

MOOCHIE GETS A WAKE-UP CALL

Norris is no longer sleepless about what happened in Seattle



Moochie Norris is walking around with an extra bounce to his step these days. Eight hours of sleep—and an occasional nap during the day—can do that for a brotha. His aura is a far cry from last year's, when insomnia—which he says he brought on himself by worrying about his job security—was kickin' his ass. "I was putting too much pressure on myself," says Norris, who started last season as Gary Payton's backup in Seattle, went on the DL with insomnia and was cut 25 days later. "All they just wanted me to do was continue playing hard."

Well, yes and no. True, Norris' numbers were decent (11.7 mpg, 3.2 ppg, 2.0 apg in 12 games), and the Sonics did get off to a 9-3 start with the 26-year-old in the rotation. The 6-foot, 175-pound lefthander also became a KeyArena favorite with his energy and three-point bombs (6-for-15, including a 4-for-4 fourth quarter vs.

Portland). But first-year coach Paul Westphal made no secret of his desire to land a veteran backup to fit The Glove, and the constant speculation in the local papers literally kept Norris up all night.

"I let it get the best of me," says Norris, who has battled this problem since college. Norris saw a physician who prescribed medication, but Moochie found that relaxation was the key. Once he was finally able to get some sleep, he rejoined his former CBA team, the Fort Wayne Fury, and averaged 15.4 points, 8.0 assists and 2.39 steals in 18 games.

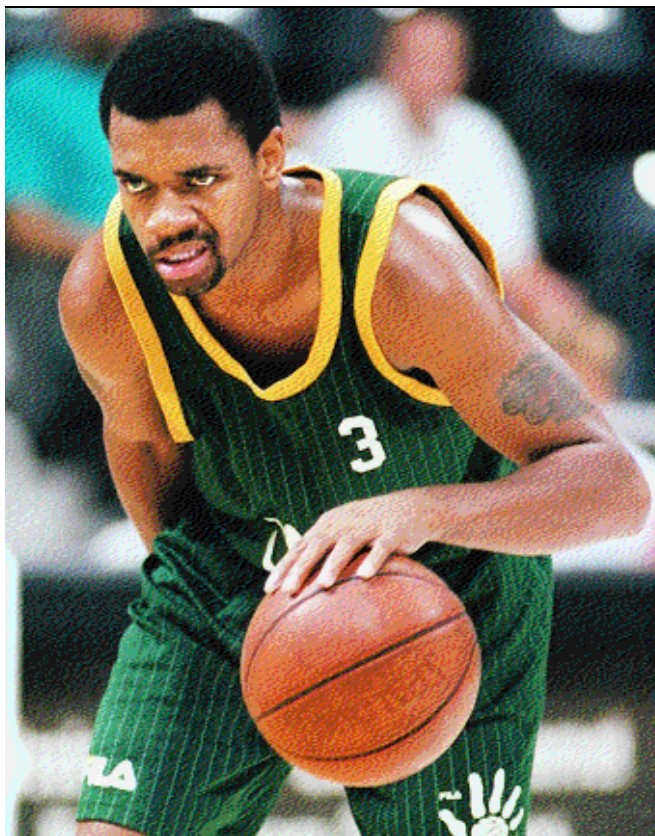
Westphal thought enough of Norris to invite him to join the Sonics' summer team that's competing in the Fila Summer Pro League in Long Beach, Calif. No promises, just room and board and an opportunity to show the Sonics—or any of the many NBA scouts in attendance—that he belongs. "He's good enough to play in the NBA in the right situation," says Westphal, who thinks Norris needs an uptempo team that will benefit from his ability to find the open man in transition. "And when he gets the opportunity, he's gotta grab it and never let it go."

Whether he'll get that shot with Seattle is unclear, especially with the Sonics in the

middle of an overhaul. They shipped Dale Ellis, underachieving Billy Owens and injury-prone Don MacLean to the Magic along with the draft rights to Corey Maggette for Horace Grant, and may package Grant with Heseley Hawkins in a sign-and-trade with the Wizards for Mitch Richmond. They hope to re-sign Vin Baker, but will probably say goodbye to longtime favorite Detlef Schrempf. All Norris can count on is finishing up in Long Beach and playing another round of games with the Sonics in the Shaw's Pro League in Boston in early August.

Norris has made contact with Orlando, Washington and Toronto, but if no team invites him to camp, he will look for a job overseas, where the money is good. No matter what happens, though, he has decided not to lose any sleep over the matter. **-Mark W. Wright**

Norris has his eyes open for a job this summer.



A Better Way?

Still love this game? Sure you do, but more scoring and less physical play wouldn't hurt, right? Management feels your pain. And that's why it's using the summer leagues to test several rule changes designed to bring some of the aesthetics—not to mention points—back to the game.

Among the changes are broadening the illegal defense rule, limiting the time a player can hold the ball in the post to five seconds and resetting the shot clock to 14 seconds instead of 24 when a team keeps possession after the ball goes OB. But the biggest change restricts the use of hands. Simply stated, a defender cannot touch a player until he reaches halfcourt. After that, any contact impeding forward progress can be called a foul. In other words, the bumping and grinding to slow down an Allen Iverson may soon be history. Enforcement of this has resulted in more than a few 50-minute quarters and 70- and 80-foul games in summer league play. "For so many years, we allowed the defender to place his forearm on the offensive player in face-to-face guarding," says NBA chief of officials Ed Rush. "We're using the summer to reprogram the players and officials."

A 16-member special committee will review game film compiled from summer leagues and then make its recommendation to the Board of Governors before training camps start. If approved, there just might be a kinder, more offensive-minded NBA for the new millennium. **-M.W.W.**

8.1 Turnover

Penny a Laker? Steve Smith a Blazer? Ron Mercer a Bull? The sign-and-trades start today.

