

# Welcome to the NBA

by Ulysses Tucker, Jr.

National Basketball Association critics and scouts labeled former Oregon State University basketball star Steve Johnson as slow, a modern day axe man since he fouled out so much in college, and not aggressive.

Six clubs selected players before the Kansas City Kings made the 6-10½ 235-pounder their first-round pick in the 1981 college draft. Johnson missed the King's rookie camp because of contract hassles and came to work camp a few pounds overweight.

According to Cotton Fitzsimmons, head coach of the Kings, Johnson, a Sporting News All-American last season and a two-time NCAA field goal percentage leader has really been a blessing to his organization this season.

After the Kings dropped a 127-116 game to the Portland Trailblazers in which Johnson scored an NBA career high of 33 points and grabbed 18 rebounds before fouling out, Fitzsimmons made the following comment about his big center's progress as a pro.

"Steve is really learning the game. He must stop making the stupid fouls and the simple mistakes. He played a good game but Steve can block shots better, rebound better, think better, and block shots better. He is a good person also.

"We drafted him as our center of the future and we will be patient with him. He's going to be a great player with time and people are going to have an awfully tough time checking him inside. I like him because he is smart and he listens well," he said.

Johnson, who sported a 17.5 point career scoring average at Oregon State under the direction of

Ralph Miller agreed with what his coach had to say about him.

"Yeah, I'm really learning the game of basketball all over again," he said. "I've been working very hard and I'm happy with my progress. Tonight was by far my best game as a professional and I look forward to some more of them."

What has been your biggest adjustment from college to the NBA?

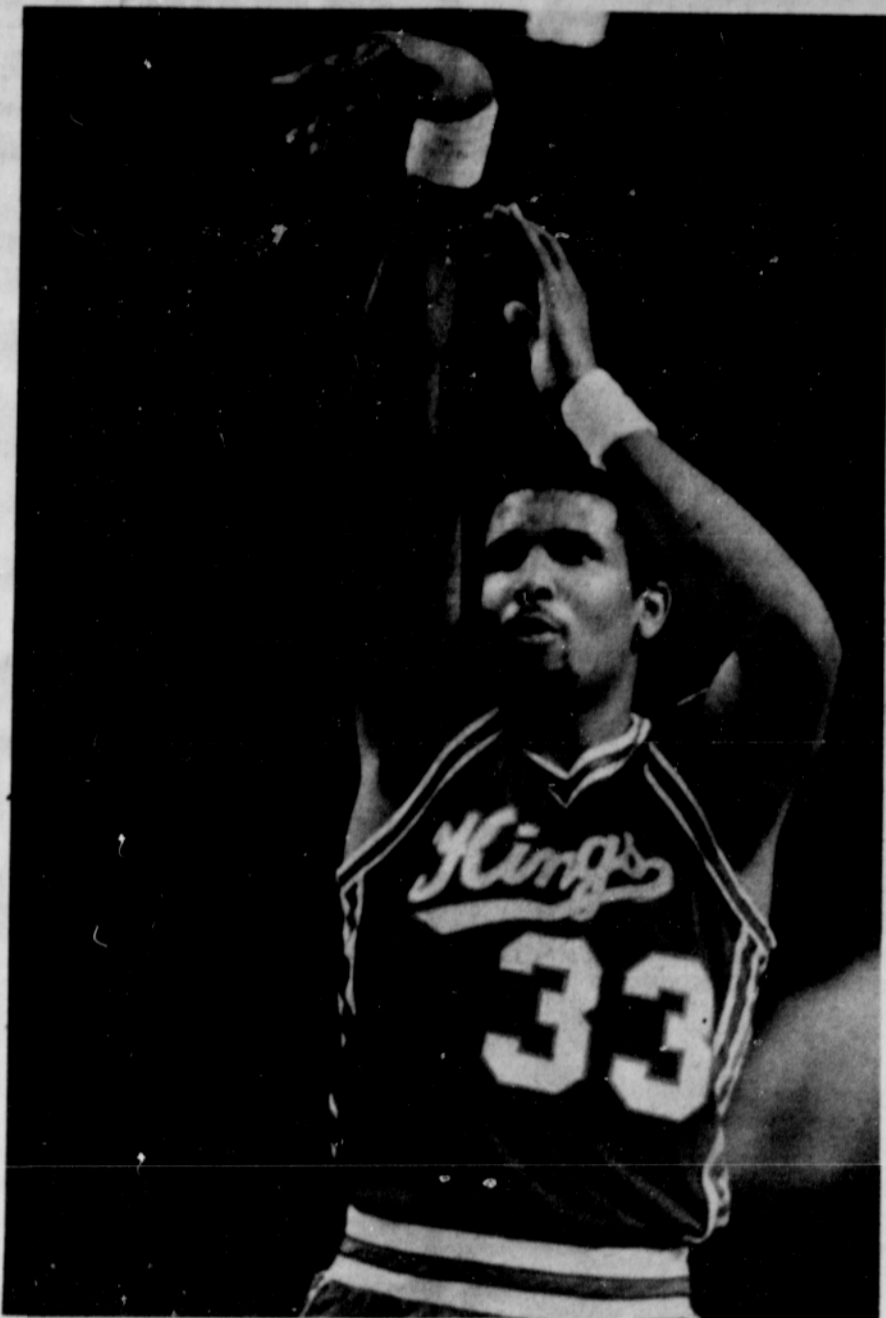
"In the beginning, I had a tough time because the coach had me playing with my face to the basket. I wasn't used to it and I had little confidence in my game out there. Once he put me back down low where I felt comfortable, I got my confidence back and I started to play better basketball. Can't nobody stop my hook once I get it going—it's tough," he smiled. "I like it more down around the basket."

When questioned about the warm reception that the Portland crowd gave him, Johnson laughed and wondered why they stopped cheering for him after scoring Kansas City's first six points.

"Oregon has been good to me," he said. "I still consider it my home and I always will. With all the cities I see around the country, it's difficult to get up for every game but it wasn't hard here. I felt like I was home. I could tell that some people wanted to cheer me on but I was playing against their team."

Johnson received that special acknowledgement from the Portland crowd, but not before he fouled out during the overtime and laying face down on the floor out of frustration. He picked himself up off the floor and walked slowly toward the bench to a standing ovation.

"I was tired," he said. "I'm not



STEVE JOHNSON

used to playing that many minutes (37) but the injuries (Cliff Robinson, Hawkeye Whitney, and Phil

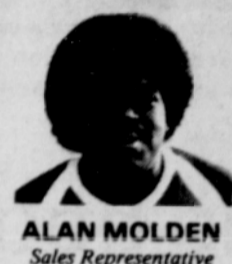
Ford) have forced me to play. I'm gonna have to get used to it—life is tough in this league, believe me."

## TENNIS TRIVIA



Tracy Austin is the youngest pro athlete ever to earn more than \$1 million. She did it as a teenager after only 21 months on the pro tour.

Tennis is believed to have originated in France between 1100 and 1200. Players hit the ball over the net with their hands.



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## Final College Top 20

games through Jan. 1					OPPONENTS' PERFORMANCES	
Rank	Team	Previous Rank	Record	Avg. Margin of Victory	Rating	Avg. Margin of Victory
1	Clemson	2	12-0-0	19.4	1.000	68-54-1 2.5
2	Penn St.	4	10-2-0	17.4	.960	83-39-2 6.2
3	Pittsburgh	5	11-1-0	18.8	.956	76-46-1 1.8
4	Nebraska	1	9-3-0	19.9	.939	78-47-2 2.7
5	S. M. U.	5	10-1-0	20.7	.927	57-51-6 -1.2
6	Texas	8	10-1-1	8.7	.919	70-50-5 2.8
7	Georgia	3	10-2-0	20.8	.917	66-57-1 -0.3
8	Michigan	12	9-3-0	16.1	.895	66-58-1 -0.5
9	Miami, Florida	10	9-2-0	9.1	.875	71-42-2 4.0
10	Arizona State	9	9-2-0	18.3	.862	58-53-4 1.0
11	Alabama	7	9-2-1	12.1	.858	68-54-3 -0.7
12	Washington	18	10-2-0	9.2	.809	56-65-3 -1.5
12	N. Carolina	15	10-2-0	18.8	.808	62-59-2 -1.5
14	U. S. C.	11	9-3-0	10.3	.807	68-55-3 1.4
15	Ohio State	16	9-3-0	11.2	.803	62-61-0 -1.8
16	Oklahoma	--	7-4-1	12.3	.776	73-52-2 0.3
17	U. C. L. A.	13	7-4-1	8.8	.770	73-52-0 4.3
18	Iowa	14	8-4-0	8.6	.735	69-54-2 0.7
19	Miss. St.	--	8-4-0	6.2	.734	63-59-4 -0.6
20	Missouri	--	8-4-0	9.8	.729	67-56-3 -0.3

## Ebony features 'small men'

Eight of the smallest players in the National Basketball Association are featured in the January issue of *Ebony*.

Eight little men (six feet and under) will tell you that height is not the only thing that makes a good basketball player. Survival, in the NBA, for these men has depended on their speed, quickness, endurance, and brains.

No matter how smart or quick he is the short player still has a rough way to go. In the last NBA draft of college players less than ten small men were chosen. Most of those draft picks were dropped before the season began.

Some of the small men who have attained success include Rickey Green of the Utah Jazz, Nate Archi-

bald of the Boston Celtics, and the littlest player in the NBA: 5'8" Charley Criss of the Atlanta Hawks.

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## Saturday Basketball League

The Salvation Army Basketball League has completed its second week of competition. The next games will be played at P.C.C January 9th, between 11 am and 3:30 pm. The current standings are as follows:

Alexander's Landscaping	2-0
Portland Tab	2-0
Lee Aces	1-1
Moore St./Blues	1-1
Moore St./Whites	0-2
Jackson Five	0-2

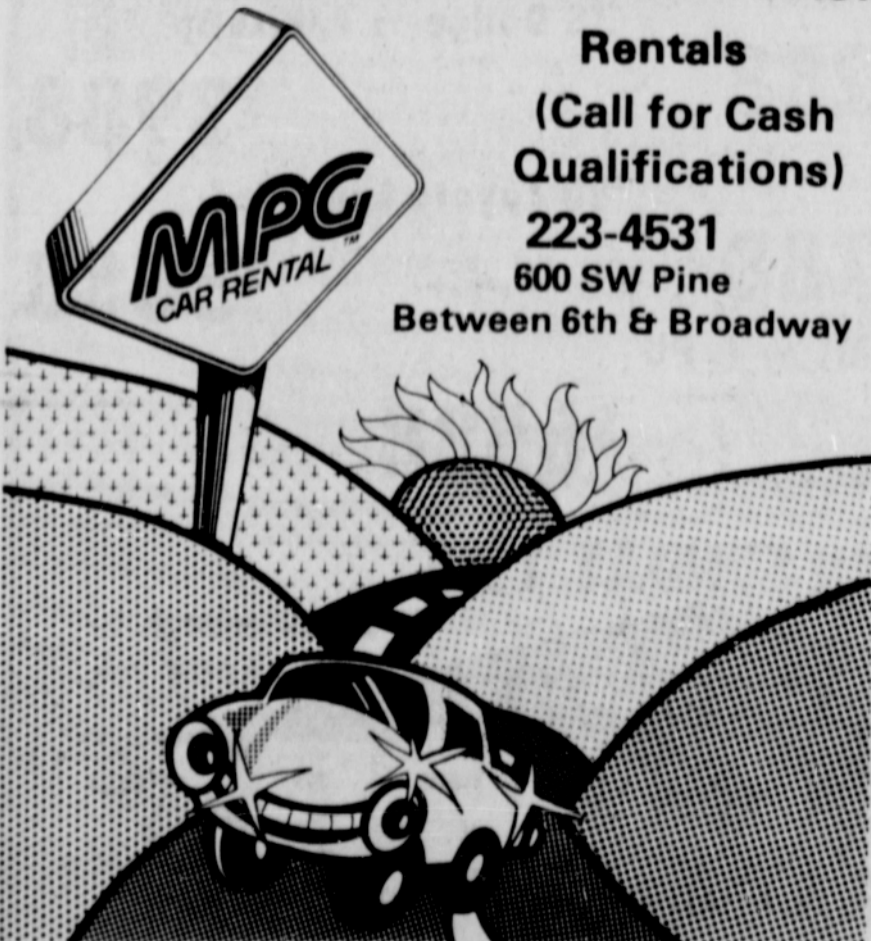
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