Pistol Pete regains weight and scoring style after illness

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Pete Maravich, gradually regaining pounds and strength sapped by mononucleosis, says he sometimes gets so tired he can hardly move on the basketball court.

And there was a time when he had strong doubt that he'd play at all in the 1971-72 season for the Atlanta Hawks of the National Basketball Association.

Yet the 6-foot-5 Maravich, playing 19 pounds under his pre-illness weight, poured in 50 points Sunday in his team's 124-116 victory over Philadelphia.

Maravich, 23, who missed his team's first 14 games because of the debilitating virus, also has enough vigor to play in the NBA's One-on-One competition. He was here this week for television taping of the competition.

He called One-on-One the "most draining type of basketball you can play." He had to win intra-squad competition to represent Atlanta and said it left him "worn out for a week."

Never a husky physical specimen, he said his weight now fluctuates between 184 and 186, compared to 203 at the start of pre-season training.

"I won't be able to gain back much more of the weight this season," he said. "We have a demanding schedule. I just want to get back into physical condition at 185 pounds."

Maravich said the three weeks he spent in a hospital didn't hurt his shooting form, but he recalls his first work-out—a solo shooting session—after getting the doctor's permission.

"I felt so frail out on the court. I thought to myself, that I probably wouldn't be back in any kind of shape for the whole year."

Atlanta Coach Richie Guerin said he was surprised by Maravich's scoring spree, especially because it was the Hawks' third game in as many nights.

"He was really tired," Guerin said. "I took him out with 30 seconds left. I tried to get him out earlier but it was a close game."

Maravich said the rest he had on Saturday night enabled him to come back with a "so-called good performance" on Sunday.

"The night before I didn't log but about 25 of the 46 minutes, so I really didn't play three in a row."

But that still doesn't explain how the former national collegiate scoring champion at Louisiana State scored 50 points.

Maravich said the foundation was laid before the game started.

"The team got together and we decided to express ourselves. We had gotten pounded into the ground in two previous games. We thought we should run more. Center Walt Bellamy and the forwards were getting down the court so fast that they were making avenues for me. They (opponents) had to adjust, switch off. By the time they I had the ball up.

"I was looking to shoot more than I ever have as a pro," Pistol Pete, a "gunner" in college who has had to adjust his game to play with the pros the season and a half.

Maravich, whose previous high was 44 points in his rookie season, called his 50 points "a team contribution."

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