

## SPORTS

# DeAndre Ayton, 40 years after Mychal Thompson

## THOMPSON WAS DRAFTED NO. 1 IN THE NBA IN 1978

Forty years ago, (how time flies) Mychal Thompson was the first player selected in the 1978 National Basketball Association (NBA) draft. The Portland Trailblazers made the selection.

Thompson finished his career at the University of Minnesota as one of the greatest players in Big-10 Conference history and after being drafted No. 1, was considered potentially, a Hall of Fame candidate.

Well, he gave the NBA 13 solid years (1978-1991). Thompson started off nicely on the NBA All-Rookie First Team in 1979 and captured two NBA championships along the way with the Los Angeles Lakers (1987,1988). However, the truth be told, Hall of Fame credentials he never amassed.

The one significant milestone that has his name cemented in history forever though, is being the first foreign player to be drafted No. 1 in the NBA. That one is his to keep.

Fast-forward to 2018, and later this year, DeAndre Ayton, Bahamian-born, just like Thompson, will opt out of his tenure at the University of Arizona after the freshman season and become available in the NBA Draft. He very well, could become the second Bahamian to be drafted No. 1.

Also, he has what it takes to become one of the greats of the NBA. For sure, the jury will be out on Ayton, once he enters the NBA, but with his overall ability and diversity on court for a big man (7'1" and 250 pounds), he is tailor made for stardom in the NBA.

He would be a consistent double/double threat in rebounds and scoring in the NBA. His range is incredible. A big man with the quickness to maneuver from the front court to the back court, while handling the ball or

not; go inside for the dunk; or step back into three-point territory to drain from long range, is exceptional.

That superlative, (exceptional), does not seem enough to capture the true essence of the 19-year-old on the basketball court. He is so good, that presently, in my view, just one team in the NBA might hesitate to draft him first, if the opportunity is there.

I refer to the Philadelphia 76ers. Well, they are presently No.6 in the Eastern Conference and looking set for a play-off spot. The 76ers will not likely have the first pick in the draft. But even if the 76ers did, with Joel Embiid already at center and another big man sensation, the 6'10' Ben Simmons who is the team's point guard, incredibly, fitting in Ayton might be challenging. However, every other team in the NBA from the defending champions Golden State Warriors on down through the Cleveland Cavaliers, Houston Rockets and Boston Celtics, would jump, I think, at the chance to pick Ayton.

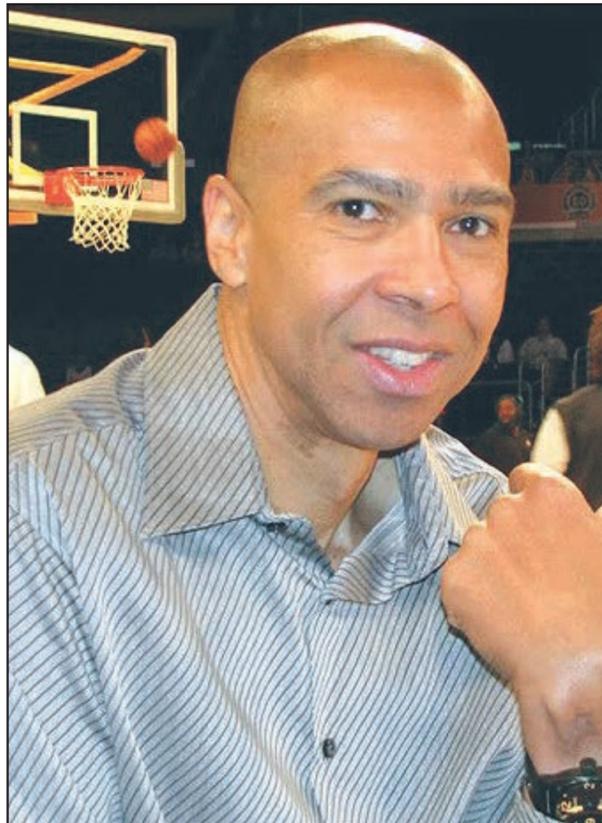
The high expectancy from all pundits is that he will certainly be among the top five in the first round, but becoming No. 1, as was Mychal Thompson, would greatly enhance the Bahamas Sports Brand.

It doesn't appear as though the negative news about rumour of money being offered Ayton to sign with Arizona will factor much in his future. Incidentally, the report keeps changing, with no proof of anything untoward by Ayton.

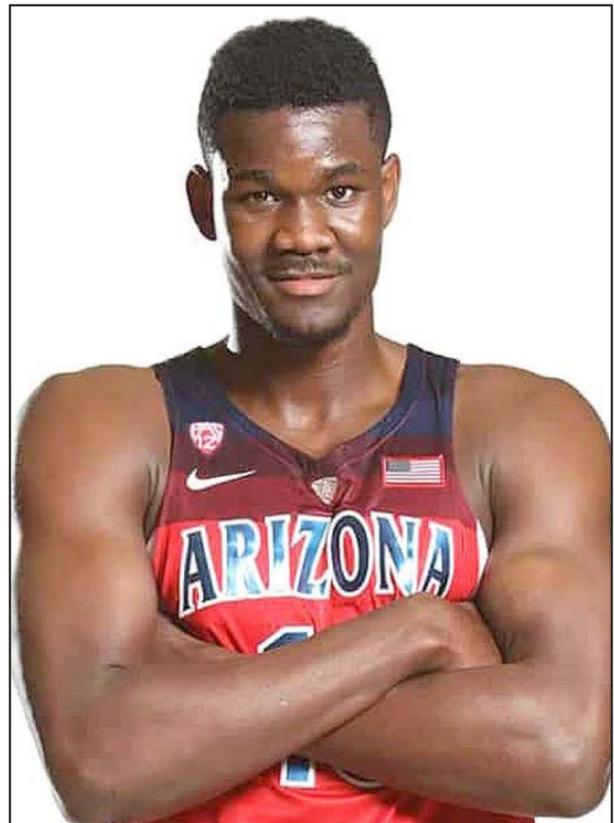
He should be just OK.

Go Ayton!

• To respond to this column, kindly contact Fred Sturrup at [sturrup1504@gmail.com](mailto:sturrup1504@gmail.com) or on WhatsApp at 727-6363.



MYCHAL THOMPSON



DEANDRE AYTON

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## SPORTS SCOPE

By Fred Sturrup



# Lady Jaguars force game three

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The Grand Bahama Secondary School Athletic Association Derek Nesbitt/Obie Wilcombe High School Basketball League is slowly winding down with it's post season play.

While the senior boys' championship was decided last month, with the Tabernacle Falcons repeating, the junior boys, junior girls, Under 17 boys and senior girls season raged on.

This past Monday at the St. George's Gymnasium the senior girls' championship series was evened up. While the Bishop Michael Eldon Warriors held a 1-0 lead in their best of three series with the St. George's Jaguars, the Lady Jags avenged their game one loss with a game two victory.

The Jags quieted the Warriors with a 26-17 win. Mariah Sherman and Jamiela Miller each finished with six points for the Jaguars. Kiajah Smith led the Warriors with five points. Myah Green and Mya Moore each chipped in with four points in the loss.

Jaguars' coach Stephanie Higgs told members of the media she was pleased with the team's effort and so far the hard work they displayed all year is paying off.

“Tonight they played exceptionally well. I'm really pleased with the way they played. They came out and they played fundamental basketball, like they played during the Geneva Rutherford Tournament.

“They (Lady Jags) feel like



**ALL EVEN — The St. George's Jaguars evened their best of three series with the Bishop Micael Eldon Warriors this past Monday at the St. George's Gymnasium. The Jags were led by Jamiela Miller, pictured going up for a lay-up, with six points in the win. It all came down to a game three between both teams yesterday evening to determine the 2018 GBSSAA senior girls champions.**

(PHOTO: SHAYNE STUBBS)

they can win, they're eager to win and they're going to give it their best shot.”

The third and final game took place yesterday at the St. George's Gymnasium but those results were not known up to press time. Nonetheless, win or lose, Higgs noted that the team's confidence is through the roof, especially headed into the Bahamas National High School Basketball Championships, March 22-26.

“Right now I'm in a very good space when it comes down to the Nationals. We've played most of

those teams from Nassau and I think if this team plays the way they should play and play up to their best potential, they can win the Nationals.”

The Lady Jags converted their slow start into a strong finish to close the first half. St. George's held a 13-8 edge over BMES headed into the half.

The Lady Jags ramped up the defensive and offensive intensity and eventually built a double-digit lead to separate themselves even further from the Warriors for good.

The junior girls' championship

picture was made clear this past Monday. The Sister Mary Patricia Russell Panthers and the Eight Mile Rock Blue Jays will meet in a rematch of the Geneva Rutherford junior girls' championship. Game one also took place yesterday but results were not known up to press time.

The Panthers eliminated the Tabernacle Falcons, 2-0, by a final score of 12-11. Tamia Cornish led the Panthers with five points. Cassidra Thompson poured in a game-high 10 points in the loss.

The Blue Jays knocked off the

Warriors, 2-0, in their junior girls' semifinal tilt. Shannae Pinder led the Blue Jays with four points in their 8-4 defeat of the Warriors. Schemia Major led the Warriors with two points.

Over at the Jack Hayward Gymnasium on Monday, the junior boys began their championship best of three series. The Tabernacle Falcons, led by top scorer Romad Dean (10 points), topped the Blue Jays 22-14. Jayden Pinder led the charge for the Blue Jays with eight points.

The Under 17 boys wrapped

up their regular season with a make-up game between the Sunland Stingers and BMES Warriors. The Stingers won that tilt narrowly, by a final score of 14-13. Isaiah Braynen led the Stingers with six points, while Sean Thomas led the Warriors with three points.

The Under 17 boys' single-elimination quarterfinals kicked off yesterday at the Jack Hayward Gymnasium. The Blue Jays took on the Warriors, while the Stingers faced off against the Jaguars. Those results were also unknown up to press time.