

NBA preview--the top picks

by Jerry M. Bruno
Collegian Staff

The 1994 National Basketball Association season began on Friday, and for the first time in three years, the NBA championship banner was raised in Houston and not in Chicago.

How anxious are people for the new season to begin? Well, if it was a normal year, the World Series would have just ended and hockey would have been all warmed up with some 35 games under its belt. Sports fans are in all their glory since the four favorite sports in the United States would be going on at the same time. But this IS 1994 and it is the year of the GREED. No baseball. No hockey. But the NBA has just begun.

NBA commissioner David Stern must be given a medal for putting up the idea of the "No strike, no lockout" rule.

Greed did almost halt some of the NBA's great and potential stars. Glenn Robinson signed a ten year, \$68 million dollar, GUARANTEED deal with the Milwaukee Bucks. That means if he gets hurt, the money is still his. Anfernee "Penny" Hardaway of the Orlando Magic signed a multimillion dollar deal also. Why is his nickname "Penny" anyway?

Injuries are also being factored into many of the teams' seasons. The Charlotte Hornets might be without Alonzo Mourning (leg) and Larry Johnson (back, foot) for the first part of the season.

The Cleveland Cavaliers are without Gerald Wilkins for the season with a ruptured Achilles tendon and Brad Daugherty is out indefinitely with his ongoing back injury.

The Golden State Warriors are without star Chris Webber (greed) and Chris Mullin (shoulder) for a period of time to either be happy or healed.

Shawn Bradley will be missed by the Philadelphia 76ers for a period of time with another knee injury.

The largest attraction of the season is Charles Barkley, Shaquille O'Neal, or the changing of Dennis Rodman's hair more than his underroos.

All the arenas are expected to be filled because of the boredom of watching old footage of the 1948 World Series.

Speaking of arenas, the new United Center in Chicago and Gund Arena in Cleveland were opened with big bangs. The United Center took over the older than dirt Chicago Stadium (even though it will never replace the "Madhouse on Madison"). The Gund Arena is said to be so state-of-the-art that Cleveland is no longer the "mistake" on the lake, but a city that moved its team back into the downtown area (The Cavs have played in the Richfield Coliseum for the last 20 years, 35 miles south of Cleveland).

My picks for the season are as follows:

Atlantic Division

I have to go with Shaq, Horace and Anfernee of the Magic over the aging and monolithic Knicks. The Knicks have to get a offensive guy to step up and make an impact other than John Starks who concentrates too much on trash talking rather than 3-pointers.

Watch out for Boston though. Off-season acquisitions in Dominique Wilkins, Blue Edwards and Pervis Ellison beefed up the bench and the maturity level. Don't forget the love of the Bean-town fans; they stand by their team.

Philadelphia must get Bradley healthy and in the weight room. He has to bulk up or his toothpick frame will get pushed around again this year.

1. Orlando Magic
2. New York Knicks
3. Boston Celtics
4. New Jersey Nets
5. Miami Heat
6. Philadelphia 76ers
7. Washington Bullets

Central Division

Jordan is gone, along with all but three remaining players from the three-peating Chicago Bulls.

Pippen says that everything is fine in the Chicago camp following his refusal to go into the game with the Knicks in the playoffs of a year ago.

Glenn Robinson will take Jordan's spot as the human highlight film; he just isn't Superman for the Bucks yet.

Charlotte is wondering when the growing pains of being one of the newer teams will wear off and everybody will be healthy.

Indiana has a great team of unknowns (excluding Reggie Miller) and will be right there in the end. Detroit has Grant Hill and that's it.

Atlanta made a very bad decision in trading away Wilkins last year. They did have Manning, but now they have no one except Stacey Augmon.

Cleveland has a GREAT coach in Mike Fratello; too bad he is not a medicine man or a miracle worker. Mark Price will keep the Cavs in the hunt, he just needs someone to step up and make an impact.

1. Charlotte Hornets
2. Indiana Pacers
3. Chicago Bulls
4. Atlanta Hawks
5. Cleveland Cavaliers
6. Detroit Pistons
7. Milwaukee Bucks

Midwest Division

This division has, The Dream, The Admiral, The Mailman and the Mavericks. Houston wants respect and they deserve it. Hakeem Olajuwon is one of the best in the league and showed it last year. Just do it again, Rockets; the respect will be there in time.

The Spurs have the largest arena in the league and the biggest troublemaker. Should Rodman play in this league? Only when the Toronto Raptors are here and put T-Rex as their center.

Mt. Mutombo was lucky to beat Seattle in the playoffs; they are still a year away. Utah is just that--Utah. Will they ever reach the top before Stockton and Malone play in the wheelchair league?

The Mavericks should be at least .500 this year with Jamal Mashburn, Joe Jackson and Jason Kidd. The Timberwolves are too wrapped up in their front office woes. Where will they play? Minnesota or New Orleans? Christian Laettner must put up or shut up. Welcome to the REAL NBA, Chris. They won't baby you here as they did at Duke or on the Dream Team.

1. Houston Rockets

2. San Antonio Spurs
3. Utah Jazz
4. Denver Nuggets
5. Dallas Mavericks
6. Minnesota

Pacific Division

This is by far the most competitive division, but only between two teams: Phoenix and Seattle. Sir Charles is the new NBA ambassador and Kemp is the King of Slam.

Manning took a HUGE pay cut to play for the Suns so he can taste the winning ways of a championship team. Seattle has a great team with great depth. Can Coach George Carl keep them all playing as a team and still make them all happy? Team play is what cost them the playoffs last year; will history repeat?

Golden State has too many injuries and Webber wants more cash. Tim Hardaway is not 100% healing from his nagging knee injury and Chris Mullin is now out with a shoulder injury. Everyone else in the division will be looking toward the draft.

1. Phoenix Suns
2. Seattle Superonics
3. Golden State Warriors
4. Portland Trailblazers
5. Los Angeles Lakers
6. Sacramento Kings
7. Los Angeles Clippers

NBA Finals

Orlando Magic against the Phoenix Suns, in which Sir Charles will get his wish and become the champion and MVP that he is. The series will go to seven games and will be one of the most memorable in history.

Sports Quiz

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Business News and Sports

Thursday

"Lion Hotline" @ 6:05 p.m.

"Living Well with Diabetes" @ 7:06 p.m.

Saturday

Penn State v. Illinois @ 2:00 p.m.

Sunday

Tampa Bay v. Detroit @ 7:45 p.m.

Wednesday

Julie, Jerry & Brian talk sports on "The Point After" @ 7:00 p.m.

Erle's Hottest Nightclub

THE EDGE

715 French

THURSDAY

COORS LIGHT DRAFT NIGHT 8 PM - 12 MID.

LATE NIGHT ALL SHELF HAPPY HOUR 9:30 - 11:30 PM

MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL ON OUR 12' BIG SCREEN T.V. FREE WINGS & PIZZA ALSO DRAFT & BOTTLE BEER

* OPEN 11:00 PM