

# ◆The Houston Roundball Review◆

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**BASKETBALL FOR THOUGHT** by Kris Gardner, e-mail: KGardner@dothereview.com

## Yao or Not



It's amazing how quickly the Houston Rockets

offseason transformed from an expected ho-hum summer to non-stop interest. Clearly, winning the number 1 pick in the NBA Draft has that effect on teams. Especially when the number one selection in the Draft is expected to be a 7-foot, five inch basketball player from China. Yes, China. **Yao Ming**, "Come on down! You're the number one choice of the Houston Rockets! Welcome to the NBA and welcome to the city of Houston!" Of course, Yao becoming a Rocket is yet to be decided; and, I for one don't believe the Rockets should choose Yao.

From all indications, Yao is a very talented basketball player. He can shoot with range; run the floor well for a "person of his size" (What does that actually mean? Who knows *how* a 7'5 person is supposed to run?) Yao has good lower body strength; and, the fact he weighs 296 pounds is viewed as very positive because Yao won't be a "stick" coming into the league. However, Yao is not expected to have an immediate impact on the league or his new team in

his rookie season; so, why would the Rocket s want to draft a player who will simply prolon



league team in July or in training camp in early October. Yao has a commitment to the Chinese National Team for the World Champion

*In addition to that dilemma, Rockets' management also has other problems to consider in deciding whether or not to select Yao with the top pick...*

g their time out of the NBA Playoffs for a fourth consecutive season? The Rockets basketball people have to answer that question.

In addition to that dilemma, Rockets' management also has other problems to consider in deciding whether or not to select Yao with the top pick: whichever team selects Yao, probably won't have him to participate with its summer-

ships in Indianapolis during late August and early September, and is supposed to be with the Chinese practicing in July during the summer leagues. He is also obligated to play for the Chinese in the Asian Games in late September. The Chinese could reserve the right to call Yao back if need be at any time during the season, although that would seem unlikely. Yao's contract is more of a concern for him than the

team that selects him. Yao is a product of the Chinese government of sport and 50 percent of his salary would go to the governing body and his club team the Shanghai Sharks. The remaining 50 percent would be divided among Yao and those who helped him get to this point.

Drafting Yao would definitely increase ticket sales for the Rockets' home games as well as make the Houston Rockets a team of global interest. Media credentials from throughout the world will be requested to see Yao play. While the team may not be playoff bound in 2002 - 2003, interest in the team would be sky high. If the Rockets' management truly believes adding Yao to the mix along with good team health (for a change) means a playoff berth next season, then, the team's decision is an easy one. However, I don't believe Yao will have an immediate pact on the court for at least two years because he will be entering completely "uncharted waters" in the NBA which will require him to become a more physical ball player. I don't doubt Yao will be a good NBA player; but, it's unfortunate for Rockets' fans this isn't 2003 because Houston's owning the top pick in the 2003 Draft would mean one thing: high school kid **LeBron James** would be a Rocket. End of discussion. Case closed.

### Inside This Issue

### Page(s)

Basketball For Thought	1
NBA State of the Team Address	2 - 3, 4
NBA Draft Order; News and Notes; Free Agents	4 - 6
Houston area colleges notes; Big 12 (w) Signees	7 - 10
WNBA Predictions; and Team Address	10, 11
Roundball Rim Shots	12

## NBA State of the Team Address

(thru May 25th)

### **Atlanta Hawks:**

**Summary:** The Hawks bad season can be summarized with this: miss the playoffs (again); but, because of a previous trade with the Clippers, no pick (8th overall) in the first round.

### **Boston Celtics:**

**Summary:** The Cs disposed of the Detroit Pistons because Kenny Anderson dominated Detroit's point guards. Role players like Eric Williams and Tony Delk stepped up to score key baskets, too. Paul Pierce and Antoine Walker only had one breakout game versus the Detroit. Facing New Jersey in the Eastern Conference Finals puts a definite strain on Boston's transition defense. Memo to Kenny Anderson: Jason Kidd is not Chucky Atkins or Damon Jones. However, give the Cs tremendous credit for coming from 21 points down after three quarters and defeating the New Jersey Nets in game 3 of the Conference Finals.

### **Charlotte Hornets:**

**Summary:** Jamal Mashburn was unable to play in the postseason due to illness and injury. Consequently, Charlotte didn't have enough offensive firepower to compete with the Nets in the second round of the playoffs. Now, the Hornets move to New Orleans until reality slaps the front office across the face and forces the team to move again in a few short years.

### **Chicago Bulls:**

**Summary:** The Bulls own the second overall pick in the Draft. G Jay Williams

is the most likely choice for the Bulls because of his tremendous skills as well as the Bulls tremendous need for a point guard. Chicago may entertain trade offers for the pick; but, it seems highly unlikely the Bulls trade the pick.

### **Cleveland Cavaliers:**

**Summary:** Since this is not 2003, coach John Lucas can only watch high school phenom LeBron James in workouts against NBA players instead of figuring out how to obtain LeBron in the Draft. Cleveland needs to keep G Andre Miller in the fold in order to have any hope of winning next season.

### **Dallas Mavericks:**

**Summary:** The Mavs lack of defense and lack of low post offense cost them dearly in their elimination from the playoffs. Sacramento took full advantage of every opportunity the Mavs offered. Since Dallas' season is now over, let's see if the Michael Finley trade rumors hold any truth.

### **Denver Nuggets:**

**Summary:** The Nuggets hope to hire a head coach before next month's NBA Draft. The team has so many holes to fill; hiring a new coach will just be step one in the long rebuilding process.

### **Detroit Pistons:**

**Summary:** After defeating the Toronto Raptors in the first round of the Eastern Conference playoffs, the Pistons were eliminated in 5 games by the Celtics.

Head coach Rick Carlisle has to take a lot of blame for his team's poor offensive showing versus Boston. Instead of finding a way to use Jon Barry's offense, Carlisle opted to sit Barry on the bench because of his poor defense versus Paul Pierce. Detroit failed to score more than 81 points in games 2 through 5 in the series. Detroit must upgrade the point guard position in the off-season.

### **Golden St. Warriors:**

**Summary:** The Warriors have made no secret about their desire to have Jay Williams on their team. Unfortunately for the Warriors, Williams will be gone by the time the Warriors have a chance to make a pick. Golden State owns the third pick; and, Williams is projected to go top 2. Consequently, unless the Warriors can pull off a trade, they will once again select "the best available athlete".

### **Houston Rockets:**

**Summary:** Lady Luck smiled on the Rockets as Houston won the NBA Lottery. The Rockets own the top overall pick in next month's NBA Draft which means Houston can choose any player they want at number 1. All signs point to Houston selecting Yao Ming; however, many questions have to be answered before Houston finalizes their choice on June 26.

### **Indiana Pacers:**

**Summary:** The Pacers lost a thrilling five-game first

round series to the New Jersey Nets. Reggie Miller was the most consistent performer for the Pacers throughout the series. Jermaine O'Neal did not perform well in his first playoffs with significant minutes. Indiana is still a very young club with a very bright future.

### **LA Clippers:**

**Summary:** The Clippers own the 8th and the 12th overall pick in next month's Draft. Since Clippers' owner Donald Sterling is known for his frugality, logic says the team will use both selections and draft 2 rookies with cheaper salaries as opposed to paying current veteran players like C Michael Olowokandi and F Lamar Odom big time money. The Clips have tremendous flexibility to improve the team; however, Sterling will probably stunt the team's growth once again.

### **LA Lakers:**

**Summary:** Disposing the Blazers and the Spurs in the first two rounds was fairly easy for the Lakers for one simple reason: LA owns a psychological edge over their opponents. The Sacramento Kings have broken through that mental wall to take a 2 to 1 series lead in the conference finals; and, in the process, have shown the Lakers' role players to be the key to defeating LA. If the non-stars don't play well, it doesn't matter how many points Shaq and Kobe score because the

(Continued on page 3)

# NBA State of the Team Address

(thru May 25th)

(Continued from page 2)

Lakers won't win. Period.

## **Memphis Grizzlies:**

**Summary:** The Grizzlies have already made one of the best moves of the off-season: hiring Jerry West as President of Basketball Operations. West is in charge of personnel and placing the Grizzlies on the winning track. While his task is difficult, Mr. West can definitely get the job done because of his keen basketball sense.

## **Miami Heat:**

**Summary:** Miami owns the 10th pick in the first round of the Draft and, because, the team has such a need for another scorer, Pat Riley's decision should be obvious. However, don't be shocked when Pat selects a defensive specialist.

## **Milwaukee Bucks:**

**Summary:** The Bucks own the 13th pick in the Draft which means little except the pick reminds Bucks' fans the team missed the playoffs. Milwaukee has to fix team chemistry on and off the court; so, the draft pick could be used in a trade.

## **Minnesota Timberwolves:**

**Summary:** Minnesota lost in the first round of the playoffs for the sixth straight season. Kevin Garnett was once again blamed for the first round flop. The Timberwolves have to figure out a way to improve the personnel or the criticisms will continue and get worse.

## **New Jersey Nets:**

**Summary:** The Nets were enjoying a glorious playoff run until they made history.

After defeating Indiana in 5 games in the first round; and beating Charlotte in the second round, the Nets headed to Boston tied 1-1 in the Eastern Conference Finals. New Jersey led Boston by 21 points heading into the fourth quarter of game 3; then, proceeded to watch the Cs drop 43 points on them to establish the largest 4th quarter comeback in NBA Playoffs history. If the team recovers from that collapse to win the series, kudos to Byron Scott and his coaching staff.

## **New York Knicks:**

**Summary:** The Knicks own the 7th pick in the first round which is of little help to the club. New York needs immediate help which the 7th pick won't provide. Trades are necessary; however, NY lacks tradeable assets.

## **Orlando Magic:**

**Summary:** Tracy McGrady may be one of the best players in the league; but, he can't defeat the Charlotte Hornets with a sore bad back and by himself. Orlando needs a healthy Grant next season in order to make the 2002 - 2003 season more than just the "Get Tim Duncan in the summer of 2003" watch.

## **Philadelphia 76ers:**

**Summary:** Allen Iverson needs to become more of a leader. Period. He has to set the example in the locker room, on the practice court, and, in the games. Philly has to acquire more offensive weapons and stop relying

on Iverson jacking up 35 shots per game.

## **Phoenix Suns:**

**Summary:** The Suns have the 9th and the 22nd pick in the Draft; so, perhaps the team can use the picks to make themselves better instead of improving teams in the Eastern Conference like Phoenix did this past season: Detroit, Clifford Robinson; New Jersey, Jason Kidd; Boston, Rodney Rogers and Tony Delk.

## **Portland Trailblazers:**

**Summary:** The Blazers just don't have the mental capacity to win in the playoffs. Players need to grow up and play as a team instead of griping about lack of minutes and poor officiating. Maturing from within could solve many of the problems; but, who is going to wait for Rasheed Wallace and Bonzi Wells to mature?

## **Sacramento Kings:**

**Summary:** The Kings have won at Utah; at Dallas; and at LA in the post-season. Sacto leads the Lakers 2 games to 1 in the conference finals thanks to Mike Bibby's impressive play; Bobby Jackson's incredible quickness; and, a growth and maturity by the entire team following the game 1 home loss to the Lakers. The Kings have more talent from 1 to 12 than the Lakers; however, Sacramento has to continue playing like a team in order to eliminate the two-time defending champions. Chris Webber may prefer taking prime-

ter shots; however, as long as he doesn't pick up stupid fouls and technicals, I don't care. C-Webb has to lead his team by example; and, that involves keeping his composure at all times.

## **San Antonio Spurs:**

**Summary:** The Spurs flameout versus the Lakers confirmed a few things: 1-Tim Duncan can't win by himself and 2-the rest of the Spurs are scared of the Lakers. David Robinson has announced he will retire after next season.

## **Seattle SuperSonics:**

**Summary:** The Sonics lost to the Spurs in 5 games in the first round. Rashard Lewis wants to receive the maximum salary on a new contract. He doesn't deserve it; but, Seattle has to determine what they will offer. Vin Baker has said he doesn't want to leave Seattle; however, he may not get his wish.

## **Toronto Raptors:**

**Summary:** Playing Detroit a tough 5 game series in the first round showed a few things: Dell Curry can still shoot; the Raptors need Vince Carter; and, Keon Clark must be re-signed. However, it's unlikely all three of those players will be Raptors next season.

## **Utah Jazz:**

**Summary:** Surprisingly Utah didn't get swept by the Sacramento Kings in the first round of the playoffs. The Jazz lost in 4 games to the Kings. Utah lost games 3 and 4 at

(Continued on page 4)

## 2002 NBA Draft Order

As of May 19

### First Round

1. Houston
2. Chicago
3. Golden State
4. Memphis
5. Denver
6. Cleveland
7. New York
8. L.A. Clippers (from Atlanta)
9. Phoenix
10. Miami
11. Washington
12. L.A. Clippers
13. Milwaukee
14. Indiana
15. Houston (from Toronto)
16. Philadelphia
17. Charlotte
18. Orlando
19. Utah
20. Toronto (from Seattle via New York)
21. Portland
22. Phoenix (from Boston)
23. Detroit<sup>1</sup>
24. New Jersey
25. Denver (from Dallas)
26. San Antonio
27. L.A. Lakers
28. Sacramento

Note: The Minnesota Timberwolves forfeited their first round pick.

<sup>1</sup> Pick may be conveyed to Atlanta via Philadelphia and Houston.

### Second Round

30. Golden State
31. Chicago
32. Memphis
33. Denver
34. Milwaukee (from Houston)
35. Cleveland
36. New York
37. Atlanta
38. Miami<sup>2</sup>
39. Washington (from Phoenix via Denver)
40. Washington
41. L.A. Clippers
42. Milwaukee
43. Portland (from Toronto via Chicago)
44. Chicago (from Indiana)
45. Philadelphia<sup>3</sup>
46. Memphis (from Orlando)
47. Utah
48. Milwaukee (from Charlotte)
49. Seattle
50. Boston
51. Portland
52. Minnesota
53. Houston (from Detroit via Toronto or Miami from Detroit via Toronto and Houston)
54. New Jersey
55. Dallas
56. San Antonio (from LA Lakers)
57. San Antonio
58. Sacramento

<sup>2</sup> Pick may be conveyed to Houston.

<sup>3</sup> Pick may be conveyed to Detroit.

## NBA State of the Team Address continued

*(Continued from page 3)*

home after splitting the first two games at Sacramento. John Stockton has not yet announced if he will return for another season; however, the team is trying to get 2001 first round draft pick Raul Lopez out of his contract in order to play for Utah in the fall. Talks are ongoing with Raul's club team: Real Madrid.

**Washington Wizards: Summary:** The Wizards have the 11th pick in the first round; and, all indications point to the Wizards looking to select a scoring small forward in order to add more offense to the club. However, until Michael Jordan announces his future plans, drafting a small forward could be a moot point because if MJ decides to play another season, the draft pick won't see any much needed game action which will allow him to improve his game.

## NBA News and Notes

### Nets' Thorn Named Top Executive

May 21, New Jersey Nets President and General Manager **Rod Thorn**, who engineered the deal that brought **Jason Kidd** to New Jersey and propelled the Nets to the Eastern Conference Finals, on Tuesday was named The Sporting News NBA Executive of the Year.

Thorn, who came to the Nets two years ago after 14 years as the NBA's Executive Vice President, Basketball Operations, received 26 of 43 votes in balloting by team executives. Detroit Pistons President of Basketball Operations **Joe Dumars** was second with nine votes and Sacramento Kings President, Basketball Operations **Geoff Petrie** was third with three votes.

In one season, the Nets improved from a 26-56 mark to a 52-30 record, the best finish in the East and the best performance by the team since joining the NBA in 1976. Among Thorn's other acquisitions was a three-for-one deal with Houston on draft night that brought first-round selections **Richard Jefferson**, **Jason Collins** and **Brandon Armstrong** for first-round pick **Eddie Griffin**. Thorn also signed center **Todd MacCulloch** as a free agent.

"This is an honor I will cherish," Thorn told *The Sporting News*. "To be singled out by your peers makes me feel really good."

### NBA Finals 2002 Schedule

All Times Listed are Central

Game 1 - Wed. June 5 (NBC and ESPN Radio), 8 p.m.  
 Game 2 - Fri. June 7 (NBC and ESPN Radio), 8 p.m.  
 Game 3 - Sun. June 9 (NBC and ESPN Radio), 7:30 p.m.  
 Game 4 - Wed. June 12 (NBC and ESPN Radio), 8 p.m.  
 \*Game 5 - Fri. June 14 (NBC and ESPN Radio), 8 p.m.  
 \*Game 6 - Mon. June 17 (NBC and ESPN Radio), 8 p.m.  
 \*Game 7 - Wed. June 19 (NBC and ESPN Radio), 8 p.m.

\* - if necessary

NBA Finals 2002 will move up and begin on Sunday, June 2 if both conference finals series end in five games or less (completed by Wednesday, May 29).

### Key Dates Remaining for the 2001 - 2002 NBA Season

June 2	NBA Finals 2002 earliest possible start date
June 4 - 7	NBA Pre-Draft Camp, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago
June 5	NBA Finals 2002 latest possible start date
June 19	NBA Finals 2002 latest possible end date
June 19	NBA Draft Early Entry withdrawal deadline
June 26	NBA Draft 2002
July 1	Teams may begin negotiating with, but not sign, free agents
July 16	Teams may begin signing player contracts
August 17	U.S. World Championship Team training camp begins
August 29 - September 8	2002 World Basketball Championship, Indianapolis, IN

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# Team by Team List of NBA Free Agents in 2002

As of April 18.

Atlanta Hawks: G Emanuel Davis \*, F Ira Newble, F Leon Smith,  
F Mark Strickland, G Jacque Vaughn

Boston Celtics: C Mark Blount \*\*, F Roshown McLeod \*\*\*,  
F Walter McCarty, F Rodney Rogers, G Erick Strickland.

Charlotte Hornets: F Lee Nailon, F Robert Traylor \*\*\*

Chicago Bulls: C Dalibor Bagaric, G Travis Best, G Trenton  
Hassell \*, F Charles Oakley, G Norm Richardson

Cleveland Cavaliers: G Ricky Davis \*\*\*, C Michael Doleac \*\*\*,  
G Trajan Langdon, F Brian Skinner \*\*\*, G Jeff Trepagnier

Dallas Mavericks: G Omar Cook, F Raef LaFrentz \*\*\*, F Eduardo  
Najera, C Ruben Wolkowyski

Denver Nuggets: F Chris Andersen, G Carlos Arroyo, G / F Calbert  
Cheaney, C / F Zondon Hamilton, G Voshon Lenard,  
G / F George McCloud, G Kenny Satterfield, C Scott Williams

Detroit Pistons: C Victor Alexander, G Dana Barros, G Damon  
Jones, C / F Mikki Moore \*, C Zeljko Rebraca \*\*, C Ratko  
Varda

Golden State Warriors: G Mookie Blaylock, C Dean Garrett,  
F Cedric Henderson, G Larry Hughes \*\*\*, G Dean Oliver

Houston Rockets: G Tierre Brown, F Dan Langhi, G Oscar Torres,  
F Walt Williams, C Kevin Willis

Indiana Pacers: G Jamison Brewer, G Kevin Ollie, F / C Carlos  
Rogers — placed on suspended list on 2 / 12.

Los Angeles Clippers: G Earl Boykins, F Obinna Ekezie, F Tremaine  
Fowlkes, F Harold Jamison, G Jeff McInnis, C Michael  
Olowokandi \*\*\*, G Doug Overton, G Eldridge Recasner —  
waived on 1 / 7.

Los Angeles Lakers: F Devean George, G Lindsey Hunter \*,  
F / C Jelani McCoy, F Stanislav Medvedenko, G Mitch  
Richmond, G Brian Shaw

Memphis Grizzlies: C / F Ike Austin — waived on 2 / 28,  
G Will Solomon

Miami Heat: F Malik Allen, C Ernest Brown, G / F Kendall Gill,  
G Eddie House, G / F Jim Jackson, G / F Sam Mack,  
C Sean Marks, C Vladimir Stepania, G Rod Strickland.

\* Denotes player's option to become a free agent.

\*\* Denotes team's option.

\*\*\* Team has right of first refusal

Milwaukee Bucks: G Rafer Alston, G Greg Anthony, C Greg Foster,  
F Darvin Ham, G Michael Redd \*

Minnesota Timberwolves: G William Avery, G Maurice Evans \*\*,  
G Felipe Lopez \*, F Sam Mitchell, C Rasho Nesterovic \*\*\*,  
G Robert Pack, F Gary Trent, C Loren Woods.

New Jersey Nets: G Anthony Johnson, F Donny Marshall, F Brian  
Scalabrino \*.

New York Knicks: F Othella Harrington \*, G / F Lavar Postell,  
G Larry Robinson

Orlando Magic: F Pat Garrity \*\*\*, G Troy Hudson, G Jaren Jackson,  
F Monty Williams.

Philadelphia 76ers: G Raja Bell, F Corie Blount, G Ira Bowman,  
G Vontego Cummings, F Matt Harpring \*\*\*, C Alvin Jones,  
F Derrick McKey

Phoenix Suns: G Charlie Bell \*\*, F Alton Ford \*\*, G / F Dan  
Majerle, C Daniel Santiago — waived on 1 / 7, C Jake Voskuhl

Portland Trailblazers: C Ruben Boumtje Boumtje, G Rick Brunson,  
G Mitchell Butler, C Chris Dudley, F Rasheed Wallace \*,  
G Bonzi Wells \*\*\*

Sacramento Kings: G Mike Bibby \*\*\*, F Chucky Brown,  
C Jabari Smith

San Antonio Spurs: F Bruce Bowen \*, F Stephen Jackson, C Amal  
McCaskill, F Malik Rose, G Charles Smith

Seattle Supersonics: C Predrag Drobnjak, C Jerome James,  
F Rashard Lewis \*, G Randy Livingston, F Art Long,  
F Ansu Sesay, G Earl Watson.

Toronto Raptors: F / C Keon Clark \*\*\*, G Chris Childs,  
G / F Dell Curry, G Derrick Dial, G Jermaine Jackson.

Utah Jazz: C Jarron Collins, G John Crotty, G Rusty LaRue,  
F Quincy Lewis, F Donyell Marshall, F Scott Padgett,  
F / G Bryon Russell

Washington Wizards: F Popeye Jones, G Tyrone Nesby, F Bobby  
Simmons

\* Denotes player's option to become a free agent.

\*\* Denotes team's option.

\*\*\* Team has right of first refusal.

## Houston Area Colleges: Spring Signings

### Prairie View Announces Three Signings

*May 15*, Prairie View A&M head coach **Jerome Francis** announced the signing of three basketball players to National Letters of Intent: two high school players, **Gary Hamilton** and **Dashon Harper**, and one junior college player, **Kevin Cooper**.

Hamilton, a 6-9 power forward from Dorsey High School in Los Angeles, Calif., was nominated for the McDonald's All-American High School Basketball Team. He was named to the Los Angeles Times Central City All-Region Team, averaging 17 points, 15 rebounds and 4 blocks per game. Gary chose Prairie View over Oregon State, Long Beach State and USC.

A 5-11 guard from Ready High School in Columbus, Ohio, Harper was selected District III player of the year in Ohio and named District III first team two years running. In his senior season, he averaged 23.1 points, 3 assists and 3.5 steals per game while shooting 50 per cent beyond the 3-point arch. Dashon chose PV over Miami-Ohio, Coppin State and Duquesne.

Cooper, a 6-3 JUCO guard from Lee College, chose Prairie View over Georgia State, Texas-Pan American and Centenary. He received region 14 honorable mention honors and averaged 15 points, 4 rebounds, 3 assists and 3 steals per game.

### Texas Southern Signs El Paso Star

*April 24*, Texas Southern University men's head coach **Ronnie Courtney** announced the signing of **Sean Walker** from Parkland HS in El Paso.

Sean is a 6'2 scoring guard; and he averaged a city-high 28 points per game last season on a Parkland team that won an area-round playoff game for the first time in its history. Besides his All-City MVP selection, Walker was also voted the District 1-5A MVP and was a first-team all-state selection.

### Lady Owls Sign Los Angeles Standout

*April 24*, Lady Owls head coach **Cristy McKinney** announced that **Amber Cunningham** has signed a national letter of intent to join Rice in the fall.

Cunningham is a 5'10 guard from Pilgrim HS in Los Angeles. She was a four-time CIF Southern Section player of the year in Division 5A and helped lead Pilgrim High to the 2002 CIF-SS Division 5A crown and the state regional finals.

"We're excited about Amber," said McKinney. "We think she's kind of an unknown in some degrees to a lot of people, and we think we found one that can come in here and do some things next year."

In addition to her CIF-SS player of the year honors, Cunningham was also the Heritage League MVP and the Los Angeles Times Central City Player of the Year. During her senior season, she was nominated for McDonald's All-American status.

### Owls Sign Texas 3A Player of the Year

*April 22*, Rice Owls men's basketball coach **Willis Wilson** announced the fourth (and final) signing to the men's basketball team. Joining the Owls next season will be **J.R. Harrison**, a 6-foot-6 forward from Gainesville, Texas, who was named the 3A Player of the Year by the Texas Sports Writers' Association.

Harrison helped Gainesville High School defend its No. 1 state ranking by leading the team to the 2002 Texas 3A championship. He was named MVP of the state championship game by scoring 16 points, grabbing 11 rebounds, passing out six assists and blocking three shots. For the season Harrison led the Leopards to a 29-6 record by averaging 19.0 points, 9.5 rebounds and 2.5 blocks per game. In addition to all-state and multiple all-district accolades, Harrison was named the MVP of the state tournament as a junior in 2001 after leading Gainesville to the semi-finals.

"J.R. completes what I believe is an excellent recruiting class, coach Wilson said. "Athleticism has been a theme in our recruiting efforts the last few years and J.R. fits that mold. What we've been looking for is athleticism to go inside and outside, and he's another guy who can give that to us.

"By combining this class with the terrific class we had last year, we are definitely making major progress on the recruiting front for the program."

### Signings (Fall and Spring)

J. R. Harrison	G 6'6	Gainesville, TX
Jamaal Moore	G-F 6'5	Moberley, MO
Alex Spotts	G 6'5	Lexington, SC
Mike Kinsella	C 7'0	Rochester, MN

## 2002 Big 12 (Women's) Signees

\* Denotes Spring Signee (Baylor, Colorado, Nebraska, Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech)

As of May 3

### Baylor

\***Ebony Jackson**, G, 5-5, Arlington, Texas / Sam Houston HS. Averaged 24.6 points as a senior...District 8-5A Offensive Player of the Year...Dallas Morning News All-Area selection.  
**Chameka Scott**, G, 5-11, Houston, Texas/Clear Brook HS. Averaged 22 points, 14 rebounds and 3 steals as a junior.  
 Sophia Young, St. Vincent, West Indies/Evangel Academy (Shreveport, La.)

### Colorado

\***Maria Billingsley**, G, 5-6, Jr, Stockholm, Sweden / Vasalunds Gymnasium/Central Arizona College. Averaged 7.6 points, 5.3 assists and 3.8 steals as a sophomore. Led CAC to a 23-3 record and the regional championship game.

**Melissa Hobbs**, F, 6-0, Woodward, Okla./Woodward HS. Averaged 17.4 points as a junior leading her squad to a 26-1 record and the Class 5-A State Championship. Top Five Player and First Team All-State Tournament by the Daily Oklahoman. First Team All-State by the Tulsa World. USA Today honorable mention All-America as a junior and sophomore.

**Amber Metoyer**, F, 5-11, Boulder, Colo./Fairview HS. Averaged 23 points and led the state with 12.4 rebounds as a junior. Following her junior year, selected to the Adidas Top Ten Camp, Adidas All-American All Star and Street & Smith's All-America honorable mention. Rocky Mountain News All-State second team and played in the Colorado All-Star game.

### Iowa State

**Megan McCracken**, G, 5-8, Port Byron, Ill./Alleman HS. Averaged 19.9 points as a junior. Holds school career records for field goals (540), field goal attempts (1,214), free throws (226), free throw attempts (348), points (1,369) and points per game (14.7). Two-time All-Western Big Six and Quad City Times all-metro.

### Kansas

**Tamara Ransburg**, F/C, 6-4, Virginia Beach, Va./Coastal Christian HS. Averaged 24 points and 12 rebounds for Tilton HS in Tilton, N.H. last season. Led her team to the league championship and a second place district finish...Attended many all-star camps, including the 2000 Nike Camp in Chicago and the Reebok camp.

**Alicia Rhymes**, F, 6-0, Shreveport, La./Loyola Prep. Louisiana 2A Player of the Year as a junior. Street & Smith's All-America honorable mention. All-district and all-metro honors.

**Aquaneta Burras**, G, 5-9, Fairbanks, Alaska/Lathrop HS/

### Central Arizona CC.

Two-time member of the Alaska All-State team and three-time member of the All-State Tournament teams. Named All-America honorable mention following her senior season at LHS. Will be a sophomore at KU next season.

**Erica Hallman**, G, 5-8, Covington, Ky./Covington HS. Averaged 22.8 points and 5.6 assists as a junior. Named to the Covington Courier-Journal All-State second team last season. A top contender for Miss Kentucky Basketball this year.

**Ebony Haliburton**, F, 5-11, Kansas City, Mo./St. Thomas Aquinas HS.

Averaged 9.0 points for Aquinas' 24-1 team which won the Kansas 6A state championship last season. Participated in the ADIDAS camp over the summer which features the country's top 200 players.

**Nichelle Roberts**, F, 6-1, Houston, Texas/West Field HS. Averaged 15 points and 11 rebounds as a junior. Street & Smith's All-America honorable mention and a member of the 5-A All-State and all-district teams last season.

**Crystal Kemp**, F, 6-2, Topeka, Kan./Topeka HS. Averaged 22.6 points as a junior. Named to the all-city and all-I-70 league teams. Second team All-Class 6A.

### Kansas State

**Jessica McFarland**, C, 6-2, Derby, Kan./Derby HS. Averaged 16.3 points and 11.2 rebounds as a junior...Holds single season school records for scoring (407) and rebounds (281). Ranked 76th best center by the All-Star Girls Report. Third team All-State all-class and first team All-Class 6A. All-SE Kansas, all-league and league MVP as a junior.

### Missouri

**Latoya Bond**, G, 5-7, Urbana, Ill./Urbana HS. Averaged 15.3 points and made better than 60 percent of her shots as a junior while leading UHS to a 24-4 record and to the State AA Tournament's Sweet Sixteen.

**Cherice Mack**, F/C, 6-1, St. Charles, Mo./St. Charles HS. Averaged 19.1 points and 10 rebounds as a junior. Class 4A first team All-State. 2001 St. Charles County Player of the Year, first team all-metro and two time all-conference. Scored 500 or more points the last two seasons.

### Nebraska

\***Jamie Wendelin**, F, 5-11, Gretna, Neb./Gretna HS. Averaged 16 points, 8 rebounds, 4 assists and 5 steals as a senior. Class B All-State. First team All-Eastern Midlands Conference three times. Second team Class B from Lincoln Journal Star and Omaha World-Herald.

**Janice Bright**, G, 5-10, Los Angeles, Calif./Lynwood HS.

(Continued on page 9)



## 2002 Big 12 (Women's) Signees

\* Denotes Spring Signee (Baylor, Colorado, Nebraska, Texas, Texas A&M, Texas Tech)

As of May 3

(Continued from page 8)

Averaged 19 points, eight rebounds, five assists, three steals and two blocks as a junior. Rated 11th-best recruit in the nation by All-Star Girls Report. All-California Interscholastic Federation selection in 2001.

### Oklahoma

**Laura Andrews**, F, 6-0, Washington, Okla./Washington HS. Averaged 22.4 points, 7.7 rebounds and 5.0 assists as a junior. Three-time Little All-City first team. All-State Tournament first team.

**Erin Higgins**, G, 5-9, Oklahoma City, Okla./Westmoore HS. Averaged 14.0 points, 6.0 rebounds and 3.0 assists as a junior. WHS's all-time scorer. Mid-State All-Conference and All-Big City first teams.

**Becky Preston**, F/C, 6-3, Albuquerque, N.M./LaCueva HS. Averaged 15.0 points, 10.0 rebounds and 1.5 blocks as a junior. State All-Tournament team. All-State, all-district and all-conference first team. Led her team to state runner-up with 24-2 record.

**Casey Walker**, F/C, 6-3, Houston, Texas/The Woodlands HS. Averaged 10.0 points, 8.0 rebounds and 2.0 blocks as a junior. All-district and all-region as a junior. Hit 57 percent of her shots from the field.

**Chelsi Welch**, G, 5-9, Plainview, Texas/Plainview HS. Averaged 16.0 points, 6.0 rebounds and 3.0 assists as a junior. Ninth best guard in the country and best guard in the state of Texas according to the All-Star Girls Report. All-State first team pick that led her junior team to the 4A state title. State Tournament MVP. District and regional MVP.

### Oklahoma State

**Lori Allen**, G, 5-11, Moore, Okla. Averaged 17.9 points, 5.8 rebounds, 3.7 steals and 1.7 blocks as a junior. Two-time honorable mention All-State. First team Big All-City pick by the Daily Oklahoman.

**Meghan Craig**, F, 5-11, Moore, Okla./Westmoore HS. Averaged 12.8 points and 5.4 rebounds as a junior. Two-time Mid-State All-Conference squad. Honorable Mention All-State as a junior. Rated No. 12 wing player in the nation and the 102nd player overall by All-Star Girls Report.

**Cara Painter**, P, 6-3, Chisholm, Okla. Averaged 16 points and 5.6 rebounds as a junior. 89er Conference Player of the Year. Honorable Mention All-State. Led team to its first-ever regional and conference championships and first appearance in state tournament.

**Melissa Steen**, P, 6-2, Altus, Okla. Averaged 13 points and 7.2 rebounds as a junior. All-Southern Conference selection and honorable mention All-State. Led state in shooting percentage as a sophomore (68.7 percent).

### Texas

\***BranDee Fry**, C, 6-4, Pascagoula, Miss./Moss Point HS. Averaged 13.2 points, 15.4 rebounds, 7.2 blocks and 4.3 assists per game as a senior. 2001-02 honors include: South Mississippi Co-Player of the Year, Sun-Herald Co-Player of the Year, two-time All-Division, All-Area and All-State.

**Tamra Cobbins**, G, 5-7, Kansas City, Kan./F.L. Schlagle HS. Averaged 20.9 points as a junior and 17.5 points as a sophomore. The Kansan Player of the Year as a junior. Two-time All-State and all-metro.

**Nina Norman**, G, 5-8, Houston, Texas/Jersey Village HS. Averaged 16.1 points, 5.4 assists and 7.9 steals as a junior. Preseason Street & Smith's All-America. Ranked No. 2 player in the state and No. 19 nationally by the All-Star Girls Report. Houston Chronicle Preseason Player of the Year entering her senior season.

**Stephanie Thiel**, G, 5-9, Nazareth, Texas/Nazareth HS. Averaged 21.5 points and 8.0 rebounds as a junior. Two-year All-State first team. Texas State Class 1A tournament MVP last year while leading her team to its second straight state championship. All-South Plains MVP by Amarillo Globe and Lubbock Avalanche-Journal.

### Texas A&M

**Tamea Scales**, Memphis, Tenn./Ridgeway HS. Averaged 15.4 points, 7.7 rebounds, 3.3 assists and 3.3 steals as a senior. All-State Tournament Team. District 15AA Player of the Year as a senior. Four-time All-Shelby Metro and All-District 15AA honors. Best of the Preps finalist and Region 8AA MVP.

\***Natasha Summerville**, G, 5-8, Grand Prairie, Texas/Shady Grove Christian Academy. Averaged 37.5 points, 11.1 rebounds and 4.5 steals as a senior. Fort Worth Star-Telegram Player of the Year. MVP in TAAPS District 4-3A, first team All-Area and All-State by the Dallas Morning News. Played first three seasons at Arlington Bowie HS.

### Texas Tech

\***Miklannet Tennal**, G, Jr, 5-3, Centralia, Kan./Cloud County CC. Averaged 23.6 points, 5.2 assists and 2.5 steals as a sophomore. MVP of the Region VI Tournament and NJCAA National Tournament. Two-time first team KJCC-West Division selection.

**Chesley Dabbs**, F, 6-0, Plano, Texas/Plano HS. Averaged 20.3 points, 9.5 rebounds, 4.0 steals and 3.0 assists as a junior. Offensive MVP for District 9-5A...First team All-

(Continued on page 10)

## 2002 Big 12 (Women's) Signees

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As of May 3

(Continued from page 9)

State and all-region.

**LaToya Davis**, F/C, 6-1, Houston, Texas/South Houston HS. Averaged 24.1 points, 11.3 rebounds, 5.5 steals, 4.5 blocks and 2.4 assists as a junior. First team All-State, all-region, all-district and All-Greater Houston. MVP of District 22-5A and leading scorer as a junior in district.

**Erin Grant**, G, 5-7, Arlington, Texas/Mansfield HS. Averaged 12 points, eight assists, four steals and three rebounds as a junior. Parade All-America third team selection as a junior. Led her HS team to its third consecutive Class 5A state championship while being named the Dallas Morning News Player of the Year. First team All-State and all-district and MVP of state tournament.

### Six Big 12 Women's Players Selected to USA Basketball 20-and-under Team

May 20, Six Big 12 women's basketball players are among 16 of the country's top 20-and-under players were named as finalists for the 2002 USA Basketball World Championship For Young Women Qualifying Team, USA Basketball announced. The selections were made by the USA Basketball Women's Collegiate Committee, chaired by University of Texas Senior Associate Athletics Director for Men's and Women's Athletics **Chris Plonsky**.

Representing the Big 12 at the trials are: **Steffanie Blackmon**, Baylor; **Laurie Koehn**, Kansas State; **Nicole Ohlde**, Kansas State; **Jia Perkins**, Texas Tech; **Heather Schreiber**, Texas; and **Stacy Stephens**, Texas.

Texas Tech head coach **Marsha Sharp** will serve as head coach of the team and be assisted by **Nikita Lowry** (New Mexico State) and **Lisa Stone** (Drake).

The finalists will return to Colorado Springs, CO., on July 7 for the USA team training camp, which will run through July 11 (times TBD). Following the July 7-11 training camp, during which time the final 12-member 2002 USA 20-and-under squad will be selected, the U.S. is scheduled to continue its training July 12-16 in Ribeirao Preto, Brazil prior to the start of the 2002 Confederation of Pan American Basketball Associations (COPABA) World Championship For Young Women Qualifying Tournament.

Hosted by Brazil in Ribeirao Preto July 17-21 and featuring eight teams from North, South and Central America as well as the Caribbean, the top three nations will qualify for the inaugural International Basketball Federation (FIBA) World Championship For Young Women which is scheduled to be played in Dubrovnik, Croatia in July 2003 (dates TBD).

## 2002 WNBA Predictions

### Rookies to Watch

Note: Players who are expected to make a positive and, in some cases, **immediate** impact on her team.

Sue Bird, Seattle Storm.  
Tamika Catchings, Indiana Fever  
Swin Cash, Detroit Shock.  
Deanna Jackson, Cleveland Rockers.  
Asjha Jones, Washington Mystics.  
Iziane Castro Marques, Miami Sol.  
Tamara Moore, Miami Sol.  
Felicia Ragland, Seattle Storm.  
Stacey Dales - Schuman, Washington Mystics.  
Michelle Snow, Houston Comets.  
Nikki Teasley, Los Angeles Sparks.  
Tamika Williams, Minnesota Lynx.

Rookie of the Year: Tamika Catchings, Indiana Fever.  
Most Valuable Player: Lisa Leslie, Los Angeles Sparks.

### Most Improved Teams

Houston Comets  
Indiana Fever  
Minnesota Lynx  
Orlando Miracle  
Seattle Storm  
Washington Mystics

### Eastern Conference

1. Miami Sol, 22 - 10.
2. Charlotte Sting, 21 - 11.
3. Cleveland Rockers, 20 - 12.
4. New York Liberty, 20 - 12.
5. Orlando Miracle, 18 - 14.
6. Indiana Fever, 17 - 15.
7. Washington Mystics, 16 - 16.
8. Detroit Shock, 13 - 19.

### Western Conference

1. L.A. Sparks, 28 - 4.
2. Houston Comets, 27 - 5.
3. Utah Starzz, 21 - 11.
4. Sac. Monarchs, 20 - 12.
5. Minn. Lynx, 18 - 14.
6. Seattle Storm, 17 - 15.
7. Portland Fire, 16 - 16.
8. Phoe. Mercury, 16 - 16.

### Playoff Teams

Eastern Conference: Miami, Charlotte, Cleveland, and NY.  
Western Conference: L.A., Houston, Utah, and Sacramento.

### WNBA Finals

Charlotte vs. Houston.

WNBA Champion: Houston Comets.

## WNBA State of the Team Address

(As of May 24th)

### **Charlotte Sting**

**Summary:** The Sting look to build on last season's strong run to the WNBA Finals. All the key players from last season are back this season. Rookie G Sheila Lambert won't be healthy until the middle of the season.

### **Cleveland Rockers**

**Summary:** Star guard Helen Darling will miss the season after giving birth to triplets. As a result, Jennifer Rizzotti, Tricia Bader, and rookie point guard Brandi McCain will have to do a good job of running the team. Big things are expected from second-year F Penny Taylor.

### **Detroit Shock**

**Summary:** Detroit selected F Swin Cash with the second overall pick in the 2002 Draft. Cash is a winner; and, she's a very talented player. Coach Gregg Williams will use Swin at small forward in order to maximize his team's lone strength: their front court. Unfortunately, Detroit lacks a good point guard who can effectively run the offense.

### **Houston Comets**

**Summary:** The Comets welcome back F Sheryl Swoopes this season. This Comets' roster is the most talented team in history; however, the team has one big question: who will run the point? Coquese Washington is the lone "true point guard" on the roster; and, she must be

more aggressive on offense and defense in order for Houston to win title number 5.

### **Indiana Fever**

**Summary:** Indiana acquired G Nikki McCray in the off-season; but, the best news for the Fever is the return of last year's first round draft choice Tamika Catchings. Catchings missed all of last season because of a torn ACL (she tore it twice). Catchings is 100%; and, she is indeed the complete basketball package. Head coach Nell Fortner wants her club to force tempo; and run the opposition into the ground.

### **Los Angeles Sparks**

**Summary:** The defending champions may be the most arrogant team in the league; but, they have the talent to back up their confident talk. Head coach Michael Cooper has thrown out the challenge to his club to finish the regular season undefeated (32-0) this summer. LA acquired rookie point guard Nikki Teasley and guard Sophia Witherspoon from Portland in exchange for veteran point guard Ukari Figs.

### **Miami Sol**

**Summary:** Miami has great team balance: Debbie Black and Sheri Sam in the backcourt plus, Ruth Riley and Marlies Askamp up front. Rookie guard Iziane Castro Marques has a huge upside. While it still remains a possibility, it appears unlikely F Elena Baranova will play for Miami this season. Her native country (Russia) wants her to stay home and prepare for the World Championships.

### **Minnesota Lynx**

**Summary:** With a healthy Betty Lennox teaming with Svetlana Abrosimova and Katie Smith, Minnesota should have little trouble scoring points. However, the team's lack of rebounding could still be a problem. Rookie F Tamika Williams is expected to help on the boards.

### **New York Liberty**

**Summary:** The Liberty's core players are still in tact which may or may not be a good thing. The team still lacks a back up point guard for Theresa Weatherspoon; and Tari Phillips will continue getting beaten up by bigger front court players. Despite obvious weaknesses, the Liberty should still manage to make the playoffs (again) because of great team defense.

### **Orlando Miracle**

**Summary:** New head coach Dee Brown takes over for Carolyn Peck; and, Dee has brought an NBA philosophy to the club. Orlando is much more aggressive on defense than in previous years. Shannon Johnson, Nykesha Sales, and Taj McWilliams - Franklin form one of the best trios in the WNBA.

### **Phoenix Mercury**

**Summary:** Phoenix starts the season with injuries to Brandy Reed and Tracy Reid. However, a bigger blow to the club was the decision by C Maria Stepanova to return to Russia and miss the 2002 season. Stepanova was a key front court player for Phoenix.

### **Portland Fire**

**Summary:** Acquiring Ukari Figs from LA should get Jackie Stiles easier shots at shooting guard. Jackie is not yet 100% from off-season wrist surgery; but, while recovering from surgery, Jackie became a much better all-around player instead of simply being a scorer.

### **Sacramento Monarchs**

**Summary:** G Edna Campbell was diagnosed with breast cancer during the off-season; but, Edna is hopeful to play this season following her chemotherapy treatments. As long as Yolanda Griffiths knees don't cause her to miss games, Sacramento will remain an elite team.

### **Seattle Storm**

**Summary:** Number 1 pick Sue Bird will team with last year's number 1 Lauren Jackson and form the best young tandem in the WNBA. Seattle still lacks a consistent scoring threat at small forward; but, the Storm will be a much better team than last season.

### **Utah Starzz**

**Summary:** G Marie Ferdinand should expand on last season's success. Utah will have to adjust to higher expectations this season for the first time. Solid team defense will be a big key the team returning to the playoffs.

### **Washington Mystics**

**Summary:** Pat Summitt was hired as a consultant; and, Pat selected G Stacey Dales - Schuman and F Asjha Jones in the first round of the Draft. New coach Marianne Stanley wants the team to play more aggressive defense and create easier scoring opportunities.

# ROUNDBALL “RIM” SHOTS

## TRIVIA

### LAST MONTH'S QUESTION:

Which NBA player holds the NBA playoff record for consecutive 30-plus point performances at 11?

### ANSWER:

Lakers forward **Elgin Baylor** set the record in the 1962 NBA Playoffs. Despite his accomplishment, Baylor and the Lakers lost to the Boston Celtics 110-107 in overtime Game 7 of the NBA Finals.

### THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

How many times has the team with the best chance to win the NBA Lottery actually won the Lottery?

## Did You Know?

**Jason Kidd** of the New Jersey Nets is one of six players to achieve triple-doubles in back-to-back playoff games in the same postseason. **Wilt Chamberlain** recorded four consecutive triple-doubles for the Philadelphia 76ers in 1967 -- in Games 4 and 5 of the Eastern Division Finals against the Boston Celtics, and in Games 1 and 2 of the NBA Finals against the San Francisco Warriors.

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The next issue will be available in late June. It will **not** be a NBA Draft Special.

E-mail comments, questions, or criticisms to:

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