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Knicks Line-up Gets Dyess'ed

Draft Day Trade Lands McDyess on Knicks

Chants of "Fire Layden, Fire Layden" were quickly followed by cheers on draft night at Madison Square Garden this month, as General Manager of the Knicks, Scott Layden, was able to pull off a blockbuster trade. Out went oft-injured Marcus Camby, the aging Marc Jackson, and the #7 pick in this year's draft ("Nene" Hilario) to the Denver Nuggets for the former All-star and Dream Team'er Antonio McDyess and the 25th pick (PG, Frank Williams), a trade which gives the Knicks their first low post presence since Ewing manned the middle in NY in his heyday.

The trade, at one point, seemed to be on life-support, as it hinged on McDyess agreeing to waive the right to opt out of his contract next season and become a free-agent. After McDyess agreed to waive this option, it meant the Knicks would have the rights to McDyess for at least two years before he is able to become a free-agent, and in January, they will be able to begin negotiations to extend his contract for another 5 years at close to \$87 million.

McDyess, who is happy to be in NY, has gone on record stating that he would like to remain a Knick for a long time, as long as the core of himself, Allan Houston, and Latrell Sprewell would remain intact, as many sports analysts have begun to question, as the trade has left the Knicks with no true center. Barring any trades or major free-agent signings for NY, Kurt Thomas will try to man the middle, but at only 6', it may be too difficult a feat for even the big-hearted Thomas.

A few rumors have begun to circulate:

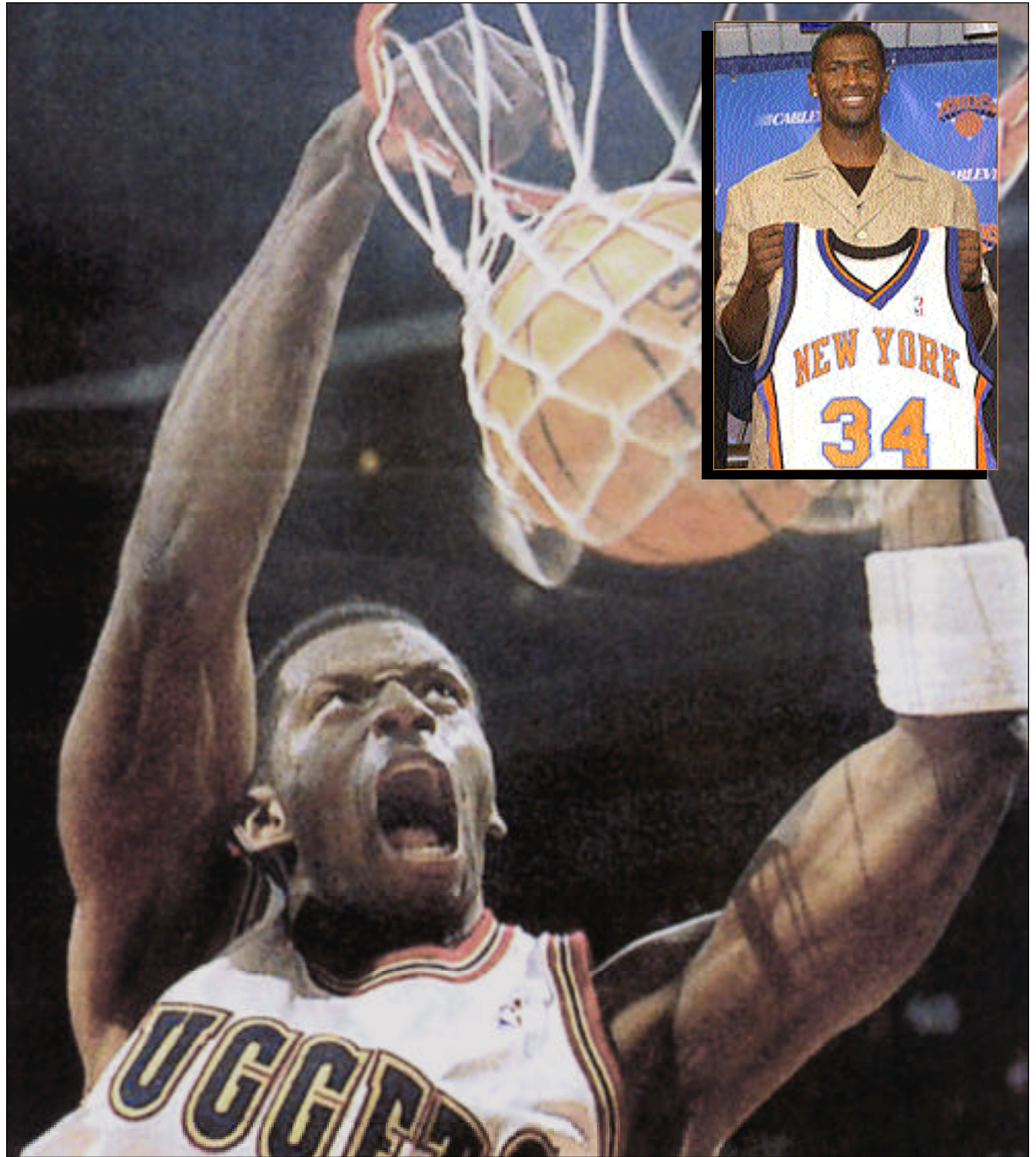
A.) Knicks send Latrell Sprewell to Milwaukee for Glen Robinson (6'8") and Ervin Johnson (6'11", no, not "Magic" Johnson).

B.) Knicks send Kurt Thomas and Charlie Ward to Seattle for Vin Baker (6'11").

C.) Knicks attempt to give their median-exception to free agent Keon Clark (6'11") or Radaslov Nesterovic (7'0").

Let's break these down, shall we?

Trade A sees the Knicks' best defender and over-all player be replaced in the line-up by the "Big Dog," Glenn Robinson, whose known as strictly a scorer and Ervin Johnson, who has valiantly manned the middle for George Karl's Milwaukee Bucks over the past half-decade. This trade, at first, seems to heavily favor Milwaukee, but at closer glance, it fills two voids that the Knicks have at the moment. It gives NY a starting center, and gives the Knicks a true small forward, which Sprewell has played over the past few years, but out of position; he is really a shooting guard, but



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Allan Houston and his \$102 million contract are at the shooting guard spot. I like this trade a lot for NY, but with Ray Allen playing shooting guard for the Bucks, and Tim Thomas just dying for the chance to start at small forward, one would have to wonder why Karl would make such a trade. It would also leave them in a similar predicament to what the Knicks are facing now- no true center, unless they decide to start Joel Pryzbilla, a rookie last season who never saw any court time under Karl.

Trade B makes sense, too. Not only do the Knicks need not give up any of the main core of players, but they gain a former All-star and teammate of McDyess' and Allan Houston's on the Dream Team a few years ago. Baker would automatically be the starting center, and would definitely play

better in the East, which is more suitable to his style of play. The Knicks would lose a bad contract in Ward, but would lose Kurt Thomas, whose value to the Knicks is much less now that McDyess has arrived.

Scenario C is a toss-up. If the Knicks do not make a trade for a center, they will try to lure a free agent to play in NY. Keon Clark is their #1 target, but he is a restricted free agent meaning his current team, the Toronto Raptors, have the right to match any contract offer up to \$4.6 million that he receives from any other team. Since NY is over the cap, that figure would be the max allowed to give to any free agent, meaning it would be up to Toronto to either let his help NY get back to the playoffs, or keep him around and give him a chance to play for them. Too early to see which way that is

headed. The same can be said for Minnesota's Radaslov Nesterovic.

There is also one more area of concern for NY, a problem which has plagued them for over a decade, the point guard position. The trade now leaves the Knicks with three back-up point guards: Charlie Ward, Howard Eisley, and rookie Frank Williams. Neither Ward nor Eisley have shown that they can be the playmaker that the Knicks sorely need now that they have the weapons to make some noise, and rarely do rookie point guards make a splash in their first year, with a few exceptions. This problem may be addressed in the form of a trade or free-agent signing, but I say look for Ward to start out as the started at point guard, only to have rookie Frank Williams win the position over by midseason.