

Sports

NBA Welcome Wagon Expansion draft deal helps Dallas to retain bench trio

DALLAS (AP) — The Dallas Mavericks kept their entire roster intact in Thursday's expansion draft — giving its first-round pick in next week's regular NBA draft to Miami in exchange for Miami's promise not to pick one of the three players the Mavericks left unprotected.

The Miami Heat had shown interest in all three of the players — centers Bill Wennington and Uwe Blab and guard Steve Alford — but particularly Wennington. Wennington and Blab were first-round draft choices in 1986, and Alford was a first-round choice a year ago.

"Our coaches and basketball people feel that the bench players on our team are important to our success," Mavericks General Manager Norm Sonju said. "We're trying to keep our bench intact for next season."

A second expansion team, the Charlotte Hornets, also was involved in Thursday's draft. But no team could lose more than one player.

Texas' two other NBA teams — the Houston Rockets and San Antonio Spurs — each lost a player from their squads Thursday. Miami took Jon Sundvold, a 6-2 shooting guard of the Spurs and Andre Turner, a 5-11 guard of the Rockets.

Dallas' first-round pick in next Tuesday's draft was to be No. 20 overall. The Mavericks will have two second-round picks and one third-round pick.

"This is a trade that makes



sense for both teams," Sonju said of the Mavericks' agreement with the Heat.

"Miami, as an expansion team, is thinking just like we did back in 1980. It will take them time to build their franchise correctly. They realize the foundation of their franchise will be built mostly with draft picks."

"On the other hand, we're going into our ninth season, and in these past playoffs, we came within a few minutes of getting into the NBA finals. It is our opinion that our young veterans would be able to help us more than any player we could acquire at the 20th pick in this year's draft."

Rick Sund, vice president of basketball operations for the Mavericks, said: "The fourth and fifth years are important for all players, but especially for big guys like Uwe and Bill, 7-footers who have three years experience. We've got time invested in our

bench players, and they're all important to us."

The Dallas deal was one of six the Heat made Thursday as existing teams arranged for the new team to either pick or not pick a player off the unprotected list.

"The drafts are getting deeper and deeper," Miami part-owner Billy Cunningham said. "We wanted to make sure we had as much flexibility going into the 1990s as we possibly could have."

Lewis Schaffel, managing partner of the Heat, said his club is focusing on developing a young team and that the Dallas trade was considered a pivotal move in that quest.

"We wanted youth, we wanted athletes and we wanted flexibility over the next three to four years in a changing basketball business," Schaffel said. "The draft after this year is only two rounds. We wanted to be able to take advantage of any contingency as we move forward."

Alford said he was pleased the Mavericks made the deal to keep the team intact.

"That just tells me that they didn't want to get rid of me," Alford said. "I think it was a move that they want to keep the stability."

Alford, after leading Indiana to the national collegiate title and earning All-American honors in 1987, rode the bench last season as the third point guard behind starter Derek Harper and Brad Davis.

Time for old stogie Kareem to hang up goggles and retire

OK, OK, I willingly admit that this column could appear to be stained a deep shade of purple — a result of too many sour grapes. I was rooting for the Detroit Pistons to pull off the upset Tuesday night; I readily confess. Given another chance, I'd do it again. Anything to see the Lakers lose (short of seeing the Celtics win, of course).

But it didn't take the green-tinted glasses of envy to see a pathetic case for what he was — a 7-foot-2, goggled dinosaur trying to play fast-break basketball with the rabbits of the modern age.

Or not trying, to put it more accurately. More on that later.

Let me make myself perfectly clear: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar will go down in the history books as one of the greatest ever to lace up a pair of Adidas. It was predestined from the day he first set foot on a basketball court that "little" Lew Alcindor would be phenomenal. He just plain had too much talent.

That's what made the last couple of weeks so depressing for anyone who would call himself a fan of the game. To see a great one in his declining years is not a pretty sight. This was no exception. For as long as I have remembered, I've cringed every time a Laker guard fangled a pass into The Big Guy in the low post. I knew what was coming, just like everyone else — a soft turn-around jumper; a lightning-fast spin move for a slam; or even scarier, the dreaded sky-hook that drew nothing but cord a shocking percentage of the time.

There wasn't a more reliable offensive threat in the game. The only one who had ever compared was Wilt Chamberlain, and he got half his career output just from jumping and grabbing someone else's shot and stuffing it through. That was before "basket interference" and all that.

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But Agosto shut out all the distractions, forgot his past and now has a 5-0 record and is pitching with "gusto" for the Astros.

Agosto's latest triumph came Wednesday night in a 5-1 victory over Cincinnati.

He pitched two innings in relief and benefited from a four-run Houston eighth inning.

"The more I pitch, the better I'm getting because my confidence is higher and I'm pitching with good control," Agosto said. "It used to be in Chicago, one guy would get on base and I'd be gone."

"I'm also very lucky. Everytime I've come into a game, the guys have scored runs for me."

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Hal L. Hammons Sports viewpoint

Kareem earned his points. He was utterly incredible.

Please underscore the word was. We all knew 41-year-olds weren't supposed to play with the kids. We knew it made no sense. But for Kareem, we were willing to suspend disbelief.

Enough is enough, though. We knew something was wrong when he went 2-for-10 in Game 1 and Los Angeles Laker Coach Pat Riley kept him on the bench for about half the game. It really hit home in Game 7; the Lakers built a 15-point lead in the fourth quarter with Kareem on the bench, he came back out, and the Pistons rallied to come one Dennis Rodman jumper from overtime.

Billy Cunningham hit the nail right on the head twice in Game 7; "Kareem's really hurting his team out there offensively."

It would have been heresy, blasphemy, to suggest such a thing even one year ago. This week it was obvious.

There is just no way you can justify to me keeping a man on the floor who doesn't even go downcourt to play offense from time to time — "resting his old legs" doesn't even begin to cut it as a valid excuse.

Surely, with only five men on the court, each would at least be expected to try to play at both ends. But not him. And it is bound to cost LA points here and there, maybe adding up to a game or two.

Sure, he's going to pick up the stray, uncontested layup off a steal (when the Laker fast break probably would have gotten two points anyway). He's going to look like a hustling, spry 37-year-old occasionally on an opponent's fast break (when he never went downcourt in the first place). And yes, he'll still hit the sky hook. But by the time he makes it upcourt, Magic Johnson only has about 15 seconds to get him the ball.

Yet Kareem insists he will play one more season. Basketball purists the world over are shaking their collective head in disapproval.

The last few years have been poor enough, with Kareem becoming more and more of a non-factor on

the boards. Now Johnson, James Worthy and Byron Scott have had to pick up the offensive slack as The Captain's numbers have dropped again.

What will the scene be next year? "Not pretty" is the only answer of which we can be sure.

Will Abdul-Jabbar continue to start, picking up fewer and fewer minutes until he becomes a Sam Perkins, filling a hole until a Roy Tarpley can come in off the bench to supply "a little more scoring, shot-blocking and rebounding?" As if that wasn't what the starter was supposed to be able to do in the first place.

Or will the former superstar be reduced to a spot offensive role, a la Bob McAdoo? I sincerely doubt, and hope, Kareem would have more dignity than that.

Or will the Lakers give him the option of a bench role or unconditional release, allowing him to be the central figure on a team with fewer stars and less promise?

The third seems unlikely, as the Laker management seems to be far from the point of signing on a center of even Kareem's diminishing ability. At least the top brass considered him worth a second-round pick in 1991 or 1992, which the Lakers gave to the expansion Miami Heat Thursday in exchange for not taking Kareem in the expansion draft.

Let's face it: he's still one of the top six or seven centers in the game. And even though the Lakers are better in every facet of the game with Mychal Thompson at center, that doesn't make Thompson what he isn't — a bona fide everyday NBA center.

The obvious answer is a surprise press conference, where a teary-eyed Kareem will announce he has reconsidered and has decided to go out on top. Two titles in a row make a great sending-off for one of the game's all-time greats. But we are getting no signs of such a blessed announcement.

So it seems fans of pro basketball will be forced to endure another year of watching a falling star. The younger generation will watch with us and ask why the tall, skinny, bald guy gets so much attention when there are younger stars like Akeem Olajuwain, Patrick Ewing and Brad Daugherty who are obviously so much better.

And we will be pressed to answer.

New clubs load up on future picks; Hornets get moody Tripuka, Curry

NEW YORK (AP) — The Miami Heat and Charlotte Hornets concentrated on youth and wheeling-and-dealing Thursday instead of big names as they acquired their first players for their NBA debut next season.

The Hornets, however, did trade for Kelly Tripuka, the only one of seven available former All-Stars to change teams.

The Heat made six deals with existing teams, four of them for agreeing to pick or not pick a player off the unprotected list in Thursday's expansion draft. The most important acquisition Miami made was to get Dallas' first-round pick in next Tuesday's college draft in exchange for agreeing to select, with the first pick, an unknown who had not played in the NBA since 1980.

The Hornets selected guard Dell Curry of Cleveland with the No. 2 expansion draft pick and later made a deal to get Tripuka from Utah.

"I didn't think it was possible to get both Dell Curry and Tripuka," Charlotte general man-

ager Carl Scheer said. "We feel we got the top two players in the draft, and if we don't screw up in the college draft, we feel good about the team we'll put together in the fall."

Miami selected Billy Thompson from the champion Los Angeles Lakers with the third pick and also acquired a 1991 or 1992 second-round pick in exchange for not selecting 41-year-old Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

With the fifth pick of the draft, the Heat selected Fred Roberts of Boston and acquired a second-round pick this year for not selecting veteran Dennis Johnson. Roberts was traded to Milwaukee for a second-round 1989 pick.

Because of its deals, Miami will have two first-round picks, No. 9 and No. 20, in the first round of the college draft on Tuesday, plus three second-round choices.

Charlotte's even-numbered picks were Curry, Dave Hoppen of Golden State, Washington's Tyrone Bogue, Chicago's Mike Brown, Rickey Green of Utah, Michael Holton of Portland, Mi-

chael Brooks of Denver, Bernard Thompson of Phoenix, Ralph Lewis of Detroit, Clinton Wheeler of Indiana and Sedic Toney of New York. Brown then was traded to Utah for Tripuka.

Miami took Scott Hastings of Atlanta, Jon Sundvold of San Antonio, Kevin Williams of Seattle, Hansi Gnad of Philadelphia, Darnell Valentine of the Los Angeles Clippers, Wayne "Pearl" Washington of New Jersey, Andre Turner of Houston, Conner Henry of Sacramento and John Stroeder of Milwaukee.

From Seattle, Miami also acquired a 1988 second-round pick in addition to Williams. The Heat also traded Valentine to Cleveland for a second-round pick in 1990 or 1992.

By trading for Tripuka instead of selecting him in the expansion draft, Charlotte was able to reach an agreement with Utah whereby the Jazz will share some of Tripuka's \$1 million contract.

Ags to play in A&M Open today

Several of the Texas A&M tennis players' vacation has been cut short. Eight Aggies will hit the courts this weekend to participate in the Texas A&M Open at the Omar Smith Tennis Center.

The tournament will begin this morning at 9:30 with the women's single and men's doubles.

Four A&M women will be playing in the single's competition this morning including Sandy Klein, Susan Williams and Derryn Haygarth.

Cindy Churchwell, a sophomore and the bracket's No. 2 seed, received a first-round bye and will play her first singles match Saturday at 11 a.m.

Three A&M players will also begin play in the men's doubles this morning. Junior Shaun O'Donovan and non-Aggie Neil Smith of Fort Worth, the No. 3 seed, and senior Craig Whitteker and Mike Castillo, the No. 4 seed, begin play at 9:30.

O'Donovan, A&M recruit Chris Brown and junior Wayne Green kick

off the men's singles this morning at 11. Castillo and former A&M player Dean Goldfine play at 12:30 p.m.

At 2 p.m. Williams and Klein will play a first-round match in the women's doubles. Haygarth and Churchwell, the No. 2 seed, received byes in the first round and will play their first match Sunday at 10 a.m.

Two A&M teams are seeded in the top three of the mixed doubles.

Southpaw Agosto adds "gusto" to Astros' failing relief pitchers

HOUSTON (AP) — When he was a struggling pitcher with the Chicago White Sox, Houston reliever Juan Agosto was referred to as "Juan Disgusto."

Agosto reported to spring training with the Astros this year with another public relations problem.

His competition for the team's left-handed relief job was Joe Sambito, one of the Astros' most beloved players ever.

But Agosto shut out all the distractions, forgot his past and now has a 5-0 record and is pitching with "gusto" for the Astros.

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"The more I pitch, the better I'm getting because my confidence is higher and I'm pitching with good control," Agosto said. "It used to be in Chicago, one guy would get on base and I'd be gone."

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keep the ball down," Agosto said.

"I knew if I also tried to worry about what Joe was doing, I'd never make it. I'm just glad they picked me and gave me a chance to pitch."

Agosto has earned his position this season. He has a 2.61 earned run average in 41 1/3 innings and has yielded 12 earned runs.

Agosto still can feel Sambito's shadow. The former Astros reliever ace has a 2.50 earned run average at Tucson, the Astros' Class AAA affiliate.

Sambito would be a popular addition to the Astros' roster, but Agosto, with his control and sinker pitch, has effectively kept him on the farm.

"The more I pitch the more my ball sinks," Agosto said. "I've also had great defense, which I need because I'm a ground ball pitcher."

Agosto is getting the luck that was absent in his early career.

Signed as a 16-year-old, the Puerto Rican native had a 15-39 record in his first four years in the minors and then sat out 1979 because of arm trouble.

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