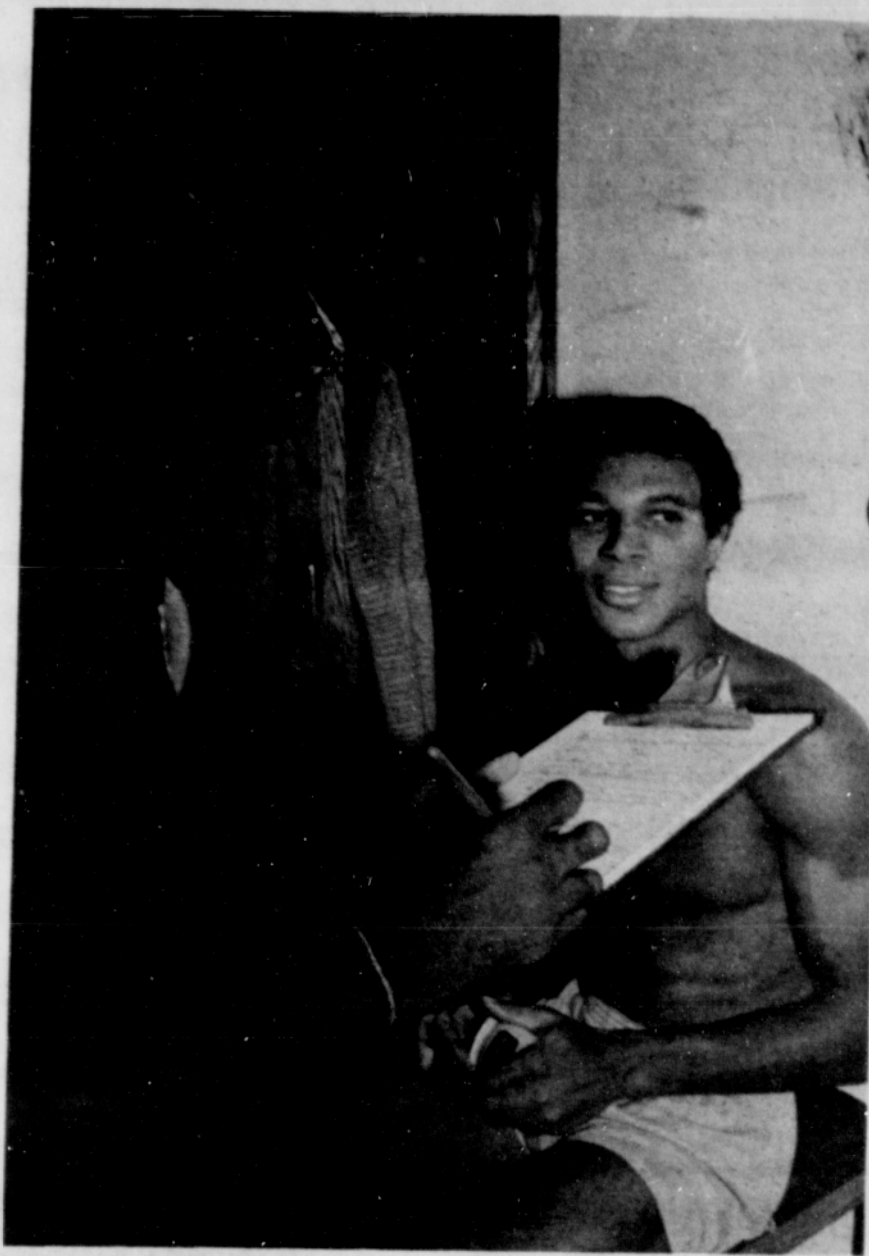


Blazers ready Darnell Valentine comes on board



Observer reporter Ulysses Tucker, Jr. interviews Darnell Valentine.

(Photo: Jimmy Robinson)

Sunday, October 18
San Francisco at Green Bay 10 a.m.
Tampa Bay at Oakland, 1 p.m.
Buffalo at New York Jets
Houston at New England
New Orleans at Cleveland
Philadelphia at Minnesota
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati
St. Louis at Atlanta

Washington at Miami
San Diego at Baltimore
New York Giants at Seattle
Denver at Kansas City
Los Angeles at Dallas, n.
Monday, October 19
Chicago at Detroit, 6 p.m.

by Ulysses Tucker, Jr.

According to Blazer rookie Darnell Valentine, the first round pick in the 1981 college draft and "sparkplug" of the team's 1-1 pre-season record, his biggest adjustment has been trying to get over the dream of playing at the N.B.A. level.

"Basketball is basketball anywhere you go but it's like I'm in a fantasy here and I'm learning to get over the dream," he said.

A product of the University of Kansas where he learned to play serious and aggressive defense under Ted Owens, Valentine has added a dimension to the Blazer attack that was non-existent last year. Mike Gale was considered the only defensive guard on the roster last season. Jack Ramsey explains.

"He has played great," he said. "We drafted him because of what he could add to the team defensively and he really picks us up. Darnell needs some toning on his offense because sometime he forces things but he's a goer. He's very positive and I think he will do well in this league."

In four years at the University of Kansas, Valentine scored 1,821 points, grabbed 408 rebounds, and sported a college career scoring average of 15.4. He was named to the Sporting News All American Team in 1979 and 1981; he was also a member of the U.S. Olympic team in 1980.

When questioned about playing with the combination of Jim Paxson, Billy Ray "Drink Your Milk Baby" Bates, and Kelvin Ransey, Valentine said that it has been a rewarding learning experience.

"As far as experience is concerned, they really help me out because they always mention situa-

tions on the court that I've never seen before since I haven't played on this level. We are all young and have a lot of energy and I think playing together will be very complementary."

Kelvin Ransey agreed. "I think he is a nice guy and he is going to do well. Darnell is playing at both ends of the floor and people thought that he couldn't score. He has been our pre-season sparkplug and is easy to work with."

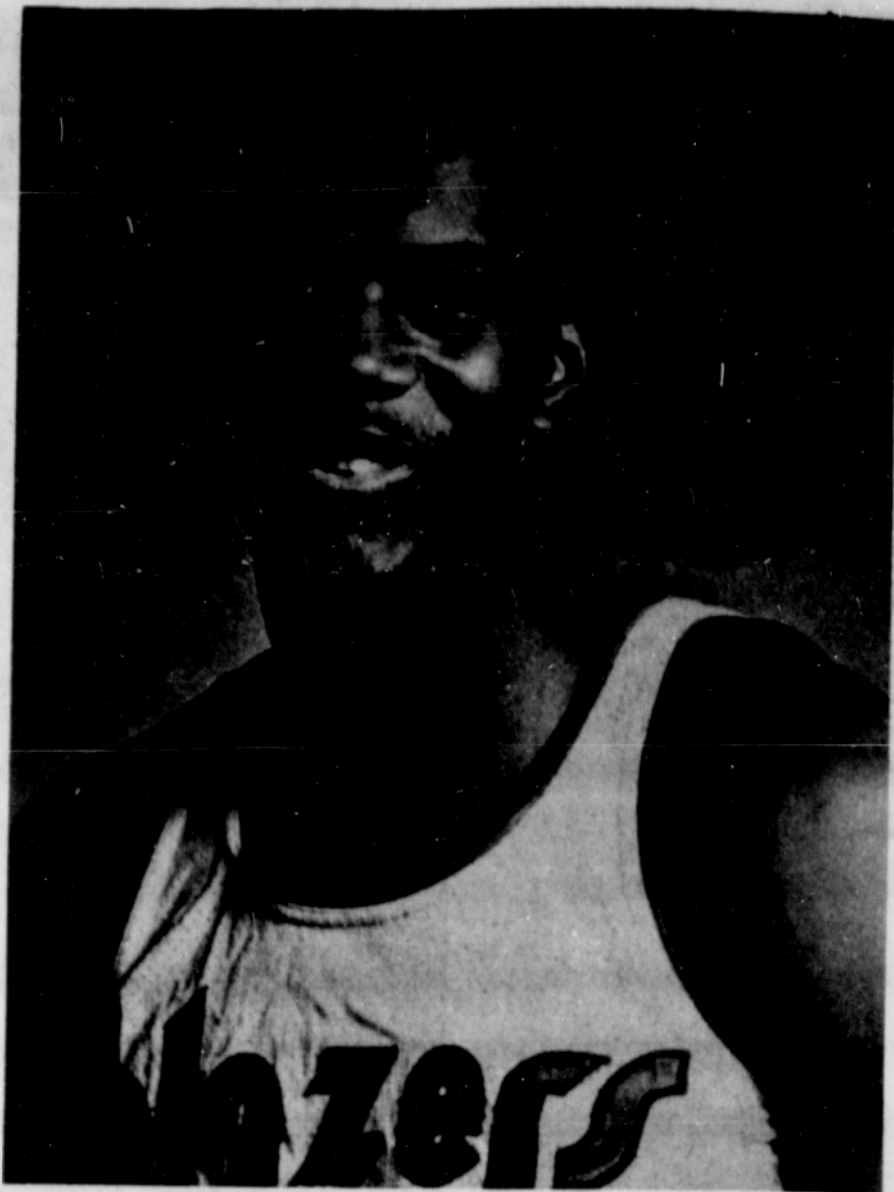
Ransey put aside the thought of losing his starting point guard position to young Valentine who runs as well as the Ohio State product and plays both guards.

"It's not a matter of him beating me out or my beating him out," he said. "What it boils down to is who is playing the best basketball. I feel real good about the situation because I know that if I'm playing bad, I have someone on the bench who can pick up the slack."

Billy Ray Bates puts it simply: "It's great to have two fine leadership guards on the same team. Knowing that both of them can get the job done adds a lot of confidence to the ballclub. I like the way he gets out and runs because I love to run. I'm looking forward to this season."

So is Valentine, who like most rookies in the N.B.A., will have his highs and lows during the course of the season. He says that the Blazers have made him feel relaxed and there's hardly any pressure.

"Jack Ramsey is a very knowledgeable coach and I respect him a great deal. He speaks on the game of basketball that's easy to identify with and he takes the time to show me my mistakes and where I'm doing well. I feel good about being a part of this fine organization," he said.



Will Kermit lead the Blazers to the NBA Championship? Keep in touch with the Portland Observer.

Portland boxers win fights

Portland light-heavyweight James Williams pulled a unanimous decision upset over Jesse Bynett of Los Angeles. Bynett is ranked No. 3 in the World Boxing Council ratings.

Portland's Daryl Penn won a unanimous middleweight decision over Sugar Ray Phillips of Dallas, Texas.

Watch for Curtis Ramsay, soon to appear at the Marriott. (right)



Sports Talk

by Ron Sykes, Sports Editor



During a 15-minute ceremony Sunday night at the Memorial Coliseum Dave Twardzik, Geoff Petrie and Larry Steele had their jerseys retired. And thus joined the likes of Boston's John Havlicek, Bill Russell, Dave Cowens and Bob Cousy.

It was a fine gesture by Blazer personnel... but was it deserving? By no means are we suggesting that the aforementioned Blazer group weren't good players, but just always believed that this, the retiring of jerseys, was for the all-time greats. One would have to expect that Kareem Abdul Jabbar would certainly be the last player ever to wear the purple and gold number 33 for the LA Lakers. And nobody should ever don the 13 worn so many years by Wilt Chamberlain. But were Petrie, Steele and Twardzik in the same class? Not hardly.

If the current Blazer policy prevails they will soon have more jerseys hanging from the rafters than Boston has championship pennants



Gross stopped by surgery.

hanging from atop the Boston Garden.

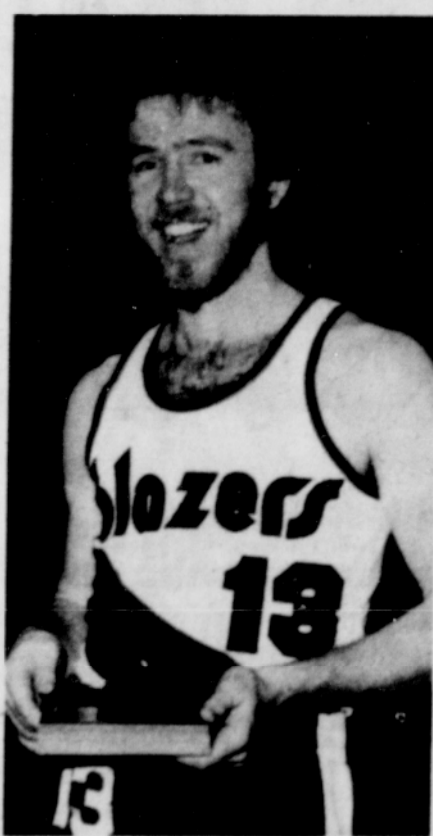
The Blazers went looking in the 1981 college draft for a big man. What they got was Darnell Valentine, 6-1, guard out of Kansas, who is fast proving that he is a big man. Valentine simply can play.

Portland fans will like this little dynamo who plays defense like you wouldn't believe.

Kelvin Ransey again appears slightly overweight. The duo of Valentine and Billy Ray Bates, called the second unit, appears at this point better than Jim Paxson and Kelvin Ransey. Bates is simply awesome. With the new rules, that insure opening of the middle, his game will simply flourish. Bates' play will demand more than the 10-15 minutes he was on the court last year.

Mychal Thompson, the new center, agreed during the summer to sacrifice his scoring to focus more on defense and rebounding. Now he's being criticized for not scoring, something he's always been able to do. No justice.

And Lawdy, Lawd, but isn't Reggie great. You could just tell by



DAVE TWARDZIK

his determined look that Reggie was going to hit one in that fourth inning rally in the deciding fifth game

Sunday. Reggie singlehandedly put the Yanks ahead and the momentum quickly swung to N.Y. with that tremendous three-run shot.

Steinbrenner was later to say, "That home run of Rick's [Cerone] in the seventh was the one that broke their backs." Cerone's maybe provided the icing on the cake, but it was Jackson's blast that brought the Yanks from a 2-0 deficit to a 3-2 lead, thus breaking Milwaukee's back. And wasn't it electrifying just watching Reggie circle the bases head down as only he can do?

Okay, so it's time to pick a world series winner. The Dodgers vs Montreal should be a good one. Both teams are evenly matched, both have key players, Tim Lincecum and Ron Cey, returning off injuries. The cold Montreal weather will be a factor. But, then, it will be equally cold for both. My pick is the Dodgers. They've been there so many times before and will probably perform a little better under the pressure. Dusty Baker and Steve Garvey will continue to deliver. The Dodgers 3-2.

The American League championship will be decided by a whistle.

There will be no runaway games. The Oakland As are scrappers, they will fight, scratch, claw until the end. The Yanks will rely on their power. This is a classic confrontation—power (Yanks) against finesse (As). My pick is N.Y. in a dog fight.

And can anyone believe that in this day of the wide-receivers, the hot backs and multi-talented QBs that a pro team would be shut out three times in a row? Well, the Oakland Raiders have. And believe me heads are going to roll. The first will be last year's Super Bowl MVP Jim Plunkett.

And hooray for the 49ers. San Francisco's thrashing of Dallas should show skeptics that they are no longer patsies. A revised defense led by Ronnie Lott, USC and Eric Wright, Missouri, has the 49ers on a roll.

Where is he now? Ken Houston, who retired from the NFL last year after 14 highly successful seasons, is now teaching school.

Houston, who finished his career with Washington in 1980, is a first year school teacher at Sterling High School in Southeast Houston.

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