



Sport Talk

by Ron Sykes
Sports editor

How quickly they forget to remember in last year's playoff series that Dennis Johnson, Sonic guard, was given all this praise as the deliverer, the man that made the big plays, enabling Seattle to overcome the rough house Washington Bullets. Well, just one year later and after losing 4-1 to the Los Angeles Lakers all this has changed.

Remember last year Lenny Wilkens was being hailed as the NBA coach of the year, though he didn't win it, most followers of NBA basketball considered Lenny as the rightful Coach of the Year. Well, after after only one year, and a 4-1 series loss to the Lakers this, too, has changed. Art Shiel, Seattle Post Intelligencer, reports the following: "So what do you do about Dennis Johnson?" That's the big question that pecks at Sonic coaches Lenny Wilkens and Les Habetger as they begin a summer longer than expected.

On the surface, some may ask, "Why do anything?" Is he not the most talented guard in the NBA?

No, not if Hoffer's definition of true talent is proper. If talent is more than the ability to solo through three defenders for a layup, or score a three-point field goal. This season D.J. reportedly turned a good deal of his talent to the latter items. Success was limited.

By his own admission (D.J.'s), he is not a shooter. In the middle of last season's title run, he said, "I just try to play good 'D' and rebound, because I know the scoring on this team will take care of itself." For doing this Johnson was rewarded with a big \$400,000 a year contract.

Observers now believe this was the beginning of the end for D.J. and the Sonics. Trying to justify the big raise D.J.'s shooting fell from a tepid 43 percent to a lowly 40 percent. It should be noted that at the same time Johnson's shooting percentage was falling, his scoring average was rising. This causes problems.

D.J. has always been the master of inside scoring, but many believe that his raise in salary led the young man to believe he had to do it all, score outside as well.

It is not the simple matter of a few bad shots, Shiel writes, because every player in the league joins D.J. in that inevitability. Johnson's greenery is symptomatic of the Sonic's most significant problem: the erosion of Sonic discipline as espoused by Wilkens.

Wilkens, remember him of last year? Well, forget that and listen to some of the knocks he's now taking after losing.

Last year there was dynasty talk, now there's rumors of quarrels on

the floor, etc. Wilkens is now called a weak leader, he lacks a strong leader's hand. More than one Sonic player confided this past season that the Seattle team was one of the looest in the NBA, both on and off the court. The latitude given the players was enormous. The practice sessions were described by some as ineffective for the teaching of rookies and the improving of second-line players.

Remember last year when the Sonics were supposed to have the league's strongest bench. Well, what a difference a year makes. Here's how John Engstrom, another Seattle writer sees it. "Nearly every good club in the NBA has at least one reserve about whom it is said, 'he would start on most other ball clubs.'" Engstrom doesn't think Seattle has that boosting power. And if what help would have been the presence of Calvin Natt, a player widely admired around the league who could have been Seattle's in the draft? Which also caused the Sonic chief scout to resign when Seattle opted for Vinnie Johnson, when Natt was their premier choice from the beginning.

Now back to D.J. and more knocks. Remember on D.J. these second pro fight was Davey Armstrong. Davey was an easy winner over Edmndo Arrellano.

One writer says, "When one

prominent player (D.J.) reverts to selfishness, the impact is greater than a simple bad shot. Almost imperceptably it snowballs. The open forward or center who doesn't get the ball is distracted for a moment and gets caught in transition. It happens a second and third time and frustration grows. There is no fourth time, because he doesn't want to make the effort to get open because he doesn't feel he will see the ball. The guard has no choice but to pump the 20 footer. Three losses later, Shiel reports, Wilkens sat on his three guards to get the ball inside, which they did almost too well. Also inside was Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. End of some season.

Those of you who were glued to the T.V. show in Los Angeles between the Eastern Conference Champions, Philadelphia vs the Western Conference Champions, Lakers, missed one whole of a super Jr. featherweight title fight between Leo Randolph, ex Olympic Gold Medalist and champion Ricardo Cordona. Randolph won in a 15th round TKO to become the third 1976 Gold Medalist to win a pro title. Sugar Ray Leonard and Leon Spinks preceded Randolph. Another Olympian fighting his second pro fight was Davey Armstrong. Davey was an easy winner over Edmndo Arrellano.

Mychal Thompson: Ready to play ball

By Ulysses Tucker, Jr.

For Mychal Thompson, the 6'9 forward-center of the Portland Trailblazers, it's been a very difficult time for him to watch his team lose, struggle, and scrape to make the N.B.A. play-offs.

This past summer he drove for a layup while working out with the Bahamian National Basketball Team. He broke his left leg and has been out of action since then. Thompson was expected to be back by the play-offs, but the specialist in Switzerland told him that he'd be wise to sit out the entire year.

Earlier in the season, several publications around the nation reported that Thompson may have possibly broke his leg playing football on the beach with friends. He denied the reports. The Blazer management supported his claims.

In any event, the only action the multi-talented athlete has had is with the swimming team, the weight room, and with the many exercises he performs to get back in shape. Mychal has developed a strong upper body in the process.

Although Mychal misses playing basketball, he has learned a great deal about himself, life, and the sport he loves so much. "By me not playing basketball this year, I've had time to think about things that I would have normally neglected," said Thompson.

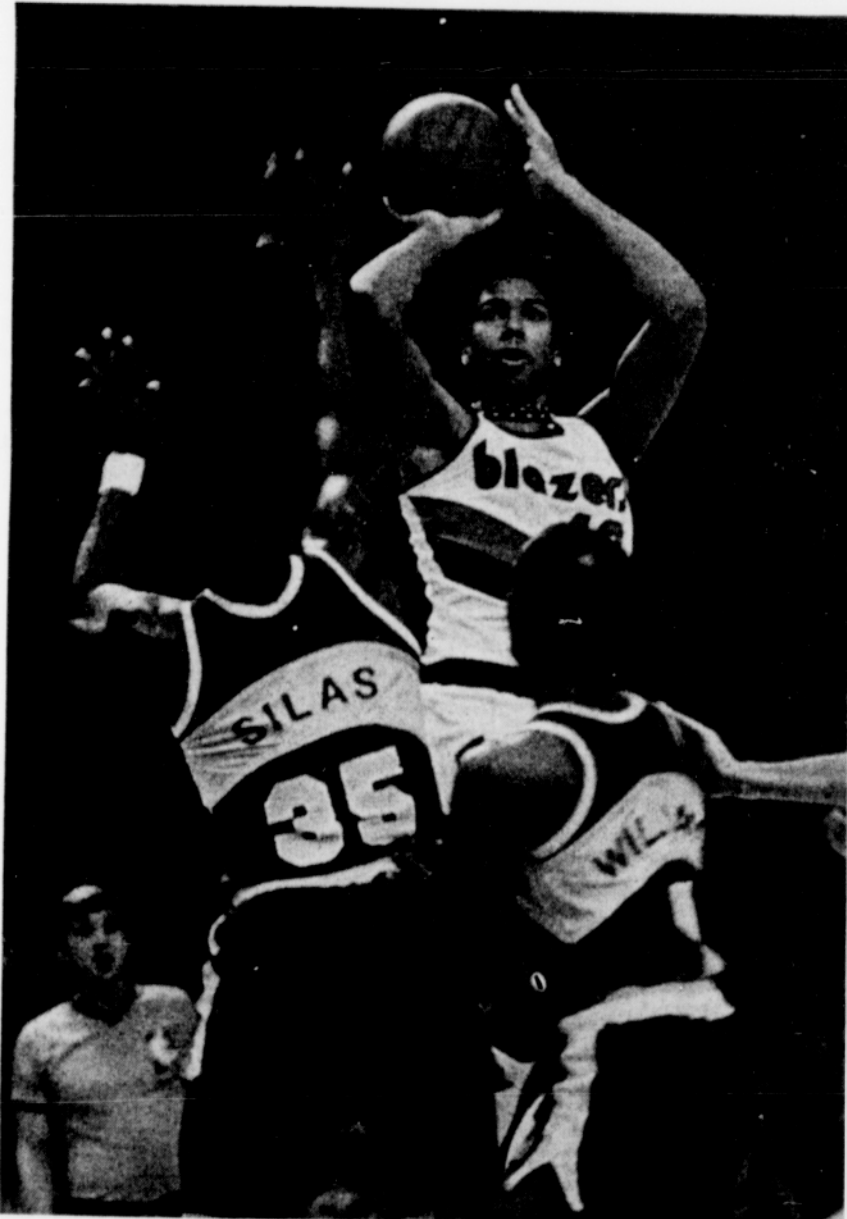
"I'm realizing that there are more things in life than basketball. Being away from the game has helped me to think about what I want to do with myself after basketball. I'm starting to look into some business ventures, and making some investments that will pay off in the future."

In 1978 Thompson, from the University of Minnesota, was the number one draft choice in the United States. Like the majority of athletes in the National Basketball Association, Thompson played basketball four seasons, but did not complete his degree requirements in four years.

"One day, I'd like to go back and finish," he said seriously. "I majored in business last time, but this time I would probably get into something along the lines of what you do (radio-television communications)." Thompson is one year away from a college degree.

Last season, Thompson averaged 14.7 points a game, hauled in 604 rebounds for a 8.3 average, was second in offensive rebounds with 198, shot a strong .490 from the field and led the club in blocked shots with 134. These figures and his overall play earned him honors on the N.B.A. All-Rookie team.

The Blazers should have an excellent frontline next year with Thompson's return, the addition of Calvin Natt, and Kermit "Chair-



MYCHAL THOMPSON

man of the Boards" Washington.

"Can you believe that I've never played with either Calvin or Kermit?" Mychal asked. "I'm really looking forward to teaming up with them next, as well as the rest of the team. We should be very strong on the boards. When you control the boards, you control the game. I love

to rebound. I like that over scoring points."

Thompson's advice to the younger athlete, even though he did not graduate, is to have an education to back you up just in case you fail to make the professional ranks. Don't wait until you get hurt like me to put your life in perspective. Do it sooner."



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Citizen of the Week



Nearly every night of the week finds Edna Robertson at community meetings facilitating citizen participation in the decision making process.

A native of Birmingham, Ms. Robertson came to Oregon in 1957. She joined the Model Cities Agency staff in 1970 as a citizen planning coordinator and soon became Coordinator of Citizen Participation. Her role was to organize and coordinate citizen groups, community meetings, and forums, neighborhood associations, advisory committees, public relations and information and referral. The Model Cities Citizen Participation and its neighborhood organization became the model for the City's Office of Neighborhood Organizations and the Neighborhood Associations.

When Model Cities was terminated Ms. Robertson was transitioned to the City of Portland as Coordinator of the Northeast District. She works for nine neighborhood associations.

Aside from her employment, which allows her the public contact she enjoys, Ms. Robertson is and has been involved in a number of community organizations including the Community Coalition for School Integration, the Black United Front, the NAACP. She served on the boards of PMSC, the Albina Action Center, the Multnomah County Northeast Quadrant, the Albina Health Center, the Multnomah School Advisory Committee, and the North YMCA board. She organized the Black Concerned Parents. She is a board member of the National Health Consumers Conference and a member of the National Citizens Participation Conference.

She has three children: Synetta Morris, a bank employee; Terry Lynn Robertson, a Wilson senior who will attend OSU next year; Felicia Robertson, a fifth grader at Maplewood.

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