



Sport Talk

by Ron Sykes, Sports Editor

NBA Forecast: Atlantic Division

1. Philadelphia 76ers
2. Boston Celtics
3. New Jersey Nets
4. Washington Bullets
5. New York Knicks

1. Philadelphia

The Sixers are young, gifted and with the combination of Julius Erving and Moses Malone, should beat out the Celtics. The Atlantic race, however, should not be decided until the last week of the season. Coach Billy Cunningham's speed conscious Sixers are loaded from top to bottom. The hot-shooting Andrew Toney is now ready to achieve the superstar potential that all have predicted for him. Toney is a remarkable shooter from any range. His consistent shooting will team well with swift point guard Maurice Cheeks. Cheeks finished last year ranking second in the league with 667 assists and third with 209 steals. The Sixers are so loaded in the back court that they were able to trade defensive stalwart Lionel Hollins to San Diego. The Sixers were the weakest offensive rebounding team in the Atlantic Division last year. So all they did was go out and sign the most devastating offensive rebounder the game has ever known, Moses Malone. Now, Moses just may not walk on water, but he will help Philadelphia walk all over everyone in the East.

2. Boston Celtics

Many pre-season pollsters had already penciled in the Celtics for first place. But that was before Philly picked up Moses.

The Celtics, like the Sixers, are talented to say the least. Boston's Res Auerbach pulled a major coup when he somehow persuaded Milwaukee to trade Quinn Buckner, a very active point guard for Dave Cowens, a very inactive power forward.

The Celtic strength lies in their

patent front line.

Larry Bird, their all-everything power forward is the offensive leader. Last year Bird scored at a 22.9 clip, led the team in steals (143) and ranked second in rebounds with 837.

Joining Bird at the small forward spot is the very reliable Cedric Maxwell.

Maxwell at 6-8 is very quick and gest out well on the break.

In the middle the Celts return the brilliant Robert Parish, who won the team MVP award by averaging 19.9 points per game and blocking 192 shots. Parish is exceptionally mobile for a big man and an excellent shot blocker. And when Parish needs a rest the Celts send for the 6-10 Kevin McHale. McHale is a hustler from the John Havlicek school. He is so good that he could start for almost any other team in the league.

In a part time role Kevin averaged 13.6 ppg and nine rebounds.

As talented as the front line is it would be hard pressed to outshine the back court. The acquisition of Bruchner to go along with the high flying Tiny Archibald and the slick Gerald Henderson does nothing but solidify the guard position for the Celts. Last year the Celts were hurt when Tiny suffered an injury during the playoffs and were forced to play the inexperienced Dan Ainge for too many minutes. Bruchner is insurance that that won't happen this year.

3. New Jersey Nets

Coach Larry Brown posted a good 44-38 record last year and garnered a spot in the playoffs.

A talented backcourt will be the strong point for the Nets. They will be led by the All-Star and hot shooting Otis Birdsong. Otis missed 50 games last year due to a knee injury that now appears to be fully sound again. Otis will be joined in the backcourt by his old KC teammate Phil Ford whom Brown obtained in a trade. Ford's leadership should be



LARRY BIRD

a steady influence on the young Nets. Top draft pick Eric "Sleepy" Floyd out of Georgetown University, brings good credentials to the Nets. Floyd will be looked upon to back up Birdsong.

Darwin Cook, ex-University of Portland Ace, is showing a lot of improvement and will prove to be a better than adequate backup for Ford.

The young Nets will return 6-8 strongman Buck Williams to the front court to be joined by the irreplaceable Albert King. Williams is a tireless performer who bangs the boards a la Mose Malone. Williams was named to the first team All-Rookie team.

Albert King, 6-6, from Maryland, is an excellent shooter and a steady performer. King averaged 12.6 ppg last year and shot .475 from the field.

Coach Brown is high on Jawes Griffin of Illinois, a fine runner and gifted shot blocker. James Bailey, 6-9, acquired from Seattle, should provide added strength and depth to the front line. Hard working Len Elmore and steady Mike O'Koren make the young Nets a legitimate contender in the Atlantic. The Nets are loaded but young. They are definitely the team of the future.

4. Washington Bullets

Coach Gene Shue used '81-'82 as a rebuilding year; still his young Bullets were able to put together a record of 43-39.

The hustle, hustle of the Bullets gained them a playoff berth last year where they downed the Nets 2-0 in the mini-series.

The resurgence of Spencer Haywood was one of the big surprises of the NBA. Spencer, after spending a year in Europe, returned to lead the Bullets in scoring 15.3 points per game and 10 rebounds.

Brilliant power playing forward Greg Ballard will team with Haywood to form a strong front line. Top draft pick Dwight Anderson from USC, should help in the back court.

Billy Ray Bates, newly arrived from Portland, will add excitement and clutch shooting for the Bullets. Given the chance Billy Ray will become an important cog in the Bullet offense. With Speedy Don Collins and hot shooting Kevin Grevy the Bullets appear to be more than adequate in the back court.

Both Ballard and Haywood should again provide the offense for the Bullets.

The Bullets were the surprise of the East last year, and if they can get help from Jeff Ruland and Jim Chones at center, they could become a force in the East.

5. New York Knicks

The Knicks, like the Blazers, did nothing to enhance their club.

They lost on the even trade of Truck Robinson for Maurice Lucas. At 6-9, Luke can do more than a few things better than Truck.

New York finished last season at 33-49 and Coach Hubie Brown can only expect to do worse this year. A team that loses its best two players, Lucas and guard Michael Ray Richardson, can hardly be expected to improve.

Coach Brown wants only disciplined players on his squad. This year he's in trouble.

Arquello vs Pryor

The time has come the boxing fan said to talk of many things... of shoes, of ships, of sealing wax and whether Arquello will be King!

That question will certainly be answered this Friday night when Alexis Arquello goes after Aaron Pryor's junior welterweight title.

As everyone knows Alexis will be attempting to win an unprecedented fourth boxing title.

His quest will be met by a man, Aaron Pryor, who believes himself invincible. It's a classic match between the boxer, Arquello, and the slugger, Pryor.

Pryor is relentless in his attack and will smother the smaller Arquello from round one to round 15. In order for Arquello to win he must be able to use his superior boxing skills. The thought here is that the slugger Pryor will not allow this to happen. He will force Arquello into a slugging match, and that's a match Alexis can't win. Our choice is with Aaron "The Hawk" Pryor.

Next Week

The Observer will provide exclusive coverage of the U.S.A.-Cuba amateur boxing competition to be held November 13th in Reno, Nevada. Earlier this year, the Cubans beat the U.S. 11-1.



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Salvation Army sponsors Portland amateur boxer

It'll be Army vs. Army November 13, when 16-year-old Marcelles Allen becomes Portland's first boxer to throw punches under Salvation Army colors in an amateur fight against U.S. Army personnel in the Matt Dishman Center ring. The bouts begin at 8 p.m.

Allen, National Junior Olympic champion for the past three years, is the Salvation Army's brightest star in a newly-formed boxing program for youth at the people-helping group's Moore Street Corps Community Center in North Portland.

The program is headed-up by former number-one heavyweight contender and 1960 Olympic team champion Thad Spencer. Spencer, a Salvation Army volunteer, is also the Northwest's first black fights promoter.

Allen, with 80 amateur fights under his belt—and only three losses—will head up a team of top boxers from Oregon as they battle U.S. Army challengers.

The 6-1, 160 lb. middleweight, who knocked out 30 other fighters thus far in the ring, is in prime condition for the bout, said Salvation Army Lt. Brian Pockett, the officer in charge of The Moore Street Corps Community Center.

"He's been here every day, training hard with Thad, and he's looking better than ever," Pockett remarked. "We think he can easily take on any challenger the U.S. Army can send in against him."

Allen will be wearing a blue robe and red and yellow trunks—the Salvation Army's colors.

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