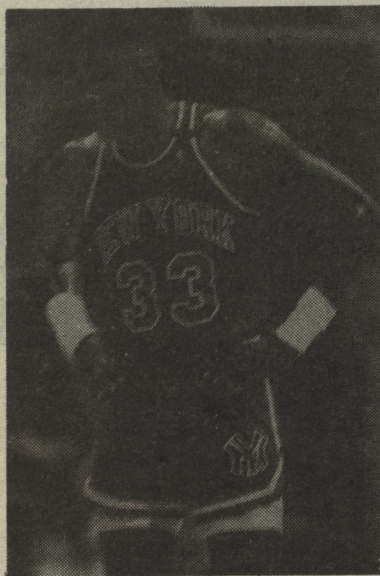


1993-1994 NBA PREVIEW

The 93-94 season will be one of change in the NBA, now that Michael Jordan has hung up his sneakers in Chicago to retire from the game of basketball, as he has nothing left to prove or accomplish. The torch has been passed to stars like Shaquille O'Neal and Larry Johnson to keep the league going for the next decade and a half. In addition to Jordan's departure, shooting guards Reggie Lewis of Boston and Drazen Petrovic of New Jersey both tragically died this summer, leaving large voids for both the Celtics and Nets as well as for their fans. This may also be the last season for last year's MVP Charles Barkley, who has said that he is "99.9% sure" that this will be his last season in the NBA. Barkley wants to go out with a championship ring, his one unachieved goal, to cap a Hall of Fame career. His Phoenix Suns, with free-agent signing A.C. Green, seem likely to win it all this year, even with the possibility that last year's rookie gem Richard Dumas may not play due to a drug suspension. This week I will look at the teams from the Eastern Conference.

ATLANTIC DIVISION



With Jordan out of the way, Partick Ewing and the New York Knicks hope to wear this year's NBA crown.

1) **New York Knicks:** With Jordan no longer in competition, the Knicks could finally make it to the finals with the deepest talent pool in the NBA. Patrick Ewing (24.2 ppg, 12.1 rpg) is one of the top three centers in the league, and John Starks (17.5) is now the most exciting 2 guard

Predicting the winners and losers in the NBA's Eastern Conference

in the East. Pat Riley's philosophy of defense and a fundamental offense led the Knicks to an Atlantic Division championship last year with a 60-22 record, 2nd best in the league. The Knicks have an outstanding front line of 6'10 Charles Smith, 6'9 Anthony Mason (10.3ppg 7.9 rpg as the 6th man), and 6'9 rebounder Charles Oakley. The only weakness is at the point where the duo of Greg Anthony and Doc Rivers is too inconsistent, but this team is headed to the NBA Finals.

2) **Orlando Magic:** Shaquille O'Neal knows rapping, endorsing, pulling down backboards, dunking and rookie success. With the third overall pick Anfernee Hardaway added to the Magic, this will be the season that Shaq learns about winning and possibly gets an MVP award to go with last season's rookie of the year trophy. This team, even with Shaq (23.4, 13.9), three-point shooter Dennis Scott (15.9), and Nick Anderson (19.9, 6.0), is still too young to win more than fifty games- but with a few years' seasoning, Hardaway alley-ooping to O'Neal will be the most often-seen play in the NBA.

3) **Miami Heat:** Like Orlando, this recent expansion team is too young to be anything more than a pretender, rather than a contender, to the crown. The Heat have major talent, though, in young guards Steve Smith (16, 4.1, 5.6), three-point threat Glen Rice (19.1) and the aptly nicknamed "Baby Jordan", '93 Dunk champ Harold Miner (10.3). Rony Seikaly (17.1, 11.8) will anchor the front line with 7'0 John Salley.

4) **New Jersey Nets:** Even with the tragic death of Drazen Petrovic, the Nets still have a blossoming star in PG Kenny Anderson (16.9, 4.1, 8.2 apg) and a possible All NBA Power

Forward in Derrick Coleman (20.7, 11.2), who was their best player even when they still had Petro. Coleman turned down an eleven-year, sixty-nine million dollar contract in the offseason to see how much he can command next year in this, the age of inflated salaries. Coach Chuck Daly has talent but he also has headaches-in-waiting with Chris Morris and newly acquired Benoit Benjamin. The Nets will be a middle-of-the-pack team.

5) **Boston Celtics:** In what will probably be the worst non-Bird year since 1978, the Celtics have many questions to answer. How will the team react to the death of scoring leader Reggie Lewis and the retirement of Kevin McHale? How long can forty-year-old Robert Parish (12.6, 9.4) keep going? Is Yugo Dino Radja the answer to the void at power forward? Can first round pick Acie Earl make people forget Joe Kleine? Who will fill the lost scoring of Lewis: Xavier McDaniel (13.5, 6.0), Kevin Gamble (13.3) or Dee Brown (10.9, 6.4 apg)? How low will the Celtics drop?

6&7) **Washington & Philadelphia:** Both teams have drafted centers of huge proportions, Philly getting 7'6 BYU product Shawn Bradley, and the Bullets nabbing 7'7 Romanian Gheorge Muresan, who may play in Italy. Neither team will be great as both are in rebuilding years, but both teams have talent, especially Washington, with Tom Gugliotta (14.7, 9.6, 3.8) and Pervis Ellison (17.4, 8.8)

CENTRAL DIVISION

1) **Cleveland Cavaliers:** The Cavs may challenge New York for tops in the East with one of the most talented teams in the NBA. Start with center Brad Daughtery (20.2, 10.2), add point guard Mark Price (18.2, 8 apg), pf Larry Nance (16.5, 7.9), 6th man Hot Rod Williams (11, 6.2) and 2 guard Gerald Wilkins (11.1) and you have one of the best squads around. Add 6'10 rebounder Tyrone Hill (8.6, 10.2) from Golden State and you have a team which could play into June.

2) **Charlotte Hornets:** This other expansion team has the best center/power forward combination tandem in the league right now, with Larry Johnson (22.1, 10.5) and 6'10 shot-blocker Alonzo Mourning (21.0, 10.3). The 2 of them combined have 3 years of NBA experience, so the peak of their careers is not for some time. The move to acquire shooting guard Hersey Hawkins (20.3 with Philly last year) got rid of