

# Guest Columnist

## Happy To Have Happy

BY TOM NELSON

In a spring issue of the Review, Happy Hairston was rapped by the editors as not being good enough to rank in the top 10 players of the NBA. I don't believe that Hairston is that good myself, but I noticed Dave Bing ranked sixth. And for one man's importance to a team, Happy would rank over Bing, who has had his two worst seasons of his career.

This so-called "power" forward has become an important factor in deciding NBA championships. Hard-nosed, clutch rebounders like Paul Silas, Dave DeBusschere, Curtis Perry and Hairston have been on five of the last six NBA champions. The power forward, teamed with a capable center, has been the trend. Consider the probable result of a Jabbar-Hairston combination in Los Angeles this winter.

The reason I must defend Hairston and his counterparts is that I have seen what he can mean to a club in S-O-M Basketball. I am a member of the Mid-Coastal Basketball League and Hairston is averaging 15 rebounds per game on a team consisting of: guards--Walt Frazier and Lucius Allen; center--Bob Lanier; Forwards--Rudy Tomjanovich and Hairston.

Without going into how I got such a team in a draft league, the fact of the matter is that Happy has saved me in many games, snatching rebounds from opposing forwards when they cannot handle them.

### HAIRSTON'S REBOUNDING SPECIALIST

The importance of Hairston in S-O-M can be traced to the fact that the rebound ratings on each player's card are not based on rebounds per game, but rebounds per 48 minutes! This shows their per game average if they play a full 48 minutes every game. In this respect, Hairston (who has been the best rebounding forward among starters in the NBA over the last two seasons, at least) is very close to Elvin Hayes, the 1973-74 rebound king, and even surpasses the '74-75 leader Wes Unseld.

	<u>Minutes</u>	<u>Reb/Game</u>	<u>Reb/48 Min</u>
1974-75 Hairston -	2283	12.8	20
"    " Unseld -	2904	14.8	18
1973-74 Hairston -	2533	13.5	15
"    " Hayes -	3605	18.1	20

The rebounds per minute show how many rebounds a player pulls down every 48 minutes, which is more accurate than rebounds per game. In a game, this means more chances at an offensive rebound after rolling an "8". With a 50% shooting average, Hairston has to be considered one of the more dangerous inside shooters on offensive rebounds, since he's rated "6" off both offensive and defensive boards.

For those who contend that Unseld and Hayes pull down more rebounds or as many as Jabbar, Cowens, etc., consider that they played more minutes, and the longer you play the more rebounds you'll get. Besides, Hayes and Unseld both alternate at center, where you'll get more rebounds near the board.

I hope I have not offended fans of some players, but I feel that this is an important aspect of S-O-M and pro basketball--but gets little recognition. So, if you are in a draft basketball league and Hayward, Hayes and Wicks are gone, you might try sacrificing some high average rebounder and scorer and go for sure defense and the best rebounder in the league by picking Hairston!

Editor's note: Tom Nelson is 24 years old and lives in Springfield Gardens, NY. The Mid-Coastal Association plays both basketball and football. The play-by-mail draft basketball league has 12 members, with Emery Kurts of Santa Maria, CA, the commissioner.

\*\*\*\*\*