veteran Doc Rivers and second-year man Greg Anthony share the point guard spot. Rolando Blackman and John Starks share the shooting guard position, with 44 sneaking in here and there.

Even the forward positions are being shared these days. Charles Smith, Charles Oakley and Anthony Mason fill the two spots. Swingman Tony Campbell, who averaged 20.6 points per game in the previous three seasons at Minnesota, has played as rarely as 44.

As for center, well, that's where the franchise is. And it's not Herb Williams, either. Williams is an able backup, but it's the giant Patrick Ewing who

but it's the giant Patrick Ewing who will take the Knicks into the playoffs. Riley is trying to mix these players into a team that can challenge the mighty Chicago Bulls and the rising Cleveland Cavaliers for the Eastern Conference title. Many believe that the winner of this conference will win the NBA title. And Riley, who won four championship rings as a coach in L.A., wants more finger jewelry in N.Y.

These Gotham Knickerbockers are

sitting in first place in the Atlantic Division. But on this night, the struggling Miami Heat are giving quite a fight in da Garden. The Knicks lead by just two

Anthony is sitting out with an injury tonight, and early in the second half, Rivers gets into foul trouble. Some help is needed at guard. Riley looks to his bench. He points to 44, and the rookie trots to the scorer's table. With 5:50 left in the third quarter and

the Knicks up 52-51, Madison Square Garden public address announcer Mike Walczewski leans toward his micro-phone and tells da Garden's dwellers, "In for Doc Rivers, number 44, Hubert

Davis."

The dwellers let out a loud cheer at this court arrival. Forty-four hasn't played much. But when he has, he's been hitting his jumpers, hustling on defense and staying cool.

Like a good Tar Heel should.

It hasn't been the easiest season of Hubert Davis' career. But the former North Carolina sharp-shooter and 20th

North Carolina sharp-shooter and 20th pick in the 1992 NBA draft is making

pick in the 1992 NBA draft is making his mark in the biggest town of them all. When he has played, Davis has averaged 6.3 points per game. His strong work ethic and polished game have certainly been noticed.

"He's going to be a great player," Rivers says. "He's probably more fundamentally sound than most of the players on the team."

"He's coming along very well."

"He's coming along very well,"
Starks adds. "He kind of reminds me of
myself when I first came into the league.
He's get a let. for He's got a lot of talent, but you have to

wait your turn."

And wait he has. He sits and watches, sits and watches. But Davis realizes his

sits and watches. But Davis realizes his place on this team.
"We have a lot of scorers on this team," he says. "Right now, I'm not the guy that needs to come off the bench and start jackin' it. I'm out there to play

When he is sitting, Davis' job is to

learn from what he views on the court and from what he hears in the club-house. And the veteran Knick players have been helpful. "Everyone's real cool," he says. "It's good to hear the war

They make me feel very comfortable on the court. It's tough to go out there. The position today is very tough. Them telling me, 'You're doing OK' makes me feel a lot better."

A veteran who has given Davis par-

ticular attention is Rivers. Now in his 10th season, Rivers is impressed with Davis' demeanor. "He gets the normal rookie razzing, but he doesn't let it affect him. He just goes on."

Recently, Davis and Rivers planned

a one-on-one. It never happened. Why? "He chickened out," Rivers says. But Davis counters, "No, he didn't show up

But both agree they will play. Rivers explains matter-of-factly that he will explains matter-of-factly that he will win because, regardless of how good North Carolina players have been in the NBA, Rivers is from Marquette. And, Rivers explains, Marquette's victory against UNC in the 1977 title game ensures Rivers' victory against Davis.

OK, Hubert, it's your turn. "I will beat him," the rookie boasts. "No 31-year-old's gonna beat me. No old guy."

So far, the biggest difference between college and pro ball for Davis has been the travel. On this particular evening, Davis is concluding a two-day

evening, Davis is concluding a two-day stretch with one game in Boston and one in New York. "It's real tough," he

says. "I didn't even play last night and I'm tired."

The season's length will be a chal-

The season's length will be a chal-lenge for Davis. He could conceivably play more games this year than he did in his sophomore, junior and senior sea-sons combined. The physical demands clearly affected former Tar Heel Rick Fox last year in his rookie season with the Boston Calties Davis has added 12 the Boston Celtics. Davis has added 12 pounds, attempting to increase his

"I'm trying to eat well, get a lot of rest," Davis says. "There's a lot of bas-ketball, but there's no school. I don't have to study. So that takes away a lot of

When Davis has had free time, he has not strolled Fifth Avenue, he has not visited the museums, he has not shopped at Macy's. What has Davis done?
"I like sitting at home watching TV.

It feels good to be on my own. I just like to hang out by myself. "I like to go down to Times Square and watch people. It's kind of cool. I like to drive in traffic. I like to hang out

with the people. It's neat."
Well, to each his own. Davis, who is living in the northern suburb of Mamaroneck, says he is more of a country person. But he is giving the big town a shot. "New York surprised me," he said "It's a great city."

a shot. "New York surprised me," he said. "It's a great city."

Davis has remained in contact with his former head coach — as a good Tar Heel does. He calls Dean Smith at least once a week. "He's still my second father," Davis says. "He's a great coach. A great coach. A great person."

Davis' natural father, Hubert Davis Sr., has been to most of the Knicks'

Sr., has been to most of the Knicks' home games. Son flies dad up from Washington, D.C., to New York. Son

misses dad, and dad misses son

misses dad, and dad misses son.

It has been a combination of Davis' dad, his friends, his former coach and his faith that has kept him going. "I know that God's taking care of me. He's given me the ability to be here. Good things are going to happen. I don't have to worry about it."

And if you listen to the two most influential people in da Garden, you'll get a feeling that good things will happen for Hubert Davis. No doubt.

"He's not playing as much now, but I think he's still contributing," Patrick Ewing says. "He's still working hard in practices. He's only going to get better."

"He's got a long career ahead of him," Pat Riley says. "He's on a team that has a lot of depth, a lot of talent in front of him. But he creates our depth. "He'll get his moment. He will."

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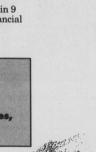
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