

76ers beat Knicks, 101-72, in opener

by **Damon Hack**
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NEW YORK - At least the New York Knicks were in line with the spirit of the holiday. They came to Madison Square Garden Tuesday night dressed as ghosts.

They were invisible on defense, turnover-prone and stagnant on offense, and were dominated from the tip as the Philadelphia 76ers smashed them to the tune of 101-72 in front of a restless crowd.

There were boos, boo-hoos and even a few chants for rookie guard Lavor Postell, who finally entered the game long after the outcome had been determined.

But the final indignity, other than

the score, came in the waning seconds of the third quarter as Philadelphia's lead swelled into the 20s. The chant started: "Patrick Ewing ... Patrick Ewing ... Patrick Ewing."

Ewing can't help them now.

The Sixers, who were led by Allen Iverson outside (25 points, nine assists), Theo Ratliff inside (12 points) and Toni Kukoc everywhere (23 points), stormed into town and ruined the debut of the new-look Knicks.

Allan Houston led the Knicks with 21 points.

Those expecting freer ball movement, offensive firepower and the defensive intensity that carried the Knicks to the Eastern Conference finals last season were instead greeted with Sixers dunks, Knicks turnovers

and the scary proposition that consistent interior play could be in short supply this season.

By midway through the fourth quarter, during which the 76ers opened a 32-point bulge, Jeff Van Gundy emptied his bench.

For a full week Van Gundy had wondered aloud about some of the focus of the team's newer players. Tuesday night, nobody on the Knicks looked in sync.

From the first moments of the game, the Knicks were completely exposed on the interior by the athletic 76ers. Marcus Camby, starting at center, had trouble containing the 76ers' big-man tandem of Ratliff and Tyrone Hill.

Ratliff had three blocks before the seats were warm as the 76ers raced

to a 26-23 first-quarter lead that increased to 51-41 at halftime.

Iverson weaved in and out, finding the Philly big men for easy looks at the basket while the Knicks settled for jumpers and had little to no success establishing any semblance of a post game.

Van Gundy opened the second quarter with the trio of Houston, Latrell Sprewell and Glen Rice on the floor, but it had little success. Sprewell finished with only six points and Rice had nine.

Camby, who has said throughout the preseason that he isn't a center, wouldn't have received any arguments Tuesday night. He had just four points and two rebounds by halftime and finished with five points and four rebounds.

cause of his animated approach, believing Down could provide a needed spark.

Tracy also is respected, but he is considered more reserved than Down, concerning players who considered Johnson too reserved.

The feeling in the clubhouse was that Tracy, at times, should have offered stronger opinions to Johnson. Malone repeatedly praised Down during the season, but is believed to have told Daly he also is comfortable with Tracy, with whom he worked in the Montreal Expo organization.

Malone, who requested that Johnson hire Tracy as a coach in '98, also prefers Tracy because of his reserved approach and willingness to toe the company line.

Moreover, Malone is leery of the media in the wake of his many missteps and disastrous partnership with Johnson.

Tracy has been a bench coach six seasons, serving the first four under Expo Manager Felipe Alou.

Tracy was 501-486 in seven seasons as a minor league manager with the Chicago Cubs, Cincinnati Reds and Expos.

A fourth-round draft choice in 1977, Tracy played parts of the 1980 and '81 seasons with the Cubs, and two seasons in Japan.

Dodgers name Tracy manager

by **Jason Reid**
Los Angeles Times
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LOS ANGELES - Promoting from within, the Los Angeles Dodgers selected coach Jim Tracy as their next manager and plan to introduce him Wednesday at a Dodger Stadium news conference, the Los Angeles Times has learned.

The bench coach the last two seasons, Tracy emerged from a tight race with batting coach Rick Down, the other finalist and preferred choice of some players.

"I know about it, but there's not a whole lot I can say about it at this point," said Down when contacted at his off-season home in Las Vegas.

As far as how it (the decision) was reached, I really can't say. All I know is that they wanted someone else. I'm very disappointed."

Down said he plans to seek a job elsewhere.

Tracy, 44, succeeds Davey Johnson, fired Sept. 29 after two seasons with the club. He has no major league managerial experience.

Contacted at their off-season home in Sarasota, Fla., Tracy's wife, Debra, said Tracy was not home, and she was not sure when he would return.

Sources said Chairman Bob Daly,

President Bob Graziano and General Manager Kevin Malone spoke late Tuesday night with Tracy and his representative to complete the terms of Tracy's contract.

Derrick Hall, senior vice president, declined comment on the club's plans. Tracy will become only the Dodgers' sixth manager since 1954 - but fourth

qualification for the job - Daly and Graziano decided Tracy would be a better fit for the tarnished franchise, team sources said, and Malone always agrees with Daly.

Down has an animated approach, and Daly, sensitive to media criticism, was concerned Down might be too forthcoming about the team, some-

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-batting coach Rick Down

since the middle of the '96 season.

The selection ends a three-week search process, leading to Daly's top choice being offered the once-coveted position.

Daly is comfortable with Tracy, whose low-key approach works well with the first-year chairman.

Although Down and Tracy were the leading candidates from the outset because of their work ethic and ability to coexist with Malone - the main

thing he disliked about Johnson.

Tracy said the right things in his interview, convincing Daly that he was the right man to lead the team.

Daly also was impressed with Tracy's handling of the club in July when Johnson was hospitalized briefly because of an irregular heart rhythm.

Some in the organization - including pitcher Kevin Brown, right fielder Shawn Green and first baseman Eric Karros - strongly endorsed Down be-

Air Force falls to Notre Dame in overtime

by **Avani Patel**
Chicago Tribune
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SOUTH BEND, Ind. -- He didn't do what he was supposed to do. He didn't carry out his assignment exactly as it had been scripted. He followed instinct over reason.

Sometimes, seasons are saved and destinies met not with logic, but magic. Glenn Earl's block of David Adams' field-goal attempt as time ran out in regulation Saturday did not win the game for Notre Dame. That would come later, in overtime, when Joey Getherall took the ball on a reverse and ran 9 yards for his third touchdown of the game, securing a 34-31 Irish victory over a resilient Air Force team at Notre Dame Stadium.

But as Earl deflected Adams' kick off its path and preserved a 28-28 tie, he claimed for his team the type of magic that separates the select from the standard.

"Not for one second in that game did we ever think we were going to lose," Earl said.

Not even as Air Force was lining up for the chip-shot field-goal attempt that would have given it the victory as time expired?

"I was just thinking, 'All right, I've got to push (teammate) Tony Weaver, and if I can't, I'm going to leap, regardless of what they tell me, because I can't live with myself if I don't give it a shot,'" Earl recalled.

Despite squandering a 28-10 lead, the Irish improved to 6-2 and preserved their chance, albeit slim, of being invited to a Bowl Championship Series game at the end of the season. Air Force is 5-3.

After ceding the Falcons a 10-7 halftime edge, the Irish looked to have the game comfortably in control when they scored three third-quarter touchdowns to lead 28-10. But Air Force

turned the tables in the final period, holding the Irish to 45 yards and two first downs while putting together three scoring drives to tie the game 28-28.

The Irish opened the scoring in impressive fashion, marching 84 yards in 18 plays. Matt Lo Vecchio's touchdown pass, intended for David Givens in the right corner of the end zone, was tapped by Falcons defensive back Wes Crawley into the arms of Javin Hunter, who hung on to give the Irish 7-0 lead two minutes into the second quarter.

Air Force answered on its next possession as quarterback Mike Thiessen lofted a rainbow pass to Leotis Palmer in the right flat. Palmer, wide open, turned upfield and carried the ball 15 yards to the end zone, tying the score at 7-7. Pass-interference and personal-foul calls against the Irish later gave Air Force first and goal at the Notre Dame 2, but the Falcons had to settle for Adams' 27-yard field goal and a 10-7 halftime lead.

Notre Dame's offense overcame its sluggishness in the third quarter. Julius Jones returned the kickoff 41 yards to the Notre Dame 46. Six plays later, Getherall hauled in a 28-yard Lo Vecchio toss for a touchdown and a 14-10 lead. Givens' 37-yard jaunt on a reverse increased the lead to 21-10.

Less than three minutes later, Getherall scored the second of his three touchdowns, grabbing a 68-yard strike from Lo Vecchio to put the Irish seemingly comfortably ahead 28-10. But the Falcons are a veteran team with skilled playmakers. Wide receiver Ryan Fleming, despite playing with a separated shoulder, caught eight passes for a career-high 163 yards, including a 42-yarder over Shane Walton that set up the Falcons' game-tying field goal.

"I think Ryan proved today that he's

one of the best receivers in the country," Air Force coach Fisher DeBerry said.

Notre Dame coach Bob Davie agreed. He refused to term the fourth quarter a defensive collapse.

"I give Air Force credit," Davie said. "As much as I respect them, I didn't want to see them celebrating on our field."

Earl's block ensured that he didn't have to. Air Force, which had the ball first, kicked a field goal in overtime. Notre Dame, which had been 0-3 in

overtime, including a loss to Air Force in 1996 and a loss to Nebraska in this season's second game, answered with Getherall's touchdown and the victory.

"It was unfortunate that we didn't pull it off," Fleming said. "Some things weren't meant to be." Davie agreed.

"The momentum went back and forth at the end," he said. "But a team that won't be beat can't be beat."



Air Force's Brian LaBasco pulls in a pass as Notre Dame's Shane Walton makes the tackle in the Fighting Irish's 34-31 victory Saturday, October 28, 2000.

As teams retool to take on Lakers, L.A. makes changes of its own

by **Kevin Ding**
Knight-Ridder Newspapers
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LOS ANGELES - Everyone is hopeful now, which is fine. There are plenty of reasons why it could work out, so go ahead and convince yourself. The NBA slate remains clean for a few more days; with opening night not arriving until Tuesday, there's no reason for anyone to feel like a loser.

But that little voice inside - the one that always speaks the truth, whether you listen or not - knows the bottom line in the NBA. To win big, you've got to have talent and you've got to have teamwork.

Just one or the other, and you'll have your share of dunks and triumphs, but you'll just be running around, burning empty calories.

If you've got some talent, though, why can't it come together for you? Lakers coach Phil Jackson says the league has evolved (or deteriorated) to the point where having just two prime-time players makes you a viable contender.

Find the right chemistry, and who knows? Just get that teamwork going, and you're in.

That's why in the grand scheme of things, people like Brian Shaw, David Wingate, Antonio Daniels and Bonzi Wells matter.

The Lakers hadn't planned on using their precious \$2.25 million salary-cap exception to re-sign the 34-year-old Shaw, who scored just 4.1 points per game last season.

But it's money well spent. Not only is Shaw is a savvy reserve guard and valuable triangle-offense organizer, he is integral to the team's harmony.

Shaw will be asked to help keep newcomer Isaiah Rider, a fellow Oakland native, in line this season. Shaw already worked magic last season, bridging the gap between Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant through his bonds with each.

Anyone who expects to compete for the 2000-01 NBA title must try to capture the kind of synchronicity the Lakers had last season.

Wingate, the 36-year-old guard who averaged 0.3 points and 0.4 assists in his seven games last season, actually can make a difference in Seattle this season.

Wingate is Patrick Ewing's pal, and so he's there to help Ewing adjust to this new, quiet life after New York. Wingate is also close to Gary Payton - to the point where Payton is taking part in more of the Sonics' pregame activities just to be with Wingate.

The Sonics already have a refurbished Vin Baker, who got a lot out of practicing against Alonzo Mourning at the Olympics, and some lightning in young Rashard Lewis. They just need chemistry to move up and join the Lakers, Trail Blazers and Spurs in the elite.

"They're not anywhere near what they're going to be," Coach Paul Westphal said of his Sonics last week. "We have a long way to go to get the cohesion we need."

In San Antonio, the little-known Daniels is crucial to the Spurs' hopes. Part of the reason superstar Tim Duncan re-signed was because his best buddy, Daniels, also was re-signing. Then with Duncan returning, 35-year-old David Robinson worked up a lather in the off-season - even taking up yoga - and looks great now.

The Spurs, who added a much-needed one-on-one player in Derek Anderson, also are thrilled with the shape Sean Elliott has recaptured. But again, much will actually hinge on Daniels, who was often sensational in relief of point guard Avery Johnson last season.

The Spurs re-signed Johnson, too, giving him a generous \$8 million, one-year deal. Daniels, the fourth overall pick in 1997, has the odd challenge of making sure he's good this season, but not too good. Johnson, who is Robinson's best buddy, is not ready to step aside.

"Everybody is making kind of a big deal about it," Daniels said. "It's very much appreciated, but A.J. has

been running this team for the past I don't know how many years. The one thing you learn in the NBA is patience."

Then there are those Blazers, who were good enough last season to build a 15-point, fourth-quarter lead on the Lakers in Game 7 of the Western Conference finals - but not good enough to avoid a stunning collapse.

Portland goes into this season again trying to find roles for everyone. The Blazers are actually deeper this season, with new big men Shawn Kemp, Dale Davis and Will Perdue coming aboard to put them now about \$55 million over the salary cap. Exciting swingman Bonzi Wells lost 15 pounds in the off-season and is expecting to play more, but that's asking for the near-impossible in Portland.

"It's kind of tough to go out there and get into a groove by just playing in cycles of three and four minutes at a time," Wells said.

Blazers coach Mike Dunleavy is already on the defensive: "At some point in the year, everybody is going to be unhappy with their minutes. There's no question about it. On the other hand, there is also a lot of opportunity for guys to fulfill dreams that they've had for a long time. You hope the positive outweighs the negative."

The general consensus is that Portland, San Antonio and the Lakers are the favorites to win the 2000-01 NBA championship. But again, there are lots of teams indulging the hope that they can find the championship mix this season.

Take Utah, for example. John Stockton, 38, and Karl Malone, 37, are back. And you know they're not about to try once more unless they're working under the assumption they could finally win a title.

The fact of the matter is that strait-laced and dependable guards Jeff Hornacek and Howard Eisley are gone - replaced on the roster by a 35-year-old hothead (John Starks) and a 19-year-old rookie (DeShawn Stevenson). The other notable additions are Donyell Marshall and Danny Manning. Ugh. Nevertheless ...

"Any time you have new people, it changes the feel - sometimes for good, sometimes for bad," Stockton said. "I think this has been a good change."

The Jazz has indeed lasted a long time, but it probably couldn't even win the Eastern Conference this time. Yes, the East is worse than it was last season.

No Eastern Conference team finished last season above .500 on the road, the most functional gauge of a team's championship mettle.

The two closest were Philadelphia and Milwaukee. The 76ers still have the defense, and the Bucks still have the offense; both teams return almost intact from last season, helping continuity and making them potential NBA Finals representatives now that Miami has lost star center Mourning (kidney disease).

New York, Charlotte and Orlando also have the talent, but they've made such drastic changes that the teamwork might take quite some time.

Defending East champ Indiana comes back without Davis, Rik Smits or Mark Jackson and with top returnee Jalen Rose shelved one month with a broken wrist.

"It's almost like you're a junior on a college team, and all the seniors graduated," Pacers forward Austin Croshere said. "And you come back the next year to a totally different team. But you can't look at it that way. Those guys are gone and they're never coming back. It's time to move on."

Right now, of course, just about everyone thinks they can move on. Not everyone can.

"People treat it like rotisserie basketball," Knicks coach Jeff Van Gundy said. "If you take these guys' stats and add it to these guys' stats, we'd be averaging 140 points per game. You need guys who understand who they are and their jobs on the team."