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# Jule's 2002-2003 NBA Predictions

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**W**hen my computer teacher/basketball coach asked me to write an article for the Bronx Journal, I said, "Why not? It couldn't be that hard, could it?" I finally found that writing for a bunch of grown people opposed to writing for people a few years younger than me was a whole new experience. It wasn't only a challenge, it was also very time-consuming, and it constantly made me really hungry because I was thinking so hard about what to put into this article.

So now I have finally finished putting this glorious excerpt of my thoughts onto paper, and ask myself, "What now?" I finally remembered that writing my predictions without an introduction didn't make a real article. So I decided to write an introduction to my introduction to my predictions. I know many of you experienced journalists will criticize my style of writing, my non-humorous humor, my irresponsible grammatical errors, and the length of this article that probably peeves you right at this very moment. But everyone's got to get a start, right?

You can expect many twists and turns from this season. Every night is filled with drama as the shooters shoot, the winners win, and the everlasting supply of sweat flows from all that are on the court.

Everybody has their own opinions about who's hot and who's not, if Kobe and Shaq

can win another title, and if the Knicks will ever get better. But all that doesn't matter right now. All that matters at the moment is my brain and me. So sit back and relax as you read this lengthy article on my take of the upcoming season.

#### THE EASTERN CONFERENCE

8) Boston Celtics- The Celtics have lowered themselves from an NBA Finals contender into a lowly team struggling to get into the playoffs. Still, they have **G Paul Pierce** and **F Antoine Walker**, which means either Pierce or Walker have to have a decent night for them to have any chance at winning.

During the off season, they traded **G Kenny Anderson** and **G Joseph Forte** for **F Vin Baker** and **G Shammond Williams** to Seattle. Bad move.

Besides the fact that Baker isn't playing nearly as good as they expected him too, they lost the only true point guard they had in Kenny Anderson. Anderson was the backbone of this team, and without him, this team looks like a pile of discombobulated bones. Also, this team isn't a very good defensive team, and besides that, they live by the three, and die by the three. There is definitely no way for **G Tony Delk** to fill the void that Anderson left with his departure. The only person who can save this team from plummeting is Pierce. And that's a given fact.

Key Players: Paul Pierce (28.7ppg; 6.3rpg; 5.3apg), Antoine Walker (14.7ppg; 8.3rpg; 4.7apg) 7) Philadelphia 76ers- So what if they have **F Keith Van Horn** and **C Todd MacCulloch**? They lost their only inside presence in C Dikembe Mutombo.

Besides that, what else can they do? Keith Van Horn, a 6-10 shooter who can't play defense, has probably already reached the peak of his career, and MacCulloch, who is two years older than Kobe Bryant, moves slower than Patrick Ewing at the age of 50. I didn't mean to be so harsh, but, c'mon. Let's be real.

Are you telling me you would trade your only shot-blocker to the Eastern Conference Champions and make them even better? You're just making harder for yourself and the rest of the Eastern Conference. You can say what you like, but to me, this was just a straight up, stupid move by the 76ers organization. I have to send out props to **G Allen Iverson**, because he has such a heart, but needs a better supporting cast. Van Horn may help him at the offensive end, but that won't get it done. **G Aaron McKie's** return should help them a lot. Maybe if they let **G Eric Snow** took a couple more shots, the 76ers would be able to get somewhere.

Key Players: Allen Iverson (27ppg; 2.33spg; 41mpg), Eric Snow (9.3ppg; 5.7apg), Keith Van Horn (17.3ppg; 10rpg), Aaron McKie (19.7ppg; 8.3rpg; .595FG%)

6) Washington Wizards- I'm pretty sure they'll make the playoffs this year with the addition of **G/F Jerry Stackhouse**. Stack



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should help provide most of the offense, which they severely lacked last year. Another big part of the team is **F/C Kwame Brown**. His vast improvement over the off-season has shown through the past few games. He can score, rebound, block shots, and do all the dirty work. There's no question about talent, but the question is: Can he stay healthy for the rest of the season? And MJ? MJ has taken his airness to the bench, but is helping this team in more ways than one. But believe me, if the Wizards start to sink, they will definitely begin to give Jordan more minutes. As for the rest of the team, every thing is going smoothly. They drafted **F Jared Jefferies**, who is a rail-bone skinny forward, but should bulk up later in his career. He could become a decent player for the Wizards, if they give him the time. I think this Wizards team has a lot of depth for what they have had to work with.

Key Players: Jerry Stackhouse (22.3ppg; 4.8rpg; 6.3apg), Michael Jordan (15ppg; 24.3mpg), Kwame Brown (10.8ppg; 11.3rpg; 3.55bpg) 5) Detroit Pistons- At first, I thought shipping Stack out to Washington for **G/F Richard Hamilton** was crazy, but now I see what the Pistons are doing.

They have created an evenly balanced team with a major inside presence in **F/C Ben Wallace**, a good swing man off the bench in **F Corliss Williamson**, and a stellar back court with the addition of Richard

Hamilton and **G Chauncey Billups**. In Minnesota, I learned to love Billups's game, because he can play like a point guard for awhile, but then bust out and play like an all out 2-guard at any moment of the game. In other words, he can go off at any minute. I like the way the Pistons organization set up this team. They are solid in almost each aspect of the game. And that's all I have to say about them.

Key Players: Ben Wallace (14.5rpg; 2.25bpg; 39mpg), Richard Hamilton (23ppg; 3.8rpg; 2.3apg)

4) Orlando Magic- I ranked this team this high because I like the combination of **G/F Tracy McGrady** and **F/G Grant Hill**. We have all seen that both of them can carry their own team, and are both established, versatile players. If both of these guys can stay healthy, who knows where they can go.

Also, with sharpshooter **G/F Mike Miller** back, they will always have help when the Magic's two stars are double-teamed. I also liked what they did with their draft pick. **F Ryan Humphrey** reminds of the type of player Charles Barkley and Elton Brand turned out to be: an undersized power forward that can do it all.

Expect good things from this team if they can keep it together.

Key Players: Tracy McGrady (32.2ppg; 4.8rpg; 5.8apg), Grant Hill (17ppg; 4.8rpg; 4.8apg), Mike Miller (13.8ppg; 6rpg; 3.8apg) Hudson (16.4ppg; 4apg)

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