

Basketball league starts third season

Return of nine out of ten original coaches isn't bad

Basketball play-by-mail leagues usually come and go as fast as a Los Angeles Laker fastbreak. Most, in other words, 'don't survive that first trip through the schedule.

But not the American Tabletop Basketball League, which was organized by avid S-O-M Basketball buff Dick Hunt, Ovid, MI, and featured in the February, 1987 issue of the Review.

Well, the 10-member ATBL, which plays a 78-game regular season plus playoffs, has gone the distance again - and with all of its original coaches, excepting one, intact.

"One of our proudest achievements is that the ATBL is about to start its third season with nine of its original 10 coaches," enthuses Hunt. "Our one coaching loss from our first year was due to work commitments and not only was the guy ably replaced, but the ATBL has even expanded from 10 to 12 teams. The ATBL is going as strongly as any league (in any S-O-M sport) I've ever heard about!"

TRADES LEAD TO CHAMPIONSHIP

The ATBL is a continuous PBM league that uses the advanced game in a draft format. Eight players can be protected from the current roster and the rest join rookies in a preseason draft.

Players aren't the only thing drafted, however, as the league also drafts team defense cards. Hunt points out this leads to decision-making time as coaches ponder whether to take a good defensive card early and pass on a potential rookie star.

"My Ovid Romans did that this year," relates Hunt, "and finished 51-27. The Delta Dragons also grabbed a team defense card in the first round, but finished 38-40. Obviously, a lot depends on your personnel, but the ATBL's jury is still out on this strategy."

When all the results were in (based on the 1985-86 real-life season cards), Joe Hornback's Mid-South Racers, thanks to some shrewd trading, were the champs. Hornback, a 26-year-old chiropractor who lives in Paducah, KY, peddled Terry Cummings and Sam Perkins to the Dragons for Adrian Dantley, Kurt Nimphius and a first round draft pick.

Dantley then proceeded to lead the league in scoring with an eye-opening 35.82 average and finish runner-up in the MVP balloting. Charles Barkley (945 rebounds, 26.8-point average) and Sleepy Floyd (league-high 961 assists) were also acquired in preseason trades. Put them all together and the Racers were, well, off to the races, winning a ATBL record 56 games.

Hornback's wheeling and dealing was in direct contrast to the ATBL's first winner - Mickey Bauchan of Mount Pleasant, MI - who made nary a trade guiding the Toronto Tornadoes. But Bauchan had to deal this time around and still suffered through a 30-48 season. He acquired the likes of Ralph Sampson, Darnell Valentine and the Vincents, Jay and Sam, and traded away Alex English, Joe Dumars and Jerome Kersey. The record before the trade was 11-25 and after it was 19-23, so the trade helped.

Big two of the Tornadoes, incidentally, was Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (19.3 points) and Kevin McHale (24.8 points, 676 rebounds).

REGULATIONS LEAD TO REALISM

Injuries are ignored in the ATBL and double-teaming is not allowed, the latter because it would be cumbersome to include in instruction sheets. Also, use of the press and fastbreak are limited when a team has a big lead (25 points or more).

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Another innovation that has proven popular, and realistic, in the ATBL is a modified "rest in minutes" chart (see following page) which regulates player use more closely and prevents overuse. The ATBL also limits players to the actual number of games played in real life.

Now for a look at the coaching lineup in the ATBL:

DICK HUNT (Ovid Romans), 26, married, custodian at General Motors and founder of ATBL...Lost in the finals in most recent season to Joe Hornback, 4-2...Top player was Moses Malone (26.7, 919 rebounds); who Hunt acquired in 1986 by trading away Michael Jordan - "The day before Jordan's then season-ending injury," recalls Hunt...Passing was the Romans' forte as team had league-high 2,535 assists (32.5 per game). Hunt's motto was: "Don't roll dice for shots, flip cards for dazzlers."

BART EWING (Ayatollahs of Slamola), Roland Park, KS, 27, married, working toward Masters Degree in social welfare...Won Western division by one game...Featured Sidney Moncrief (25.7 points), Clyde Drexler (25.4) and Mo Cheeks (840 assists).

JEFF SMITH (Rip City Racketeers), Pocatello, ID, 28, TV news director and a bachelor...Record (48-30) was 15 games better than year before...Biggest move, and most controversial, was last-second acquisition of John Lucas. Before Lucas the Racketeers were 18-18, and with him they went 30-12...Lucas had 747 assists and averaged 15.3 points, while other standouts were Rolando Blackman (29.1), Calvin Natt (21.3), Charles Oakley (730 rebounds), James Donaldson (652 rebounds) and Robert Parish (779 rebounds, 18.3 points)...Led the ATBL with 3,884 rebounds (49.8 per game).

LAIRD LEATHERS (St. Charles Skyhawks), St. Charles, IL, 20, field supervisor for Servicemaster Corporation...Youngest member of ATBL and biggest wheeler-dealer...Only coach to be in playoffs both years...Big guns were Paul Pressey (850 assists, 17.8 points), George Gervin (21.3) Julius Erving (19.0) and Karl Malone (726 rebounds)...Leathers made the trade for Jordan, who was limited to his real-life total of 18 games, so watch out this season for the Skyhawks!

TERRY JOHNSON (Northfield Knights), Northfield, MN, 36, married, sales representative for Colgate-Palmolive...Featured MVP Larry Bird (33.1, 519 assists, 695 rebounds), who at times was used at guard with James Worthy and Cedric Maxwell at forwards. Worthy averaged 21.7 points and Maxwell had 598 rebounds...Center is a problem as oft-injured Sam Bowie and top-draft choice Patrick Ewing, who was also hurt last season, are two question marks.

GREG BAKER (Delta Dragons), Lansing, MI, 23, emergency room technician at a Lansing hospital...Took over team that went 9-69 in first season and restored respectability by guiding it to 38-40 record...Had identical 19-20 records away and at home, the latter being unusual in PBM or real-life...Firepower for Dragons was supplied by Kiki Vandeweghe (35.8), Terry Cummings (16.3, 681 rebounds), Sam Perkins (14.1, 667 rebounds), Jim Paxson (15.7) and Derek Harper (15.0, 648 assists).

DAN SMEGO (Cleveland Carp), Parma, OH, 31, married, personnel manager and also semi-pro baseball player...Had great record at home (28-11), but awful on road (9-30)...Had best regular-season record year before (55-23)...Top players: Magic Johnson (21.7, 902 assists, 509 rebounds), Orlando Woolridge (24.7), World Free (27.7) and Larry Smith (898 rebounds).

CHUCK STEINMETZ (Rhawnhurst Rebels), Havertown, PA, 26, accountant and bachelor...4-20 losing streak in middle of season led to 33-45 record...Featured Mark Aguirre (26.8), Roy Hinson (20.4), Byron Scott (20.1) and the ATBL's top shot-blocker, Wayne Cooper (354)...Cooper and Hinson also fouled out a combined 55 times.

MICKEY BAUCHAN (Toronto Tornados), Mt. Pleasant, MI, 21, senior at Central Michigan University who aspires to be high school teacher.

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No-trade policy was scrapped in second season after winning title first year without making a transaction.

PHIL GRABAR (Highwood Hoops), Burgess, VA, 38, store manager... member of Society for American Baseball Research (SABR)...Took over expansion team and looked toward future...Akeem Olajuwon (29.7, 776 rebounds, 179 blocks), forward Eddie Johnson (22.0) and Benoit Benjamin (282 blocks, 11.3) were building blocks.

BILL KIRWIN (Kennett Komets), Kennett Square, PA, 42, bar manager, married...Another who guided expansion team...Lost both Mitchell Wiggins and Lewis Lloyd to drug problems...Standouts were Alex English (31.8) and Reggie Theus (774 assists, 24.9).

Standings, playoff results and leaders:

<u>East</u>	<u>Won-Lost</u>	<u>GB</u>	<u>Scoring</u>	<u>Rebounds</u>	
Racers	56	22	-	Dantley RACE 35.82	Malone ROM 12.4
Carp	37	41	19	Vandeweghe DRAG 35.78	Barkley RACE 12.1
Rebels	33	45	23	Bird KNI 33.1	L.Smith CARP 11.7
Komets	21	57	35	English KOM 31.8	Olajuwon HOOP 11.4
<u>Central</u>				Olajuwon HOOP 29.7	Sampson TOR 10.3
Romans	51	27	-	<u>Assists</u>	<u>Field Goal %</u>
Skyhawks	41	37	10	M.Johnson CARP 12.5w	M.Thompson AYAT .662
Dragons	38	40	13	Floyd RACE 12.3	Barkley RACE .651
Tornadoes	30	48	21	J.Lucas RACK 11.5	S.Johnson ROM .640
<u>West</u>				Pressey SKY 10.9	Pierce SKY .618
Ayatollahs	49	29	-	Cheeks AYAT 10.8	McHale TOR .608
Racketeers	48	30	1	<u>Free Throw %</u>	<u>3-Pt. FG %</u>
Knights	39	39	10	Gervin SKY .9059	Hodges AYAT .518
Hoops	25	53	24	Woodson CARP .9056	Macy SKY .474
				Mullin DRAG .900	Scott REB .457
<u>Playoffs:</u>	<u>Racketeers</u>			Pierce SKY .898	Bird KNI .444
d. Skyhawks, 2-0.				Bird KNI .890	M.Cooper RACE .442
Racers d. Racketeers,				<u>Steals</u>	<u>Blocks</u>
3-1. Romans d.				Drexler AYAT 2.69	W.Cooper REB 4.54
Ayatollahs, 3-2.				D.Harper DRAG 2.49	Benjamin HOOP 3.62
Racers d. Romans, 4-2.				Pressey SKY 2.38	Eaton AYAT 3.31
				Floyd RACE 2.37	Olajuwon HOOP 2.63
				Bird KNI 2.29	Lister SKY 2.45

Awards: General Manager of Year - Joe Hornback (Mid-South Racers).
 Coach of the Year - Joe Hornback (Mid-South Racers). Rookie of Year - Karl Malone (St. Charles Skyhawks). Sixth Man of Year - Michael Cooper (Mid-South Racers). Dennis Johnson Award (goes to player who has great season in ATBL but has mediocre S-O-M card) - Fat Lever (Ovid Romans). LaRue Martin Award (opposite of Dennis Johnson Award; has good S-O-M card but has poor ATBL season) - Sam Perkins (Delta Dragons).

REST CHART

<u>MPG*</u>	<u>Must Rest**</u>	<u>MPG*</u>	<u>Must Rest**</u>
0-3	39 minutes	25-27	15 minutes
4-6	36 "	28-30	12 "
7-9	33 "	31-33	9 "
10-12	30 "	34-36	6 "
13-15	27 "	37-39	3 "
16-18	24 "	40-42	2 "
19-21	21 "	43-48	0 "
22-24	18 "		

* The player's real-life minutes per game.

** Minutes the player must rest in any one ATBL game.