

1994 NBA PREVIEW

Part 2: The Wild, Wild West

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Pacific Division

1) *Phoenix Suns/ Seattle Supersonics*

Last week I thought that Phoenix would be a veritable lock for the NBA title, this week they may not even be the best team in their own division. The reason being Seattle's acquisition of '6'9 allstar Detlef Schrempf (19.1ppg, 9.5rpg, 6.0apg) from Indiana, adding to a potent front line including the explosive Shawn Kemp (17.8, 10.7) and the veteran Sam Perkins. Added to an athletic backcourt of ex-Hornet Kendall Gill (16.9, 4.9, 3.9), pg Gary Payton and scorer Ricky Pierce (18.2) you have a fast-breaking team which will run other clubs into the ground. Only the lack of a true center may hurt this club against other western teams which employ great big men.

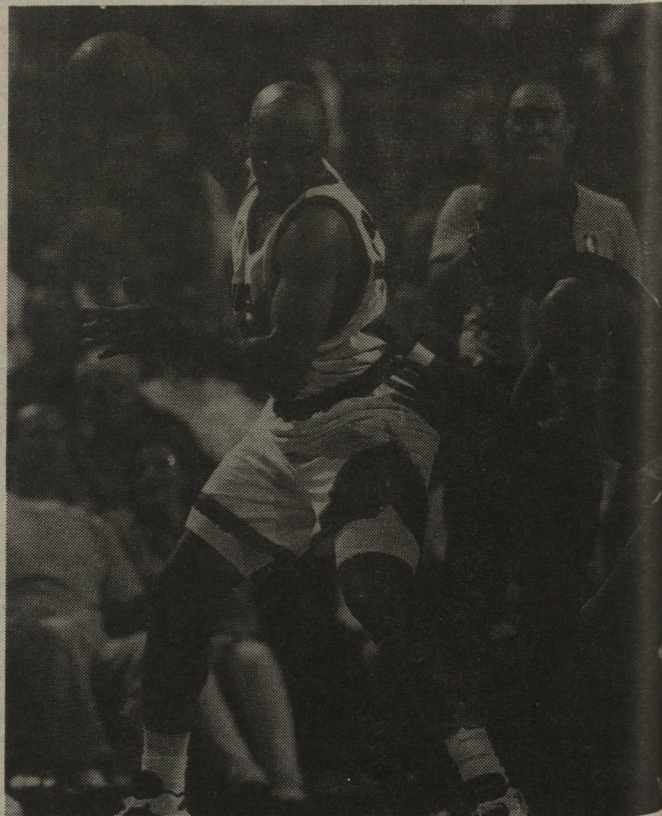
Phoenix is still very good as they are led by '93 NBA MVP Charles Barkley (25.6, 12.2, 5.1) who is the most versatile player in the game today. The loss of Richard Dumas will hurt them but they acquired former Laker A.C. Green to give them rebounding and playoff experience, coupled with former allstars such as Dan Majerle (16.9), outside sniper Danny Ainge (150 three-pointers made) and playmaker Kevin Johnson (16.1, 7.8 apg) this creates a team which knows how to win games. Like Seattle the Suns lack a true inside force but Oliver Miller may become the most improved pivot in the league after his outstanding showing in last years playoffs. The winner of this conference will be the team that stays healthy and plays together.

3) *Portland Trailblazers*

The Blazers may be doomed to be bridesmaids, never going home with a ring. This team has the best backcourt trio in the league with perennial allstar Clyde Drexler (19.9, 6.3, 5.7) returning from injury, Terry Porter (18.2), and pg Rod Strickland (7.2apg) coming off the bench to change the tempo of the game. Harvey Grant (18.6) came over from the Bullets in the Kevin Duckworth deal to bolster a frontcourt with 6'11 Cliff Robinson (19.1), rebounder Buck Williams, and Nets free-agent Chris Dudley who makes every free-throw an adventure. Portland will be very good but not good enough.

4) *LA Lakers*

The Lakers are in a year of transition going from experience to the youth which will carry them thru the '90's. Last year's rookie backcourt of Anthony Peeler (10.4) and Doug Christie and draftee Nick Van Exel need maturing which seasoned Sedale Threatt (15.1) will provide. James Worthy (14.9) is on the backside of his career but he will help the younger players such as 1st round draft pick George Lynch become accustomed to the rigors of the NBA.



After coming within a John Paxson three-pointer of a potential championship last year, Charles Barkley hopes to lead his Phoenix Suns to the NBA's promised land.