

Sporting News
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Clippers avoid embarrassment

LOS ANGELES -- Norm Nixon figures the Los Angeles Clippers cost themselves some fame, and he's relieved that they did.

"If we had tied the record, it would probably have been on the front page," the Clippers' guard said. "Since we won, it'll probably be on page seven."

The Clippers missed their shot at NBA history last Wednesday night by beating the Houston Rockets 114-111.

Had the Clippers lost, they would have tied the NBA single-season record of 20 straight defeats, set by the 1972-73 Philadelphia 76ers.

"It's good to get that monkey off our back," Nixon said after Los Angeles rallied in the fourth quarter to end its 19-game skid.

In the process, the Clippers broke the eight-game personal losing streak of Coach Don Casey, the former assistant who replaced the fired Gene Shue on Jan. 19.

"I kept having a nightmare that I died and the obituary said I was the only NBA coach who never won a game," Casey said with a smile.

"The darned streak was the worst. No one paid attention to any of the good things we had done ...

"I'm glad it (the win) came at home against a formidable team, with formidable veterans," Casey added.

Ironically, the Clippers' win came over a Rockets team coached by Don Chaney, who himself had been through hard times as the Clippers' coach before being fired after the 1986-87 season.

"I know they're glad they're not in the record book," Chaney said. "I know what it's like, losing a lot of games."

K.C. & Lenny -- blue collar HOFers



K.C. Jones

HOUSTON -- K.C. Jones and Lenny Wilkens, saying they represent the NBA's "blue collar" workers, were elected Friday to the Basketball Hall of Fame.

They were joined by William "Pop" Gates, 71, who played with the New York Renaissance and other teams during the game's barnstorming years in the 1930s and 1940s.

"People will look at the stats and see that K.C. averaged only six points a game, so you have that problem," said Jones, here for the NBA All-Star weekend. "I was more of a blue-collar worker. You had to use what talent you had."

Wilkens, primarily a playmaker rather than a scorer, said players with skills other than scoring should be recognized in the Hall of Fame.

"You look beyond the points just like a coach looks at more than scoring when he's putting together a team" said Wilkens, now coach of the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Jones said he was surprised at his selection.

"This is the sort of thing that happens to superstars, all-stars and scorers, and not people who can't shoot," said Jones, who retired last year as coach of the Boston Celtics, for whom he played earlier in his career.

For years, he was overshadowed by his college and pro teammate Bill Russell.

"At San Francisco (where he and Russell won two NCAA championships) and the pros, my contribution was my brain, not my scoring ability. I just did the blue-collar-type things," Jones said.

Wilkens ranks third in the NBA in career assists with 7,211, demurred. "K.C. was a fine player."

Wilkens, a standout at Providence College, averaged 16.5 points and 6.7 assists a game during a 15-year NBA career with St. Louis, Seattle, Portland and Cleveland. Before coming to Cleveland two seasons ago, he coached at Portland and Seattle, where his 1979 team won the NBA championship.

Jones only averaged 7.4 points a game in his nine-year playing career with the Celtics, during which Boston won eight straight NBA championships, but he contributed an average 4.9 assists and could make his presence felt in clutch games.

In the 1955 NCAA championship, the 6-foot-1 Jones held LaSalle's 6-6 scoring ace, Tom Gola, who was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1975, without a point for 21 minutes, while edging Russell for game-scoring honors with 24 points.

"He was more interested in good defense and making the team look good than in scoring a lot of points," Wilkens said. "When he played you on defense, it was like wearing a glove."

Bowie comes off injured list

PORTLAND, Ore. -- Sam Bowie, who has been sidelined for much of the past two seasons with a broken right leg, was taken off the injured list Thursday afternoon, the Portland Trail Blazers announced.

Bowie, a 7-foot-1 center, is expected to be worked gradually into the Blazers' playing rotation, said team spokesman John Lashway.

"There are not prescribed minutes for Sam to play," said Bucky Buckwalter, vice president of basketball operations. "His playing time will be determined by the coaching staff as his physical condition and ability indicate."

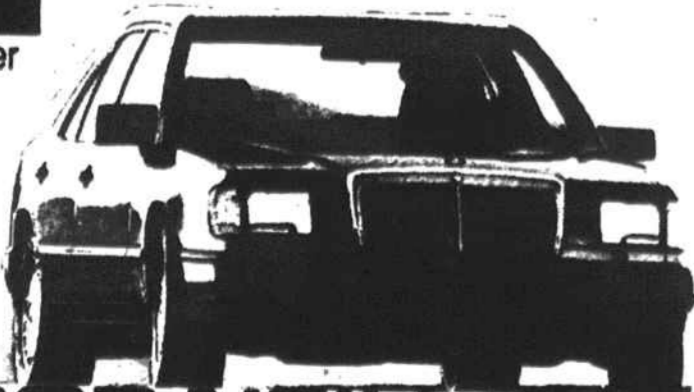
Bowie, 27, suffered a fractured right tibia in a game against Dallas on Nov. 7, 1986, and broke the bone in the same location prior to an Oct. 17, 1987, pre-season game against Cleveland, Lashway said.

Since the 1987 setback, Bowie received a bone graft and had a metal plate permanently affixed to his right tibia on March 9, 1988. The same procedure was used successfully on his left tibia, which also was fractured twice.



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Duke Blue Devils rediscover defense

By TOM FOREMAN JR.
Associated Press Sports Writer

Duke has rediscovered the meaning of defense, and Maryland was both witness and victim to the awakening.

The Blue Devils downed the Terrapins 86-60 Saturday to continue their climb toward the top of the Atlantic Coast Conference. Prior to Sunday's games, Duke was percentage points behind Virginia and North Carolina, who were tied for second before their game in Chapel Hill.

Just as it did in the last two outings, Duke used its defense to set up an offensive outburst.

"The fact of the matter is, defense wins games," guard Quin Snyder says. "We're starting to figure that out."

In their last three games, the Blue Devils have forced 57 turnovers and held opponents to an aggregate 37.8 percent field goal shooting. On the other hand, Duke's worst shooting effort in its last three games was the 57.9 percent compiled against the Terrapins.

"Three things are the keys and they're all interrelated," forward Danny Ferry says. "We're playing with a lot more emotion. We're playing smarter, and finally, we're really concentrating on our defense because it's going to create things for us offensively."

All five Blue Devils starters contributed to a 16-0 run that covered five minutes and helped Duke take a 22-8 edge. Maryland was no closer than eight points in the first half and trailed 40-22 at halftime.

Duke, which hit 60 percent of its field goals in the first half and

57.9 percent for the game, raised its record to 17-4, 6-4 in the ACC. Maryland dropped to 8-14 and 1-8.

Alaa Abdelnaby started the run with a tap-in at 15:02 and Snyder finished it with a layup off a steal with 10:45 left in the half. The Blue Devils hit seven of nine

shots in the decisive stretch.

Phil Henderson's 3-point field goal with 16:43 remaining pushed Duke to a 62-32 lead, and the advantage grew to 75-42 when Brian Davis hit the front end of a two-shot foul.

"Duke played a fantastic game," Maryland coach Bob Wade said.

"Defensively, they kept us out of everything we were trying to do."

Ferry led Duke with 24 points. Henderson finished with 17 points and Robert Brickey had 14 for Duke.

Jerrold Mustaf led Maryland with 18 points and John Johnson had 17.

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