Dunn on defense has really been tough, and he, too, has been a part of this chemistry. The big question now is, who will go? Jim Brewer, Abdul Jeelani, appear as likely candidates for dismissal. Ok, sure Jeelani has played exceptionally well when given the chance. It's going to be tough for Ramsey to ax the man who has shown he has very good offensive skills, good quickness, adequate rebounding ability, but is lacking somewhat on defense. Jeelani can and will play in this league-if not for Portland, then surely for some other team.

Back to Kermit Washington. Kermit, I must admit, is more than just the ordinary journeyman. Kermit Washington plays intelligently and does play well within himself. And that is an important commodity.

Believe me, this will be an exciting season for Portland fans. My prediction for the month of October is 10 wins and one loss.

Now that Craig Fertig is gone, can Dee Andros be far behind?

Blazers Notes

Needless to say, the name of Portland's game has been defense...the Blazers have outshot all opponents to

date (season shooting marks are .509 to .418) and have outrebounded all of them...the Blazers have led in assists in all five games...and in blocked shots, the Blazers lead by 33-10 margin.

Portland vs. Golden State. The Warriors lead the all-time series 26-22, although Portland is 17-8 at home...but in Portland's first three seasons, the Blazers were only 4-12 against the Warriors. In the last six seasons, Portland is 17-14 in the series. The two teams split 2-2, last season.

Portland has sold out Memorial Coliseum for 106 regular season and playoff games in a row.

John Lucas, Warrior guard, came in with an 18 point scoring average against Portland, while amassing a hefty 8.8 assists per game. This year's defensive minded Blazers limited him to seven points and three assists; far below his average.

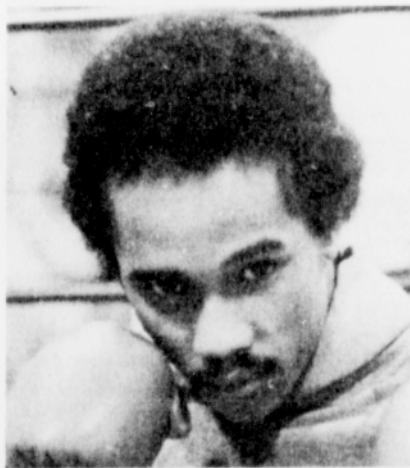
Kermit Washington, power forward obtained in the compensation for Bill Walton, has averaged 12 points and 10.2 rebounds a game. He has led the Blazers in rebounding in the last 4 of 5 games with totals of 12, 11, 11, and 12. Power forward Jim Brewer led the team against Golden State with 11, in just 26 minutes of playing time. Washington is shooting .571 from the field.

Abdul Jeelani, free agent forward who played in Rome, Italy the past two years, is shooting .500 from the floor on 16-32 and has scored 41 points in 77 minutes of action.

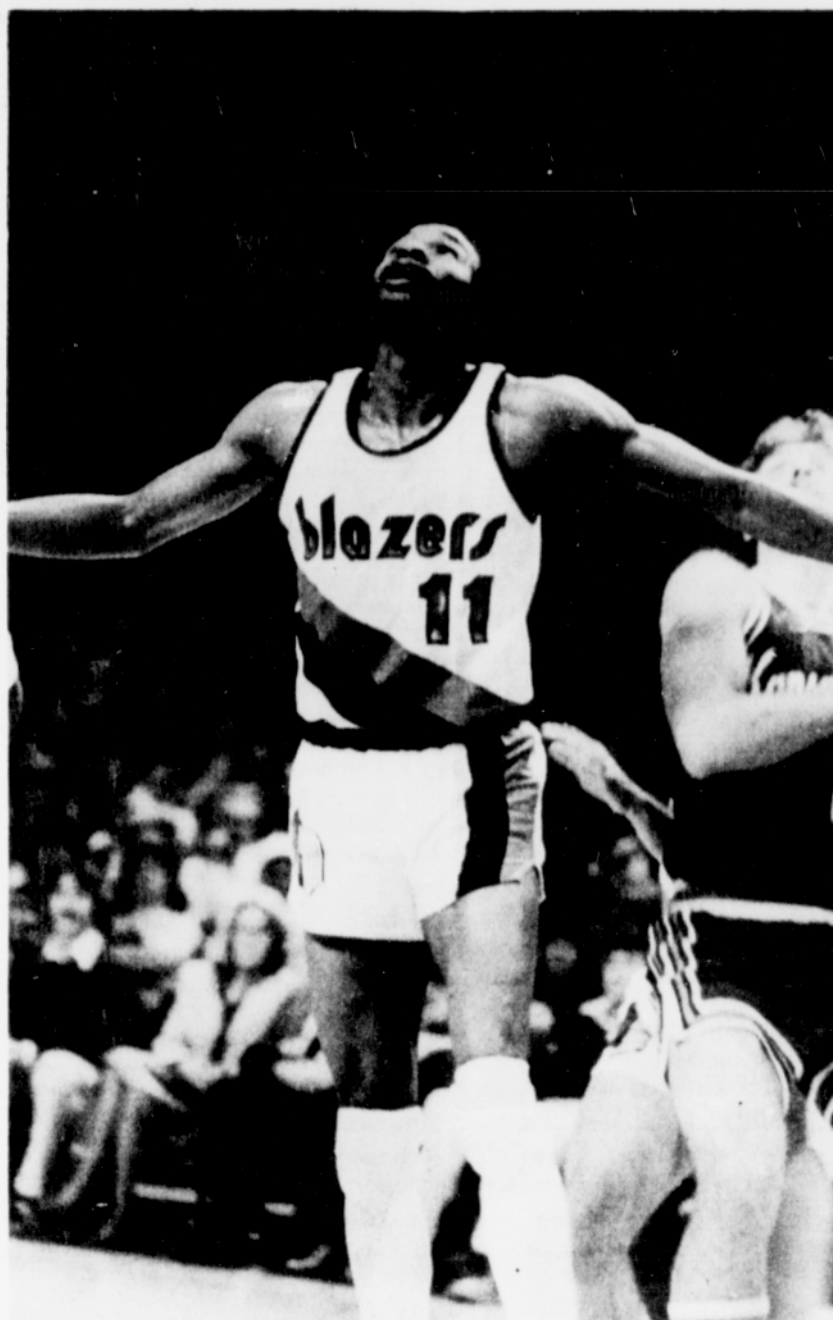
T.R. Dunn is shooting .490 from the field (25-51) and 875 from the foul line (7-8). He is averaging 11.4 points a game while collecting 34 rebounds in six contests.

Remember when... Saturday, February 7, 1976, the headlines of a local paper read: "Screaming Blazers whip Seattle." Portland coached by Lenny Wilkins had won 7 in a row by beating the Sonics 109-100 on the Seattle court. "We had lapses and that's natural," said then Blazer forward Sidney Wicks, who led his team with 5 points. "All teams have lapses. We kept playing hard and well, though it was a team effort thing because we don't rely on one man." On that night the Blazer line up was as follows: Sidney Wicks, Bob Gross at forwards Bill Walton, center and Geoff Petrie and Larry Steele at guard.

What does the current New York Knicks and the Harlem Globetrotters have in common? They're both all Black teams.



Curtis Ramsey will meet Eddie Nuno in a rematch Thursday at the Jantzen Beach Ice Arena. The welterweights fought to a draw in a match which angered fans and caused Ramsey to swear never to fight in Portland again. A home town fighter, Ramsey is expected to draw a large and expectant crowd.



ABDUL JEELANI IN ACTION

Jeelani: High scoring rookie

by Ulysses Tucker, Jr.

"I was confident in rookie camp and I am now," said Abdul Jeelani, 6'8 free agent forward from the Italian league where he starred in Rome for two seasons.

Out of the 18,537 college basketball players available last spring, the N.B.A. drafted only 220 and invited hundreds of free agents to battle through the summer leagues, fall camps, and preseason. Currently, there are 49 rookies scattered around the league on rosters and the injured reserve list. Jeelani is one of them.

Jeelani, originally drafted by Cleveland in 1976 after a brilliant career at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside where he became the all time leading scorer in the school's history by averaging 20.6 a game over a four year period. He also grabbed 1,237 rebounds in 110 games.

The former NAIA All-American has a reputation as being a shooter and have been labeled by some Blazer fans as "instant offense." "That's true," he answered quickly. "I've always been a good offensive player, once I get in my rhythm it's hard to stop me." Jeelani continued, "Coach Ramsey's system makes me just that much better because it involves motion. If a player does what he's supposed to do, he will receive good percentage shots. I want to do my best within that framework." best within that framework." floor and has scored 47 points in just 115 minutes of action, to average 7.6 per game with his best effort coming against the Lakers when he scored 12 points.

"I was really up for beating L.A., and I think that the fact that I did so well helped me to get over a mental hurdle," he said. "You wouldn't believe how much that did for my confidence, but it could have worked the other way around." Jeelani has also grabbed 20 rebounds in seven games for the undefeated Blazers.

What has been your biggest adjustment? "Coming off the bench was a problem in the beginning, because I've started every game throughout my career," he said. "Now, I know that if I'm going to get five minutes, I have to give Jack Ramsey the best five minutes I possibly can. It's ten minutes, then it's the same. It'll make me a better player in the long run."

Jeelani acknowledged that fact that he needs to work on playing defense in the NBA. "The coaches are really helping me to correct the mistakes that I make," he said. "Sometimes my man gets by me but our team defense is so well, that one of the other players will cover my back. We really work hard at defense."

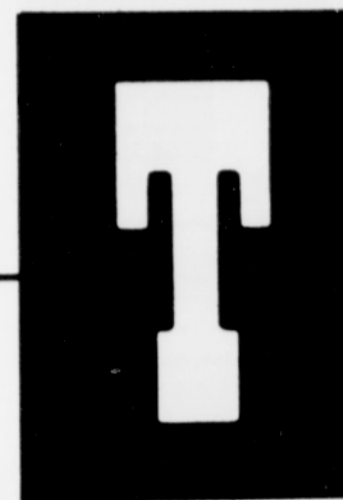
The Blazers lead their opponents 39-10 in blocked shots, and own the best defensive average in the N.B.A. with a 84.5 yield per game. No team has scored one hundred points on the Blazers this season.

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