

Superintendent Search Intensifies

continued ▲ from Metro

The company, Wisconsin-based ProAct Search Inc., claims to seek out the best candidates "in every corner of this nation to meet your executive staffing needs."

A condition for hiring Schmitt as interim was his demonstrated lack of interest in the job full-time (he just turned 64 years old).

Schmitt said he agrees with this stipulation because it prevents interims from having "an inside track."

Schmitt said one of his most immediate plans is to focus on high-school performance this summer.

"With some of the reconfigurations and some of the smaller schools within a school, like at Marshall and Madison, the district is looking at ways to try to keep them open and make them more responsive to those students," he says.

Schmitt doesn't fault Phillips for leaving in the midst of reconfigurations, saying, "I really believe that she was committed to Portland for much longer term until this Gates Foundation opportunity came along, and I don't think anybody should blame her for accepting that because she'll be in a position to do so much good for so many communities and school districts from that vantage point."

Phillips, in a final visit to Boise-Eliot Elementary in north Portland last week, said she expects easier choices for future superintendents.

"So it's not about saving a school," she says.

The outgoing leader said the school board is "very dedicated to picking someone who will maintain the momentum of the work that the team has started."

Schmitt will get \$11,500 a month until Sept. 30, when the Board hopes to have found a new superintendent.

Such a salary only requires that Schmitt keep the district running, but he interprets the job description to take on emergency measures, such as responding to scattered groups of parents that have been petitioning to redraw school boundaries.

"We need to address rather quickly the whole school-transfer and attendance policy, and to review that and make some changes," he says.

"It's always kind of a tricky balance," he says, "in between there is a position of making sure that there are lots of high quality choices across the district, so no matter what school or neighborhood you're in, you're going to have access to something there that's special."

SPORTS

Oden Marks Blazers Turning Point

Pick gives team high expectations

BY PAT GRUHLER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Kevin Pritchard did it again. Two years in a row the Blazers general manager created huge noise during the NBA draft.

The draft was a huge turning point for the Blazers franchise. Not only did the team have the much publicized first pick, in which they did what most people thought and picked Greg Oden, but they also made several trades throughout the night, including trading superstar Zack Randolph.

In draft grade reports by many NBA pundits, the Blazers earned the highest grade two years in a row.

Oden is widely thought to be the best post player to come out of college since Tim Duncan in 1997. Pritchard had not tipped his hand in the five weeks between the June 28 draft lottery. In fact, many people were starting to feel that Pritchard may be leaning toward selecting Kevin Durant.

Coach Nate McMillan seemed to favor Oden the whole time, but the team, and the league, did not want the team to leak who they were picking until the very end.

Oden has rejuvenated the city's Blazers fans. Thousands of people crowded in the rain in Pioneer Courthouse Square Friday afternoon to welcome Oden to Portland.

In the trade involving Randolph,

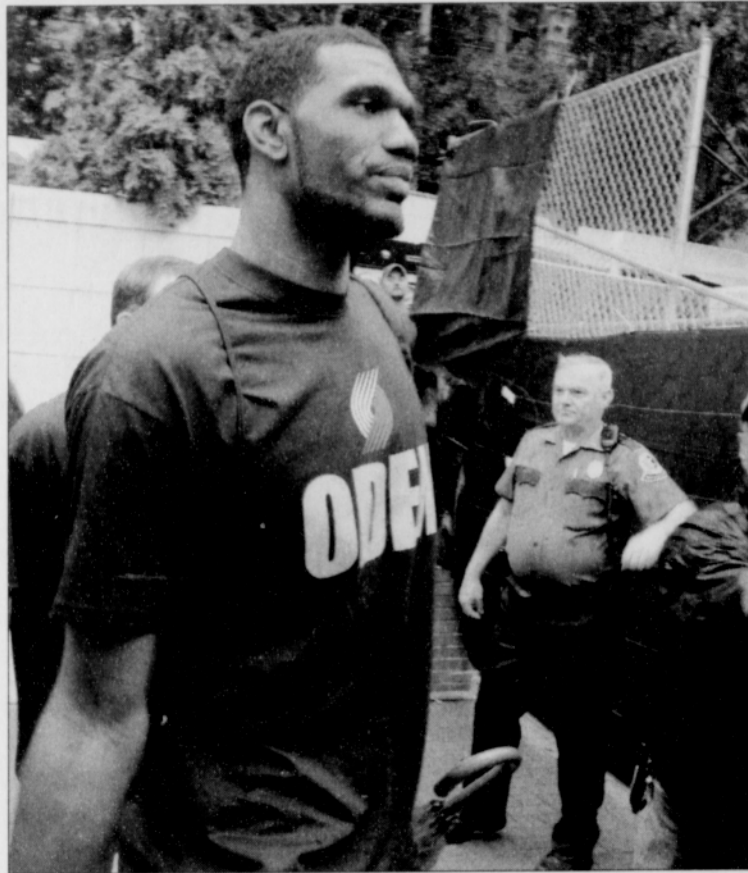


PHOTO BY RAYMOND RENDELMAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Greg Oden steps off a Max train at Pioneer Courthouse Square for a rally Friday one day after being drafted by the Trail Blazers as the number one pick in the NBA.

the Blazers also lose Dan Dickau and Freddie Jones to the New York Knicks for post player Channing Frye and former all star guard Steve Francis, who was thrown in for salary cap reasons.

Francis has been hampered by his poor attitude and huge contract for the majority of his career and does not look to be continuing it in Portland. The Blazers have been rumored to buyout the remaining \$36 million on Francis' contract, leaving Frye as the main piece the Blazers got in return for

Randolph.

Randolph and Frye do not really have similar numbers, as Randolph averages nearly 25 points and 10 rebounds and Frye is closer to 10 points and five boards. But most people look at this as addition by subtraction for Portland. They get rid of a bad attitude and bad team player in Randolph, and get a guy in Frye who will fit in better.

McMillan will more than likely play a three-man rotation with Oden and Aldridge in the post, giving the Blazers three athletic, quick shot

blockers and rebounds who should give the majority of teams huge problems.

For the second year in a row, the Blazers bought a first round draft from the Phoenix Suns, getting guard Rudy Fernandez of Spain. They then bought Philadelphia's first-round pick to get Petteri Koponen. Both players are thought to be two of the better young international players in the game, but don't look for them on the court this year, expect both of them to stay overseas.

The Blazers used two second-round draft picks to get solid college prospects Josh McRoberts out Duke University and Taurean Green, who helped lead the Florida Gators to back-to-back national championships.

The Blazers also received small forward James Jones from the Phoenix Suns. Jones is a terrific three point shooter who was a role player the last few years on the tremendous Suns teams. Look for him to help Portland's plagued shooting from beyond the arc.

Portland now sets its sight on free agency, where they look to figure out what to do with free agent small forwards Travis Outlaw and Ime Udoka. The team will also have to figure out what to do with Darius Miles, Raef LaFrents and Joel Prysilla.

Never count out Pritchard using all of these players to make a trade. You never know what he is up to.

The Blazers signed Oden to a deal on Monday. They start summer league play Friday. This will be a chance for many of the young stars to shine.

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Gregory Brown and Denise Muhammad, Dignity Village's only two black residents, with the homeless camp's fundraising coordinator Will Currier.

PHOTO BY NICOLE RONALD HOOPER/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Homeless, Not Helpless

continued ▲ from Metro

week at the village doing security or general help.

"We want the community to know that we aren't just sitting on our butts looking for a hand out," Currier says. The stereotype of homeless people being lazy really bothers him as well.

Currently there is no limit on how long someone can stay at Dignity Village.

"I don't view Dignity Village as an excuse to get homeless," says Currier. "It's a transitional place for people not where they stay for five to 10 years."

Cindy Davis knows what she wants to do with her life, but believes it's unattainable since she's been homeless the past three years.

"No one wants to hire me, I don't know if it's my age or the lack of experience, and people generally look down on you if they know what your address is," said Davis, 50. "Also, when they see a large gap on your application that also raises a lot of eyebrows." The familiar taunts of "why don't you just get a job," have been heard probably more than once by the 1,400 people in Portland who sleep outside every night.

Davis, a former office manager, has lived at Dignity Village twice along with her daughter, Elsie, who is 20. Homeless women may have more options in Portland, but Davis wasn't able to find a shelter to take her and her daughter.

"Seven years ago when I was homeless with my daughter there weren't any openings anywhere in

the Portland area and I don't think it's changed," said Davis. "It's hard for people to get into a shelter these days."

Before coming to Dignity Village, Davis says she lived in a shelter in Vancouver.

Dignity Village does not do background checks on potential residents, so her neighbors could be sex offenders, murderers, etc., but as a woman Davis says she feels safe. No one under the age of 18 is allowed to live at Dignity Village.

"It's pretty obvious who the weird people are. We actually had someone who had just got out of jail for murder and he had a warrant and he got picked up," said Smith. "None of us knew that but he was a perfectly nice guy."

The biggest issue residents say is the occasional spousal arguments but mostly its noise control. Just a few steps inside Dignity Village property a list of rules is displayed next to the office. The rules forbid any drugs or alcohol within a one block radius of the property.

Currier says these rules are sometimes too much for residents. "Over the last five months we have had a lot of negativity," said Currier, 42. "The new people coming in have a positive attitude." Currier says it's a cultural shock to some new residents who come to Dignity Village.

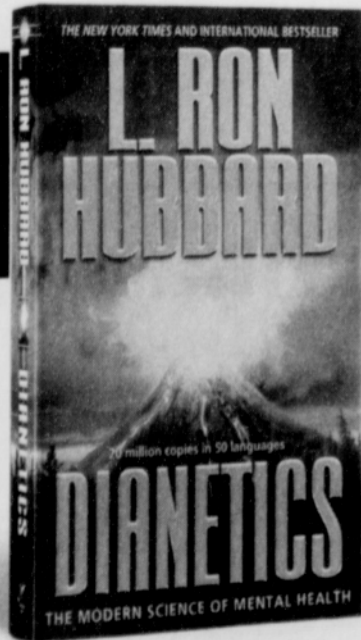
"They come here and see they

don't have to lie and cheat to live," said Currier. "It's great to not have the sound of someone waking me up at 5 a.m. from a doorway." Living at Dignity Village, Currier says, gives him a greater purpose than just helping himself. Instead it's homeless people helping each other.

"I don't get paid but it helps the village. I don't have a problem getting a job, I could do that tomorrow," said Currier. "I have the ability to talk with preachers and I am a Christian. It would be a shame to let that fall apart and just worry about me. This is a special circumstance. How often do you get to make an impact in 60 people's lives?"

The leadership roles, like Cindy Davis' position as office manager and Currier's role as fundraising coordinator, require them to be a resident at Dignity Village for one year. To commit to staying homeless for one year at least, some may question the incentive to leave. Smith says the incentive is to create a better way of life.

"I will be moving on," said Smith. For more information on how you can help Dignity Village, visit myspace.com/dignityvillage. The site is open to the public each day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Dignity Village, a non-profit organization is located at 9401 N.E. Sunderland. Donations can be made at any US Bank.



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