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Tracking the NBA Draft

We've had the sophomore draft. The high schooler draft. And the foreign import draft. This year? With no consensus No. 1 pick and a lottery free-for-all, it's the flat draft. That doesn't mean a bad one: When Chicago grabs Steve Francis and Charlotte nabs Lamar Odom, no one's gonna cry. What it does mean is teams without specific needs—and those with more than one pick—are likely to deal. Chicago will listen to Toronto, which wants Francis so badly it's willing to package the 5 and 12 picks for the top spot. Vancouver's willing to deal the No. 2 pick for a vet 2-guard or power forward. The Cavs are so high on Wally they'll trade a player and pick to move up. Here's how ESPN analyst Len Elmore and *The Magazine's* Chris Palmer see the first round breaking down in D.C. June 30:

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Chicago>>**STEVE FRANCIS**, 6'3" PG, Maryland

Vancouver>>**ELTON BRAND**, 6'8" PF, Duke > Griz deal or draft muscle. Brand can bang, but can he shoot? He answered that by popping 18-footers in workouts. Oh, and don't worry, this Player of the Year is a legit 6'8".

Charlotte>>**LAMAR ODOM**, 6'10" SF/SG, Rhode Island

Clippers>>**BARON DAVIS**, 6'2" PG, UCLA > Clips love the Baron's end-to-end quickness, finishing skills and fearless pull-ups. So will their fans. Doctors say bum left knee is fine. L.A. had better hope so.

Toronto>>**ANDRE MILLER**, 6'2" PG, Utah > Not as flashy as Davis or Jason Terry, but the youthful Raps crave this four-year guy's maturity. Toronto would prefer to trade up for Francis, but Miller will do just fine.

Minnesota>>**WALLY SZCZERBIAK**, 6'8" SF, Miami (Ohio) Stock soared during NAAs, and GMs like what they saw at predraft workouts—especially the 56 of 63 treys he dropped in Toronto.

Washington>>**DREY MAGGETTE**, 6'6" SF, Duke

Cleveland>>**RICHARD HAMILTON**, 6'6" SG/SF, Connecticut Cavs exercise option of Celts' pick to add depth and speed. They get it with Hamilton, a master at getting off his shot inside the lane and out. With 20 more pounds on his 185-pound frame, he'll be lethal.

Phoenix>>**JONATHAN BENDER**, 6'11" PF, Picayune (Miss.) H.S. Thought taking a prep guy this high was passé? Think again. This 18-year-old can jump over you, blow by you and stick the J, too. If a few more GMs really had guts, he'd go even higher.

Golden State>>**JASON TERRY**, 6'2" PG, Arizona The creative playmaker the Warriors desperately need, he has three-point range, plays big D—'Zona's all-time steals leader—and isn't afraid to take the big shot.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT

STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

The last full-time rookie starter the Bulls drafted was a No. 3 pick named Michael, back in '84. Steve Francis is no Jordan, but he's the first building block in the Bulls' reconstruction. The most explosive player in the draft, Francis will have few problems getting around even the best defenders with his D.C. crossover and herky-jerky quickness. His blend of all-around game (he had a quadruple-double messing around in a community college game), flash (after Kornel David, you'd crave flash too) and unselfishness ("I wish he would shoot more," says Terps coach Gary Williams) will help win a few games and sell more than a few tickets in star-studded Chicago. *-C.P.*



TOPS IN 2004

WAIT AND SEE

The most versatile player in the draft, 19-year-old Lamar Odom, can handle against pesky guards, stroke the deep three and create shots for himself, as well as for others. Bet on Charlotte coach Paul Silas to use Odom at both guard spots plus small forward, the way Jim Harrick did in Odom's one season at URI. That (last) season's result: Odom single-handedly carried the Rams to the Tourney, averaging 17.6 ppg, 9.4 rpg and 3.8 apg. Bank on a Charlotte playoff appearance next season as Odom challenges Francis for Rookie of the Year. Only his perimeter defense—he's played little—will hold Odom back. Five years out? All-Star Odom proves he should have graduated at the top of his draft class. *-C.P.*



BEST BLUE DEVIL

FRESH PRINCE

We're sure that four Dukies will go in the first round. We're equally sure the best of the bunch is the one you didn't see play much—freshman Corey Maggette. And we won't be surprised if he's one of the best draft wagers, period. A 6'6" swingman, Maggette is quicker than the big guys and bigger than the quick guys. He also has freakish ups on the scale of Vince Carter. Maggette's learning curve will be longer than Carter's because he played a mere 39 college games, but he's well suited for immediate sixth-man impact, averaging a point every 1.7 minutes last season. The only question: How long before his judgment catches up with his talent? But trust us, it will. *-Rick Bonnell*

