

SPORTS

# One-Season Best!

It's time to do the all-time one-season comparison for Bahamian professional basketball players.

Let's start with the Bahamian born players. Four jump right out, namely Mychal Thompson, Dexter Cambridge, Buddy Hield and Jonquel Jones. I put an asterisk to Osborne "Goose" Lockhart and Kendal "Tiny" Pinder because they played for the Harlem Globetrotters (a touring team, not a pro league).

There are of course, the deep Bahamian-rooted players. Reference is to Rick Fox, Klay Thompson and Eric Gordon. Fox and Klay have Bahamian fathers while Gordon, the reigning NBA three-point champion and winner of the Sixth Man Award, is the son of a Bahamian mother.

It's a rather nice crop of stellar court performers who are distinctly connected to this little country, called The Commonwealth of the Bahamas. The subject of discussion is definitely highly arguable. I admit that. However, in my view for one-season of professional basketball, Jones wins the tip. Let's just keep the comparison to the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). Jones of course would have a bigger edge if we attached her Asian season. She tore apart the Women's Korean Basketball League, winning all of the major awards and carrying her team the Woori Bank Wibee to the League and championship titles.

So, in this her second season in the WNBA, Jones has evolved as one of the prime faces in global women's basketball. The WNBA is the top league for women players and this has been an incredible breakthrough campaign for the 6-6 center/forward who hails from the unassuming community of Holmes Rock in West, Grand Bahama. Going into tonight's game on the road against the Phoenix Mercury squad, Jones is averaging 15.8 in scoring and sits easily atop with a 12.0 rebounding average per game. She is also a presence in all of the major stat categories. In particular she has been sensational from beyond the arch and if she puts up a few more in tonight's and Sunday's last game against the Los Angeles Sparks, she would qualify to be listed and should end up among the top five from three-point range.

The young lady, 23, is unique, much different from any other player who has graced an WNBA court during the 20 years of the organization's existence. She puts the ball on the floor like a little guard, finishes with the best, consistently positions herself for rebounds, is a major block shot threat, hits the long ball with unexpected consistency, has no fear down inside although often giving up good poundage to opposing centers and she leads by an infectious enthusiastic attitude whether on the court, showing how it is done, or on the sideline cheering on her teammates.

Jones is the full package, and adoration for her around the WNBA grew during this second year. Jones was an All-Star starter, and grabbed the Verizon Classic spotlight with a coming-



JONQUEL JONES DRIVING



## Sports Scope

By Fred Sturupp

out performance of 24 points inclusive of an electrifying dunk. If she doesn't win the Most Improved Player Award this season, then one could expect at some point for hell to freeze over. Jones will likely get some votes for the MVP Award.

At 384 rebounds for the season, she needs just 15 tonight to push Tina Charles into second place for seasonal record total. She could become the first WNBA player to snag more than 400 rebounds in a season.

It's been a fantastic run, that will be extended to play-off competition. Indeed, she is having a season for the ages.

How about Mychal Thompson for one season?

Well, there was his rookie year and the All-Rookie First Team. There were the two championship seasons with the Los Angeles Lakers. Who knows what would have happened in his second year? He sat out the season with an injured leg. In the fourth season he averaged 20.8 and 11.7 rebounds but did not make the all-star team.

Cambridge just played portions of 53 games during the 1992-93 season for the Dallas Mavericks. He averaged 7.0 points and 3.2 rebounds.

Hield this past season, made the NBA All-Rookie first team. He came alive when the New Orleans Pelicans traded him to the Sacramento Kings. Hield averaged 15.1 down the stretch and looks poised for great things during the upcoming season.

Now to the Gordon, Klay and Fox. This past season, Gordon averaged 16.2 points per game, 2.7 rebounds and 2.5 assists as he helped to guide the Houston Rockets into the play-off along with his individual aforemen-

tioned achievements. Klay has had sensational games (37 points in a quarter, 60 in a game), and is an annual all-star selection, to go with two NBA championships.

For Fox, his best one-season

statistically, was 1996-97 when he averaged 15.4 points per game and 5.2 rebounds. He later went on to win three NBA titles with the Lakers, but as a role player.

They are all due congratulations for their contributions to the Bahamas Sports Brand.

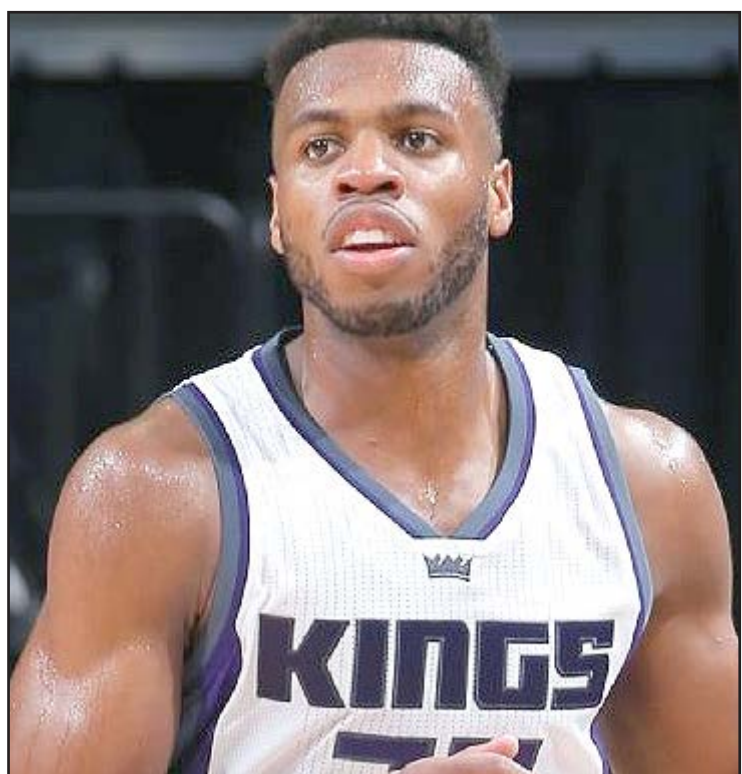
Jonquel Jones though, gets my nod for the best one-season performance.

Let the debate begin!

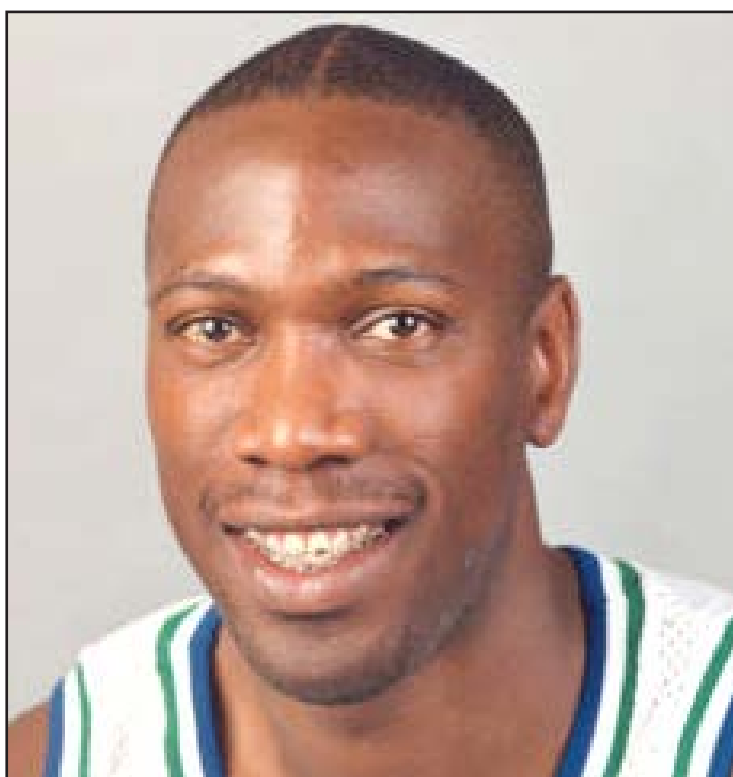
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MYCHAL THOMPSON



BUDDY HIELD



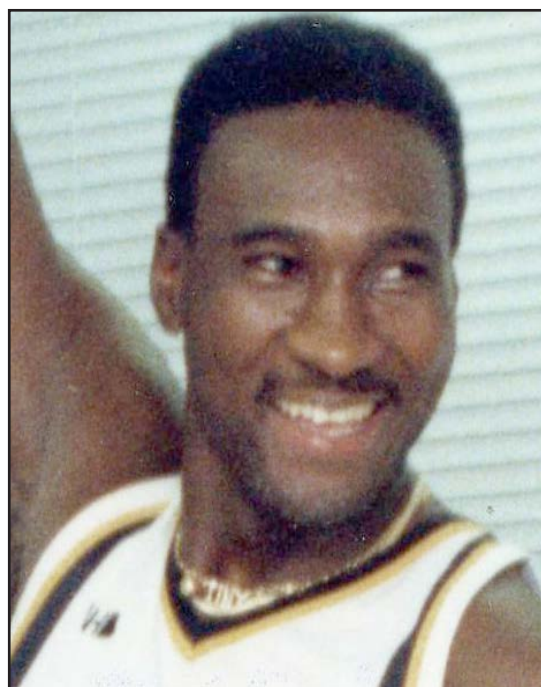
DEXTER CAMBRIDGE



KLAY THOMPSON



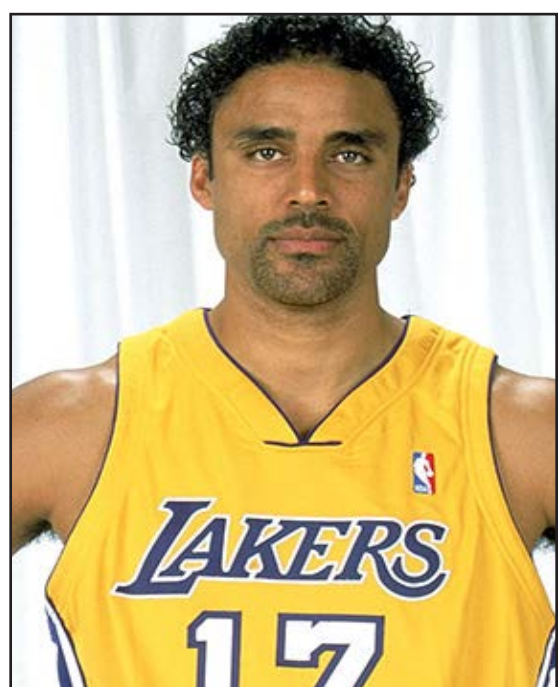
OSBORNE "GOOSE" LOCKHART



KENDAL "TINY" PINDER



ERIC GORDON



RICK FOX