



Sport Talk

by Ron Sykes, Sports Editor

Through the years the Portland Trailblazers have gained the reputation of being softies. It has been widely known throughout the NBA that all you have to do is give the Blazers a few hard knocks and they have a tendency to back away like Count Dracula at the sign of a cross. It is for sure that Dr. Jack Ramsay is not an advocate of passive resistance. So the question now is why do the Trailblazers seem to fall into that pattern.

Aggression is a necessary evil in the wards of the NBA. Without it you are relegated to the bottom of the pack and making the playoffs is nothing more than a dream.

This current team has obviously signed a non-aggression pact with the other members of the Pacific division. Perhaps Blazer brass should start thinking of a wholesale change in personnel. The feeling around town is that they (Blazers) have stayed pat too long. It seems that this Blazer team is making superstars out of the ordinary opponents that they face. A case in point is Seattle SuperSonics' backup center, James Donaldson.

When you play Seattle you expect big plays from allstar Jack Sikma, but when a James Donaldson comes and and plays like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, then you know you're in

trouble. Donaldson's play was quoted by one Portland player as being 125-126 per cent better than last year. One should be reminded that these are not NBA statistics but only hold true against Portland.

Portland's front line has a tendency, for some strange reason, to treat loose balls the same as they would the bubonic plague. They stay far, far away.

At six-ten, two-hundred-and-thirty pounds, Mychal Thompson should be a force for the team. However, Mychal has a tendency to shy away when the going gets tough. In prior seasons he was heard asking for rebounding help from the six-eight Kermit Washington. To ask for help isn't bad, but to beg for help is.

Thompson seemingly has not learned that life in the NBA is not as easygoing and laid back as the island he is accustomed to.

Against Portland Donaldson had sixteen points, eighteen rebounds, and four blocked shots which prompted Thompson to say, "He's a different player and he's so strong that there's not much that you can do."

The belief here is that a statement like that indicates a defeatist attitude and a pessimistic review of an

opponent's skills. Donaldson said, "It was clear in the beginning that even Mychal couldn't handle me. From then on, I tried to post him."

Whereas an optimist never built a town and a pessimist never tore one down, it doesn't take an Einstein to understand that one will surely progress further with the former than with the latter.

All the focus, however, shouldn't be on the shoulders of Thompson. This lack of aggression is a team problem. Lately, due to injuries, Portland has been forced to start seven-foot-two-inch Peter Gudmundsson in the middle. Peter fits in well with the Trailblazers laid back attitude, for he is the epitome of non-aggression. Gudmundsson is everything that you wouldn't want in an NBA center. In fact the only thing that he has in common with an NBA player is his height. He is neither agile nor mobile. In fact, he would be hard pressed to beat the Statue of Liberty in an obstacle course. It is incredible that the Blazers could go into a season with Gudmundsson and even more so that they could finish the season with him as a starter.

Portland will need three years of good drafting to gain parity with the higher echelon of the NBA. Today's

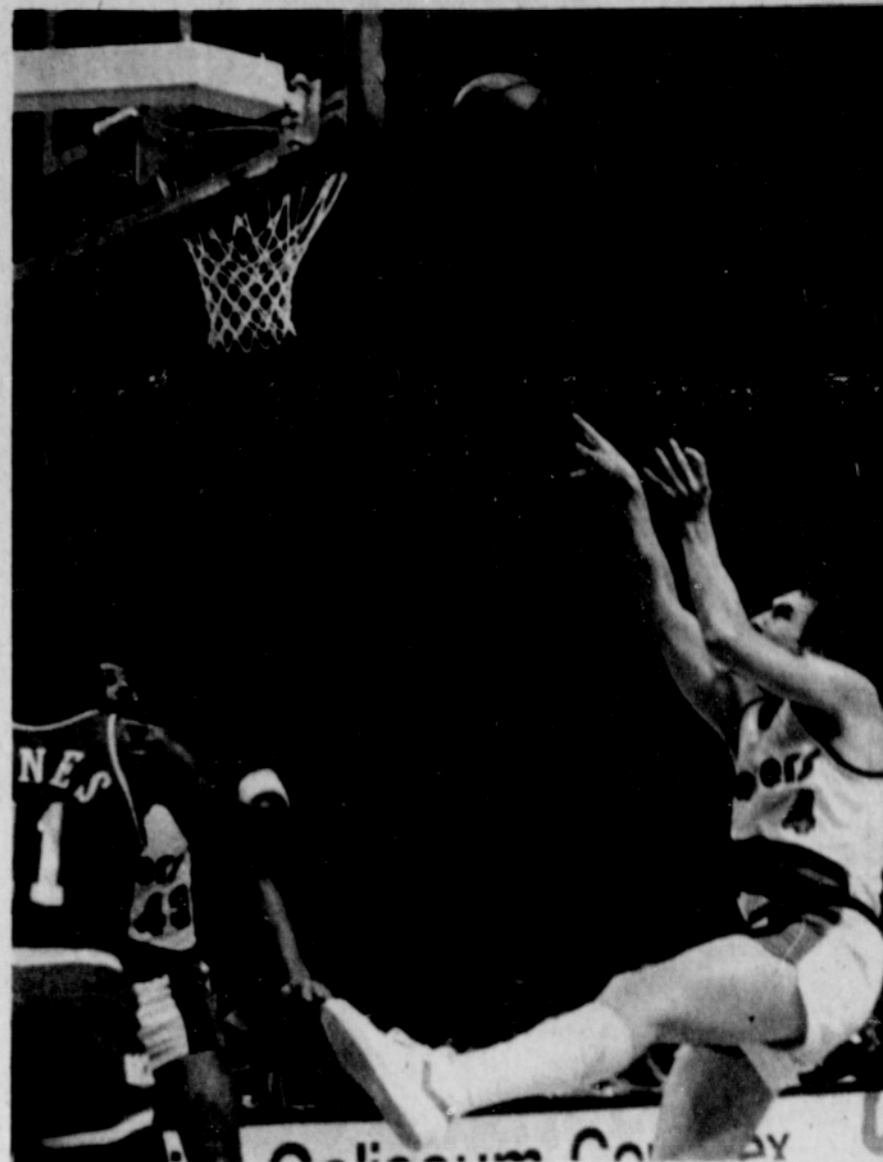
pro game dictates that you not only have a strong starting unit, but also a strong bench.

To gain a strong bench, one has to be ready to shell out some bucks. The good teams, Philadelphia, Boston, Milwaukee, and Los Angeles all have talent from one through twelve. Los Angeles has players like Michael Cooper and Bob McAdoo coming off the bench; Philadelphia has Harvey Catchings and Andrew Toney; Boston has Larry Bird and Tiny Archibald; and Milwaukee has Junior Bridgeman and Brian Winters. These are all quality players. Whereas counters with such household names as Peter Verhoeven and Jeff Lamp.

In order to have a team of championship caliber, the chemistry of the team must be right. With this team, it is not. Calvin Natt, 6-6, small forward is the only positive force presently bounding a basketball for the Portland Trailblazers.

Kelvin Ransey, second year guard out of Ohio State, like Gudmundsson and numerous other Blazers is also a charter member of this non-aggression pact.

That old cliché tells us that, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." That in itself tells us why these 1981-82 Blazers are going nowhere.



Jim Paxton fires up an off-balance shot late in the Blazers' 108-96 win over Houston. Paxton reached a career-high 33 points in Tuesday's win over Kansas City. He hit 13 of 17 shots from the field, scored 10 straight points, and hit 7 of 7 free throws. A good night for Paxton! (Photo: Jimmy Robinson)



Swing into Spring—Spring fever gets under way at Jefferson High during a pre-season baseball game between the Democrats and Madison High. Jefferson slugger Nathan Mosley cracks a solid single bagger in the early innings. (Photo: Jimmy Robinson)

Rating the offense...

It is well known that to win in the NBA, you can play defense until you're blue in the face. But without offense, you'll never win a game. Therefore any team that's worth its weight in bears must have a shooter who can fill the hole. We will attempt to rate some of the better offensive players in the NBA:

- 1) George Gervin—San Antonio Spurs—6-7 guard. George is a pure shooter who because of his height can take opposing guards either inside or out and is capable of scoring big numbers whenever he wants.
- 2) World B. Free—Golden State Warriors—6-3 guard. Free is perhaps the best pure shooter in the game today. World consistently

shoots better than 50 per cent and has a range somewhere up there in the stratosphere.

- 3) Andrew Toney—Philadelphia 76ers—6-3 guard. Toney, like Free, is a great pure shooter. He is great when he's hot but needs improvement in shot selection; however he will improve as he gains experience.
- 4) Brian Winters—Milwaukee Bucks—6-4 guard. Winters is strictly an offensive player. His range is unlimited and he can light them up from any spot on the floor.
- 5) Allan Dunleavy—Houston Rockets—6-3 guard. Dunleavy makes no pretense of being anything other than a shooter. When Houston needs perimeter shooting, Dunleavy gets the call. He, too, can

- 6) Moses Malone—Houston Rockets—6-11 center. A-w-e-s-o-m-e. Malone, offensively, can do it all. He currently averages over thirty points per game. Moses has emerged as the top offensive center in the NBA.
- 7) Kareem Abdul-Jabbar—Los Angeles Lakers—7-2 center. Abdul-Jabbar is still the premiere center in the NBA. Anytime he wants to score, he still has the ability to do so.
- 8) Gus Williams—Seattle SuperSonics—6-2 guard. Some will wonder why Gus is rated so low. The answer is strictly because of his one-year layoff. Gus' timing has suffered due to his 1980-81 layoff.

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