

Basketball Cards Make 1992 The Year of the Point Guard

By Dick Hunt

The most eye-popping feature of the new 1991-92 season basketball cards — besides Dennis Rodman's rebounding — is the herd of slick-passing point guards, the largest ever seen in one set.

The first measure of greatness in a point guard is the number of dazzlers in his fastbreak passing column. There are 22 who play at least 24 minutes per game, have at least 10 fastbreak dazzlers and 8 or fewer fastbreak turnovers.

Researching every card set back through 1980-81 (I'm a get-a-lifer and proud of it), the previous record for this criteria was 19 in 1983-84. The fewest was 11 in '80-81 and '81-82. The average is 15.5.

This year, only Atlanta, New Jersey, Dallas, Denver and Portland do not have such a guard.

Add great passers Nate McMillan and Lester Conner, who play fewer than 24 minutes, and there's more decent point guards than the greediest coach will ever need. If you're drafting, don't kill yourself to get that behind-the-back passer. They're a dime a dozen in Strat this year.

Of course, the quantity won't disturb stock-team play if you set the pace of a team's offense according to the recommendations on the roster sheet. Of my 22 quality point guards, seven play for teams that didn't fastbreak very much. It's only when you toss them into a draft pool that they show their playmaking value to a run-and-gun squad.

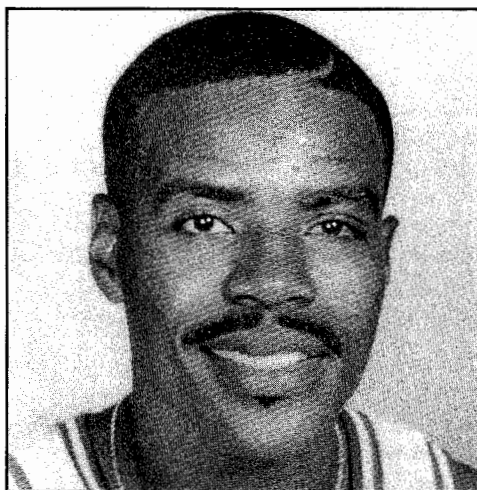
A DANGEROUS SPECIES

Several scoring machines lost their licenses to "fill it up" in this set. The following are perennial 1+ shooters who became "zeroes," and thus will not be able to shoot as often as their coaches will want:

Brad Daugherty, Reggie Miller. It'll be tough watching these two stand around, waiting for "Pass to Any Player" readings, but their 1+ status probably will return next season.

Jay Humphries. He's on my "great point guard" list, but wasn't last year. Last year, he was a 1+, but isn't now. It's a tolerable tradeoff.

Johnny Newman, Wayman Tisdale, Ron Anderson, Danny Ainge. Get rid of these guys. They offer little rebounding, passing or defense. Without their scoring, these guys have Vandeweghe disease. The symptom:



RON ANDERSON: *No longer useful*

The coach on the sidelines shouting, "Kiki, if you're not racking up the points, what the hell are you doing out there?"

Kevin Edwards. The value of this perennial 1+ increased when he lost his "gunner" status. His shooting percentage was always so low that you closed your eyes — as he must have been doing — whenever rolling for his shots. Now that he shoots less, he's less harmful, simply a decent rebounder and stealer.

THE NEW STARS IN TOWN?

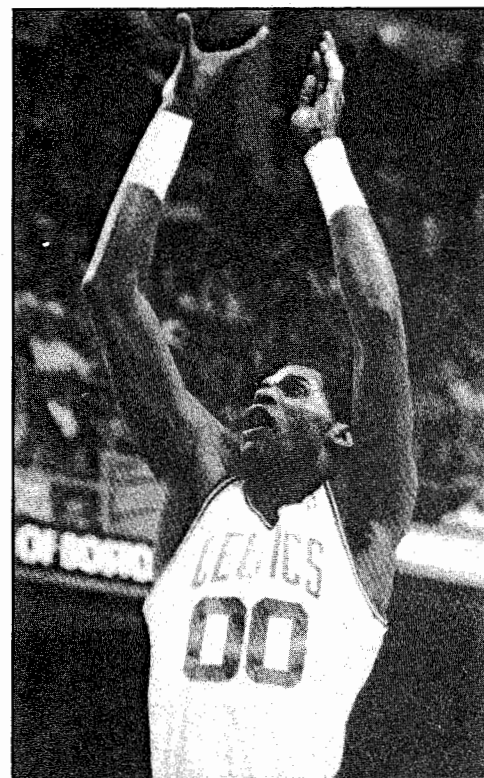
After several unimpressive seasons, these players appear to have blossomed into stars, or at least solid starters. Actually, this is my list of impressive-looking Strat cards that make me want to say, "Oh yeah? Do it again!" And I wouldn't draft or trade for them until they did:

Anthony Bowie. Other than his X-column defense, his card isn't bad at all, but his 33 mpg was for an injury-riddled team. And he missed 30 games. I'm not convinced his '91-92 season wasn't a fluke.

Sedale Threatt. The Lakers were desperate when they replaced Magic Johnson with Threatt, but he had his best season ever. As great as his card is, I believe it'll be a one-year wonder.

Alexander Volkov. Don't get suckered by the man's great passing. He needs work on rebounding, FG% and FT% and more playing time before he reminds you of that great passing forward who recently retired.

Doug West, Tim Perry, Kendall Gill, Terry Davis. These guys have one common denominator: Their playing time ballooned.



ROBERT PARISH: *Give him up now*

All have decent cards, so keep 'em if you've already got 'em, but don't give up a lot to acquire them.

HANG ON TO THESE GUYS

These players had off years for various reasons, but they could come back big. Besides, their trade value is low.

Charles Oakley, Terry Porter. These proven veterans should be allowed an occasional poor year. Porter's hurts more if he's your point guard, but I wouldn't trade him unless you absolutely need a point guard to replace his suddenly mediocre passing.

J.R. Reid. He's developing slowly, but surely, getting a little better each year. Just check his rookie Strat card; that'll cheer you up. A change of venue might help, now that Charlotte has Alonzo Mourning. B.J. Armstrong is in the same boat — get him out of Chicago and he might bloom into a decent playmaker.

Muggsy Bogues. Every year Charlotte talks about its desperate need to replace Bogues and every year his SOM card gets better. As long as he can pass, steal and roll for replays,

Continued on Page 11

22 Dazzle in Fast-Break Column

Continued from Page 10

Muggsy will be a decent point guard. Damn the X-columns, full speed ahead!

Sherman Douglas. Last year's long hold-out obviously ruined his season, but if Boston has any sense, it will use Douglas extensively. If you have any sense, you will hang onto him.

AND NOW FOR THE DOGS

It's time to bail out on these guys. Many obvious names are left off this list (Vandeweghe, Lister, etc.). This covers the guys you may have been on the fence about:

Kevin Willis. With the year he had, this choice is bound to shock people. But he'll never approach this performance again, so dump him while his trade value is sky high. When he goes back to the old Kevin Willis next year, he'll be just another power forward. I once held onto Jay Vincent's best card ever and got burned big the next season; Willis is blooming too late in his career.

Kevin McHale, Larry Bird, Robert Parish, Larry Nance, Rolando Blackman, Isiah Thomas, Moses Malone. This could have been an all-star team just a few years ago. But unless you're betting on a championship team, get rid of them while they have decent cards to trade. You might be amazed at the youth and



J.R. REID: *Improving slowly but surely* draft picks you can weasel out of a contender by waving these guys under his nose and reminding him that he's not the *only* contender in your league who might want them.

Reggie Williams. Late-blooming Reggie just got his best Strat card ever. He did so "starring" for a lousy team. Reggie Theus did that several times, but *that* Reggie could pass. When Mutombo takes over this team's offense, Williams' days will be numbered.

Ron Anderson, Johnny Newman, Xavier McDaniel. All former 1+ shooters, these guys have little effectiveness as 1+ shooters. Newman has a great scoring card, but he can't rebound and he's foul-happy.

Kevin Duckworth, Byron Scott, Buck Johnson, Chris Jackson. I don't think these guys will ever get better. Jackson's shooting percentage shows no signs of improving. The other three guys could be the All-Carbon-Copy team; their cards look the same year after year.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING MINUTES

I'd like to make a pitch to Strat-O-Matic for more extra players. Just as Strat gives cards to any baseball players who meet a minimum level of at bats or innings pitched, the game company should set a similar standard for minutes played in basketball.

If the cutoff was 200 minutes played, there would be 12 more cards in the new set. That isn't much and we're not talking about bums. Good luck with your Orlando replay: The Magic is missing three players who played more than 600 minutes each. That 1,800 minutes is a whole season for many sixth or seventh men.

The Magic's missing men include Dennis Scott, who tied for the team lead in points per game at 19.7. He played 18 games, at 34 minutes per. Chris Corchiani, who played 741 minutes, was sixth on the team in assists. How many adjustments did SOM make to other Magic players to get the team stats right?