

Dick Hunt provides team-by-team look

New S-O-M Basketball cards reviewed

By DICK HUNT, Bar Harbor, ME

It's been a while since you heard from me last and since I just recently received my 1989-90 Strat-O-Matic Basketball cards (finally!), I thought this would be a good time to drop you a line.

Every year you guys go to great pains to discuss the new baseball and football cards right after they come out. I feel it's time the winter sports got a little press, too. I mean, usually the basketball game gets a finals replay by Del Newell and that's it for the year.

So here we go on a jaunt to correct that. This is my "first glance" opinion of the '89-90 basketball cards. Remember, this is not an in-depth study of the cards, so there may be goodies that I missed.

Helpful hint: In my jargon, a 3/4 rebounder is one who is a 3 offensive rebounder and a 4 defensive rebounder.

Here's my team-by-team look at the new cards:

ATLANTA - Dominique Wilkins got a decent card, typical for him... Moses Malone is still tough, but obviously aging, as his rebounding is down and his days of being a 1+ shooter seem to be over.

BOSTON - Reggie Lewis got terrible shot columns for a 49.6% shooter, but that's because Larry Bird, Dennis Johnson and John Bagley are all loaded with dazzlers... Bird's passing (4-20 dazzler normal) is better than ever; he got the first assist rating at RF that I remember ever seeing... Robert Parish and Kevin McHale are solid again.

CHICAGO - No surprise, Michael Jordan is great again... However, I was pleasantly shocked by Scottie Pippen's card; I expected it to be good, but it is phenomenal. He's got dazzlers (5-11 normal passing), steals (21-33, same as Jordan) and a blank x-column against outside shots. And he can shoot the lights out, too.

CLEVELAND - For half a season's work, Brad Daugherty got a great card, especially inside... Mark Price is also very good, but is Cleveland's only 1+ shooter while Daugherty sits... Larry Nance's shot columns took a dip in quality and Hot Rod Williams is very overpaid.

DETROIT - My heroes (Hunt is from Ovid, MI, a couple of NBA 3-point shots from Lansing) look terrific on defense again this year, but human on offense... Joe Dumars is very unusual, if not unique in S-O-M basketball history: he's a guard and 1+ shooter with no 0's at all in his outside shooting column. Dice rolls of 5 and 7-9 are either X or F2, but that's it... Dennis Rodman plays all five positions and his worst rebounding rating is 7/2 at center.

INDIANA - Good looking offense... Reggie Miller is a 2 shooter with great shooting of every kind... Detlef Schrempf got a great card, with 4-8 inside being "good stuff," including an X + F1 on number 7... Rik Smits is great inside on offense (and a 1+) and is a 1-14 shot blocker, but is foul happy and still can't rebound... Chuck Person is a good outside shooter again, although Vern Fleming's shooting touch dropped a touch... Team defense cards and defense in general are weak.

MIAMI - Typical second year team: bad... Rony Seikaly looks pretty good and rookie Sherman Douglas looks very good (21-33 steal, 5-20 normal dazzlers). Both are 1+s, but the rest of the team's 1+ shooters (Kevin Edwards, Jon Sundvold and Glen Rice) do a volume business: All shot below 44% and have the poor shooting columns to prove it.

MILWAUKEE - Ricky Pierce is still a good shooter, but others on the team are starting to show signs of age... Paul Pressey's shot columns and passing are slipping from recent years and Jack Sikma isn't the force of season's past, either... I had to laugh at Alvin Robertson, a 20/20 rebounder at guard. His stealing and passing are as good as

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ever, but his shot columns are as poor as ever, too.

NEW JERSEY - Sam Bowie is back! He's a 1-11 shot-blocker, has a good inside shot column (2, 5-8, 12) and is a 2/3 rebounder at center.. Mookie Blaylock is a terrible (37.1%) shooter, but shows promise in all other areas...Some decent shooting on this team, including Chris Morris and Purvis Short, who got his best card in years.

NEW YORK - Patrick Ewing got a fabulous card, including an inside shot column with goodies on 2-8, 11. He's a 1-20 shot-blocker with a clean x-column against inside shots and improved his rebounding at center to a 1/3 rating. To ice the cake, he got a world-beater of a fast-break column, with "stuff" on 2-5 and 8-12...Unfortunately, Kiki Vandeweghe is the Knicks' only other 1+ shooter, which makes it easy to sag on Ewing. Vandeweghe and Johnny Newman can combine to give you 54 minutes of 0/0 rebounding at both forward spots.

ORLANDO - Pretty much as expected: Reggie Theus is a decent gunner and he and Sam Vincent make a good passing guard...Terry Catledge got his usual card, but he is a 1+ with 22.5 field goal attempts per 48 minutes.

PHILADELPHIA - Charles Barkley is great again. Although there is a slight drop of quality in his shooting columns, he makes up for it by being a 1 shooter, a big inconsistency over the years in his Strato career. His rebounding numbers are typical for him and his 21-30 stealing matches up very well with an all-time fastbreak shooting column: 2-10, 12 is a "stuff"...Hersey Hawkins looks good, but Ron Anderson and Mike Gminski are disappointing.

WASHINGTON - This team will miss John Williams...Bernard King's passing improved (4-9 dazzler Normal), but his shooting fell...Jeff Malone is interesting: his outside shot column gets everything except 6, 7 and 8...Darrell Walker isn't a scorer, of course, but is great otherwise (3/49 guard rebounding, 5-20 dazzler fastbreak passing).

CHARLOTTE - J.R. Reid got a horrible card...Muggsy Bogues got a first in my memory: 1-20 dazzler on Normal passing...Kelly Tripucka's shooting columns were better than expected, 40.8%; Rex Chapman's weren't...Team defense cards are decent, but x-columns are sad.

DALLAS - The decline of the Mavs was worse than I feared...Roy Tarpley still rebounds and steals, but his shooting went into the toilet...Derek Harper improved again, but not as much as Adrian Dantley declined...Rolando Blackman still looks pretty good despite his drop in field goal percentage to below 50%...Sam Perkins is almost as overpaid as Hot Rod Williams.

DENVER - Watching the simultaneous Strato decline of Walter Davis and Alex English is breaking my heart...Fat Lever got another typical Fat Lever card, including the 16/44 rebounding...Dan Schayes and Bill Hanzlik haven't changed much either, but Michael Adams' shooting columns took a dive from last year's lofty heights.

GOLDEN STATE - Chris Mullin, like Reggie Miller, got a fantastic scoring card, able to hit from everywhere...Mitch Redmond is pretty impressive for the second best guy on the team...Sarunas Marciulionis got a fun card; on his inside shot column, 2-6, 8 and 11 are F(2) results...Rookie Tim Hardaway looks like a good future point guard.

HOUSTON - Akeem Olajuwon got better again. He's a 2/14 rebounder at center as well as a 1-20 shot-blocker...Otis Thorpe looks decent and Mitchell Wiggins is a 12-4 rebounder at point guard, but the rest of the team puts you to sleep. I see now why Houston benched Sleepy Floyd. He takes his nickname too literally.

LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS - Charles Smith got a great shooting card, with a 4-8 being good on his inside column...Danny Manning's card is finally showing some of his potential...Benoit Benjamin reverts to his old, sub-par ways and Ken Norman got another mediocre shooting card.

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LOS ANGELES LAKERS - Magic Johnson got a vintage Magic card, but James Worthy took a big drop in his shooting columns...Orlando Woolridge looks like a great inside scorer, but I expected Vlade Divac to be better...A.C. Green has leveled off and Byron Scott did some back-sliding in his shooting columns...And where's Kareem? Did he really retire?

MINNESOTA - Tony Campbell escapes both 'Detroit and LA's bench and finally gets his reward: a good shooting card...Tyrone Corbin and Pooh Richardson are average shooters, but each excels in other areas... Trivia question: What's the last Strat-O-Matic card set Sidney Lowe got a card in? Would you believe 1983-84 with the Chicago Bulls?

PHOENIX - These guys look good...Tom Chambers got his best shooting card ever...Kevin Johnson is the point guard of the future - grab him in our next draft...It's a good thing Eddie Johnson shoots 3-pointers, because he stinks at 2-pointers...Jeff Hornacek looks real good, the perfect complement for Chambers and the Johnsons...Mark West, Dan Majerle and Kurt Rambis are the board crashers deluxe and you gotta love a power forward (Rambis) who steals on 21-31.

PORTLAND - Clyde Drexler and Kevin Duckworth provide a good inside-outside offensive punch...Terry Porter got a great card at right guard...Drazen Petrovic provides decent bench scoring, but Cliff Robinson is a horrible shooter...Buck Williams and Jerome Kersey are good as ever.

SACRAMENTO - I expected a better inside column from Wayman Tisdale...Danny Ainge got a decent card for his shooting performance (43.8) and Rodney McCray got his best shooting card ever...Antoine Carr isn't bad, either, giving the team three surprisingly good 1+ shooters.

SAN ANTONIO - David Robinson is my first choice in any draft right now. He's a 2/4 rebounder at center, a 1-20 shot-blocking rookie with a perfect inside x-column and he scores on rolls of 4-8, 10 in his inside column. That includes drawing fouls on 6-8, 10. The guy's an improved, young, Moses Malone. Robinson also gets the fastbreak shooting column that Ewing got, scoring on rolls of 2-5 and 8-12 with a 1-7 split on number 7. And he steals on 21-29 to use that fastbreak column, too.

Terry Cummings got his best shooting card ever and brought back his old passing (3-15 open) and stealing (21-27) skills...Willie Anderson's a good outside shooter, but not a 1+, so sag all over Robinson and Cummings, both of whom would like to post up all the time.

SEATTLE - Dale Ellis got a great shooting card, but gunner Xavier McDaniel didn't, as even his rebounding went down (2/2 at right forward)...Nate McMillan is great if you don't need scoring; he's a 3/16 rebounder at guard with 7-20 dazzler in his fastbreak passing...Derek McKey and Sedale Threatt round out the scoring threats.

UTAH - The Mailman, Karl Malone, got better again, scoring inside on dice rolls of 3-8, 10 and 11. Without a weakness in his game, Malone is a very close second to Robinson on my wish list...My favorite point guard, John Stockton, disappointed me with his turnover-happy fastbreak passing (1-9 turnover), but his card is typically good in every other way and Utah didn't fastbreak much last year anyway...Thurl Bailey is just another 0 shooter again after three or four years of being a 1+... Mark Eaton is not a 1-20 block man for the first time in his career, dropping to a 1-17...Blue Edwards looks good; besides, how can you not like a guy named Blue?

I also noticed "turnover" readings on the outside columns of Team Defense cards. I haven't seen that for a few years. Also, there are six "plod" teams (ones that don't fastbreak much) with dazzler-happy point guards. Why should a coach limit a fastbreak his team runs so well?