

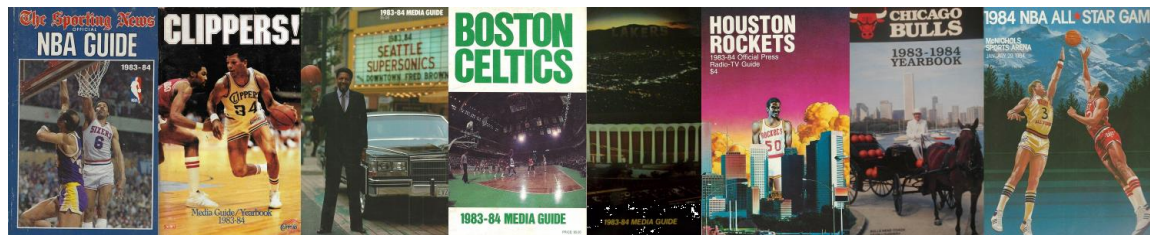


80s Era NBA + 40: Part Fifteen

1983-84 Season Review

By Michael Hamel

1983-84 In Review



Finals: Boston Celtics def. Los Angeles Lakers (4-3)

MVP: Larry Bird

ROY: Ralph Sampson

MVP Voting Top 5: Bird, King, Magic Johnson,

Abdul-Jabbar, Thomas

All-NBA First Team

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, Bernard King, Isiah Thomas

All-NBA Second Team

Adrian Dantley, Julius Erving, Moses Malone, Sidney Moncrief, Jim Paxson

Players of the Week (Month)

November Eddie Johnson, Magic Johnson, Kiki Vanderweghe, Mark Aguirre (Magic Johnson)

December Rickey Green, Jeff Ruland, Adrian Dantley, Dan Roundfield (Ruland)

January Isiah Thomas, Purvis Short, Kelly Tripucka, Buck Williams (Aguirre)

February Bernard King, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Larry Bird, Magic Johnson (King)

March Mickey Johnson, Bird, Dantley, Moses Malone (Abdul-Jabbar)

April Thomas, Abdul-Jabbar, Dominique Wilkins

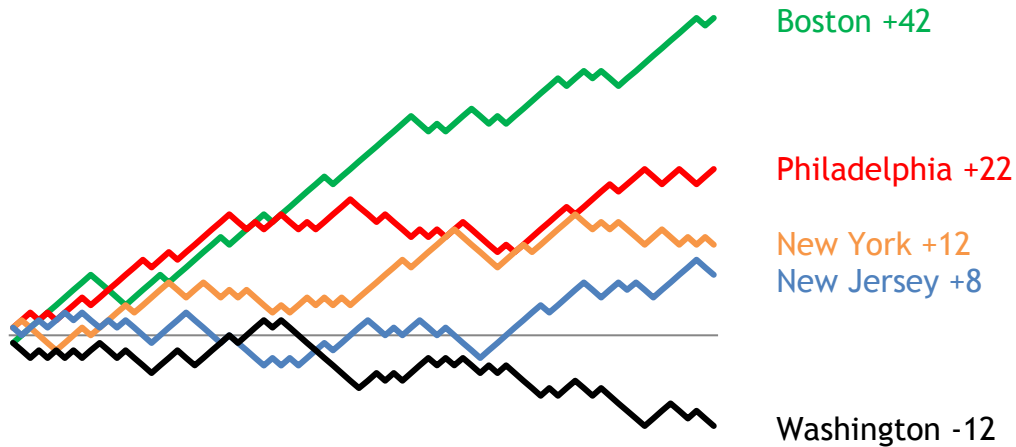
All-Defensive First Team

Maurice Cheeks, Michael Cooper, Bobby Jones, Sidney Moncrief, Tree Rollins

All-Defensive Second Team

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Larry Bird, T.R. Dunn, Dennis Johnson, Dan Roundfield

1983-84 Atlantic Division



10,014,543

NBA Total Attendance
(exceeds 10 million for the first time)

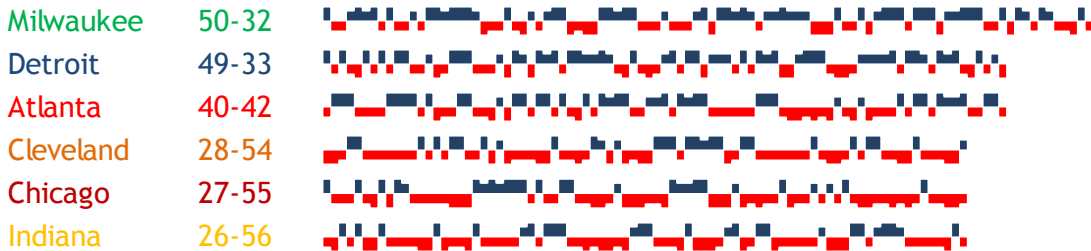
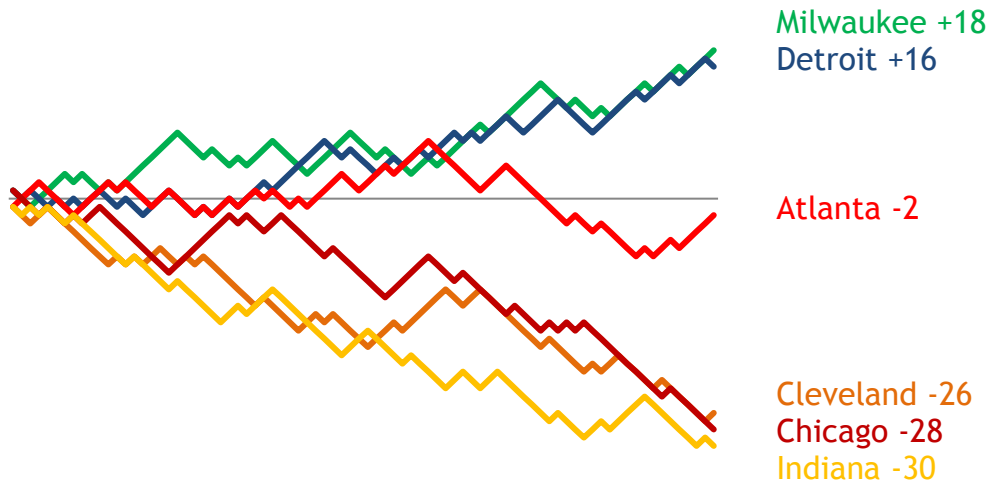
10,620

Average fans per game
(Down slightly from a peak of 11,017 in 1979-80)

652,865

Detroit Pistons' league-leading attendance at the Pontiac Silverdome

1983-84 Central Division



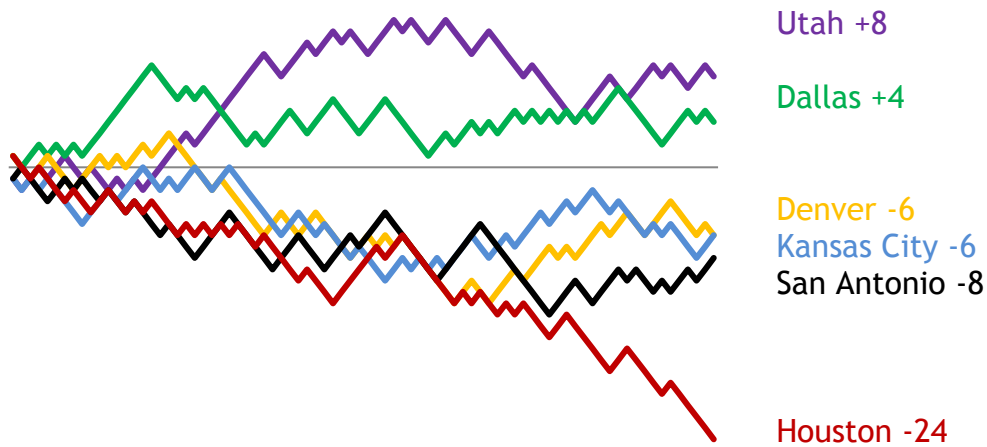
Opening Tip: Clyde Drexler, Ralph Sampson, Byron Scott

Final Buzzer: Tiny Archibald, Elvin Hayes, Bob Lanier, Swen Nater, San Diego

Stuck in the mud

For the third straight season, the Bulls, Cavaliers, and Pacers finished at the bottom of the Central standings. Cleveland did not win more than two games in a row until February, when they finished 9-5 for the month. Chicago started 5-6, then lost eight in a row before a season-high seven-game winning streak raised their record to 12-14. Indiana's longest winning streak was four games in March, but included three wins against their fellow cellar-dwellers.

1983-84 Midwest Division

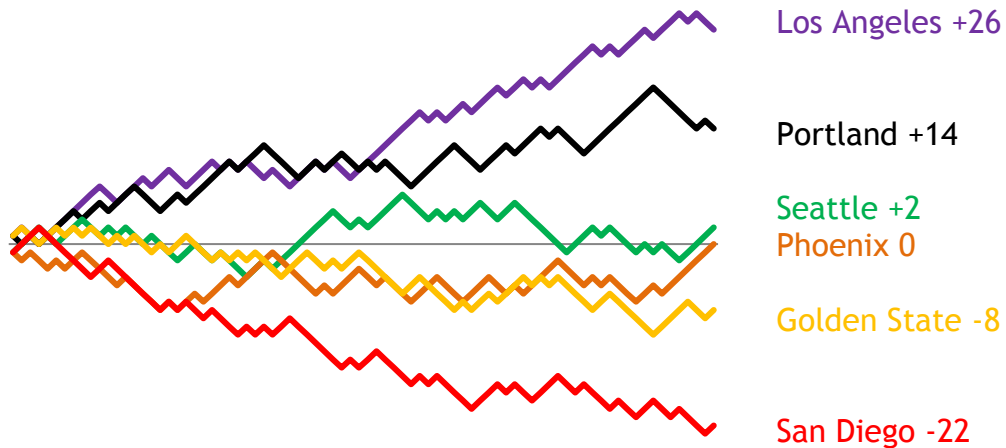


| | | |
|-------------|-------|--|
| Utah | 45-37 | |
| Dallas | 43-39 | |
| Denver | 38-44 | |
| Kansas City | 38-44 | |
| San Antonio | 37-45 | |
| Houston | 29-53 | |

Off the Court

| | |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October | George Halas, longtime Chicago Bears head coach and a co-founder of the NFL, dies at age 88 |
| November | The post-apocalyptic Nuclear War drama <i>The Day After</i> premieres on ABC television |
| January | First Macintosh computer released by Apple Computer; Apple's corresponding "1984" advertisement airs during Super Bowl XVIII |
| March | Rob Reiner's mockumentary film <i>This Is Spinal Tap</i> debuts |
| May | Soviet Union announces they will boycott the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles |

1983-84 Pacific Division



| | | |
|--------------|-------|--|
| Los Angeles | 54-28 | |
| Portland | 48-34 | |
| Seattle | 42-40 | |
| Phoenix | 41-41 | |
| Golden State | 37-45 | |
| San Diego | 30-52 | |

Center of Attention

Ralph Sampson was the consensus #1 overall pick in the 1983 draft, which began a string of five straight years where a “franchise” center was selected at the top of the draft.

4

Number of former #1 overall picks who started games at center for Pacific Division teams (Kareem Abdul-Jabbar 1969, Bill Walton 1974, Mychal Thompson 1978, Joe Barry Carroll 1980)

3

Number of former #1 overall picks who started games at center for the other three divisions—17 teams—combined (Bob Lanier 1970, Kent Benson 1977, Ralph Sampson 1983)

NBA Head Coaches

New coaches at start of season

1983-84

9 (39%)

Former Pro Players

9

Former College Head Coaches

14

Both

2

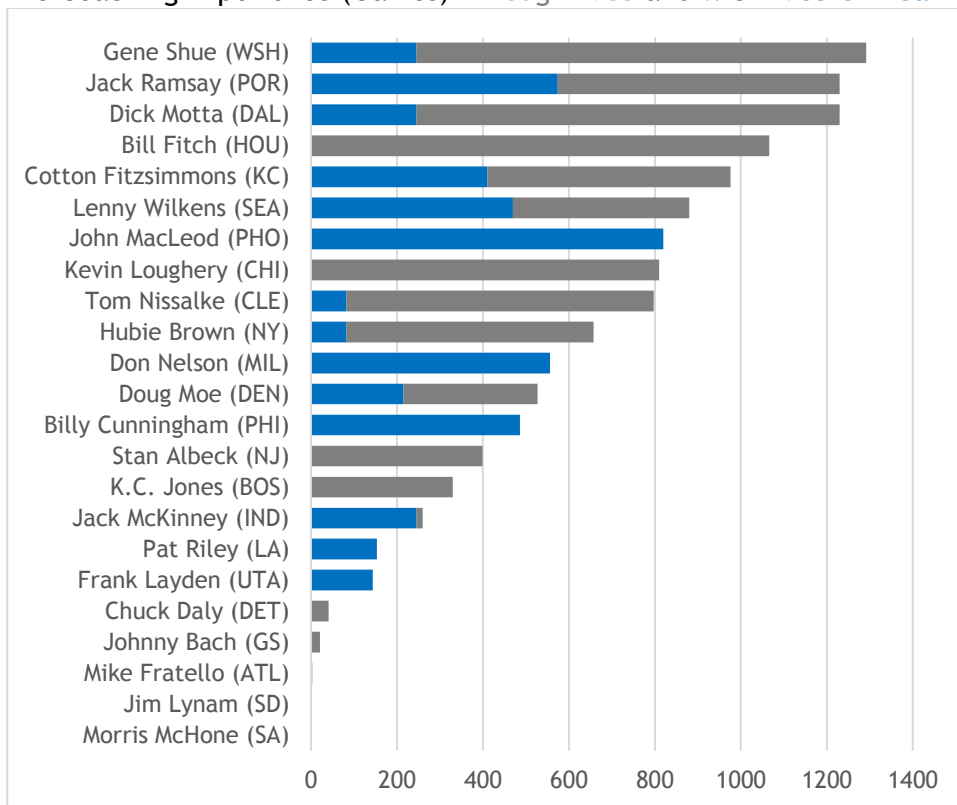
(Bach, Jones)

Fired Mid-Season

1

(McHone)

Pro Coaching Experience (Games) Through 1983 and with 1983-84 Team



New Head Coaches by the Numbers

| | | Pro Record through 1983* | | | | Final Record for new team | | | | | |
|----------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----|-----|-------------------|---|---|
| | | W | L | Pct | Playoffs / Titles | W | L | Pct | Playoffs / Titles | | |
| Stan Albeck | NJ | 217 | 182 | .544 | 3 | 0 | 87 | 77 | .530 | 2 | 0 |
| Johnny Bach | GS | 6 | 15 | .286 | 0 | 0 | 89 | 157 | .362 | 0 | 0 |
| Chuck Daly | DET | 9 | 32 | .220 | 0 | 0 | 467 | 271 | .633 | 9 | 2 |
| Bill Fitch | HOU | 546 | 520 | .512 | 7 | 1 | 216 | 194 | .527 | 4 | 0 |
| Mike Fratello | ATL | 0 | 3 | .000 | 0 | 0 | 324 | 250 | .564 | 5 | 0 |
| K.C. Jones | BOS | 185 | 145 | .561 | 4 | 0 | 308 | 102 | .751 | 5 | 2 |
| Kevin Loughery | CHI | 387 | 423 | .478 | 6 | 2 | 65 | 99 | .396 | 1 | 0 |
| Jim Lynam | SD | 0 | 0 | .000 | 0 | 0 | 52 | 91 | .364 | 0 | 0 |
| Morris McHone | SA | 0 | 0 | .000 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 20 | .355 | 0 | 0 |

*Includes ABA records¹

By the Numbers

Fans' fascination with uniform numbers has been part of watching sports for decades, ever since the New York Yankees put numbers on the backs of their players in 1929 (conveniently arranged by their position in the opening day batting order; Babe Ruth wore number 3). Several years ago, the company Mitchell & Ness produced a graphic showing their selections for the best NBA player that wore a particular uniform number.² An 80s Era edition is a little more difficult, as there are fewer all-time greats to consider, but it was a fascinating exercise. No player wore a number higher than 55 during the 80s Era, so this list is a bit shorter than the Mitchell & Ness version.

| # | Name | Main Tm | Comments (specific to 80s Era only) |
|----|------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 00 | Robert Parish | BOS | 7x AS, 3 time champion |
| 0 | Orlando Woolridge | CHI | Only player to wear number 0 (during 80s Era) |
| 1 | Gus Williams | SEA | 2x AS, 2x All-NBA, top 5 assists and steals 2x |
| 2 | Alex English | DEN | 6x AS, 3x All-NBA, top 5 scoring 5x |
| 3 | Dennis Johnson | BOS | 4x AS, 8x All-Defense |
| 4 | Sidney Moncrief | MIL | 5x AS, 2x Def Player of Year, 5x All-NBA and All-Defense |
| 5 | Bill Walton | BOS | Best of poor group (John Bagley, Billy Paultz) |
| 6 | Julius Erving | PHI | 81 MVP, 8x AS, 5x All-NBA |
| 7 | Kelly Tripucka | DET | Honorable mention: Tiny Archibald |
| 8 | Marques Johnson | MIL | 4x AS, 2x All-NBA |
| 9 | Lionel Hollins | PHI | Best of mediocre group (Jim Chones, Randy Smith) |
| 10 | Maurice Cheeks | PHI | Cheeks (4x AS, 5x All-Def) over Norm Nixon (2x AS, more assists) |
| 11 | Isiah Thomas | DET | 6x AS, 5x All-NBA, top 5 assists 5x |
| 12 | John Stockton | UTA | Rookie in 1984-85 |
| 13 | Larry Smith | GSW | Best of really mediocre group (Ray Williams, James Silas) |
| 14 | Dale Ellis | DAL | 3x Top 10 3-point FG |
| 15 | Vinnie Johnson | DET | Runner-up: Brad Davis |
| 16 | Bob Lanier | MIL | Past his prime, but no other reasonable choice |
| 17 | Chris Mullin | GSW | Rookie in 1985-86 |
| 18 | Dave Cowens | BOS | Still effective in final season (1979-80)... Derek Smith 2 nd choice |
| 19 | Cedric Maxwell | LAC | Only player to wear number 19, won 81 Finals MVP wearing #31 |
| 20 | Micheal Ray Richardson | NJN | 4x AS before derailed by drugs |
| 21 | Dominique Wilkins | ATL | 2s AS, 3x All-NBA, led league PPG 1985-86 |
| 22 | Rolando Blackman | DAL | 3x AS, seriously considered Larry Nance and Andrew Toney |
| 23 | Michael Jordan | CHI | You were expecting T.R. Dunn? |
| 24 | Moses Malone | HOU | MVP in Houston 82, then wore #2 in Philadelphia and won title |
| 25 | Paul Pressey | MIL | 3x All-Def... Bill Cartwright would be another reasonable choice |
| 26 | Coby Dietrick | CHI | Only player to wear number 26 for more than one season |
| 27 | John Johnson | SEA | Weak group, second choice was Caldwell Jones (see #39) |
| 28 | Quinn Buckner | BOS | 3x All-Def in Milwaukee, better than Sam Smith |
| 29 | NONE | | |
| 30 | Bernard King | NYK | 3x AS, 3x All-NBA, unstoppable (32.9 PPG) before knee injury |
| 31 | Kurt Rambis | LAL | Already picked Cedric Maxwell for #19 |
| 32 | Magic Johnson | LAL | There's no 80s Era without Magic |
| 33 | Larry Bird | BOS | Sorry Kareem... Bird was the better player during the 80s Era |
| 34 | Akeem Olajuwon | HOU | 3x AS, 2x All-NBA, 2x All-Defensive |
| 35 | Darrell Griffith | UTA | By far the best of a mediocre group |

| # | Name | Main Tm | Comments (specific to 80s Era only) |
|----|------------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 36 | Paul Silas | SEA | Changed number from 35 to 36 after reaching his 36 th birthday |
| 37 | NONE | | |
| 38 | Dale Wilkinson | LAC | Only player to wear number 38 |
| 39 | Caldwell Jones | CHI | Only player to wear number 39 |
| 40 | Bill Laimbeer | DET | 4x AS, led league in rebounds 2x, top 5 def rebounds 5x |
| 41 | LaSalle Thompson | KCK | Edges out Sam Perkins and Thurl Bailey |
| 42 | James Worthy | LAL | 2x AS, just reaching peak as 80s Era ended |
| 43 | Jack Sikma | SEA | 6x AS, 1x All-Defensive, led league def rebounds 2x |
| 44 | George Gervin | SAS | 6x AS, 4x All-NBA, led league PPG 2x |
| 45 | Purvis Short | GSW | Adrian Dantley wore #45 in Detroit (87-89) |
| 46 | Jay Murphy | LAC | Only other player to wear 46 was Dale Wilkinson (see #38) |
| 47 | NONE | | |
| 48 | NONE | | |
| 49 | NONE | | |
| 50 | Ralph Sampson | HOU | 4x AS, 1x All-NBA |
| 51 | Reggie King | KCK | Best of poor group |
| 52 | Jamaal Wilkes | LAL | 2x AS, the <i>other</i> star of Game 6 of 1980 Finals |
| 53 | Artis Gilmore | SAS | 4x AS |
| 54 | Kent Benson | DET | Better player than Mark Landsberger |
| 55 | Kiki Vandeweghe | DEN | 2x AS, top five PPG 3x |

Next Time: The Los Angeles Lakers – How They Were Built

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Notes

¹ All charts were created by the author using data from <http://www.basketball-reference.com>. The nine new coaches for 1983-84 were a high-water mark for the 80s Era. Games “with 1983-84 team” are the number of games coached with the coach’s current team prior to the 1983-84 season; this omits any non-consecutive stints as the team’s head coach, including: Gene Shue’s stint with the Baltimore Bullets 1966-1973; Johnny Bach’s 21 games with the Warriors while head coach Al Attles was recovering from an Achilles tendon injury during the 1979-80 season; and Mike Fratello’s 3 games as interim coach for the Hawks at the end of 1980-81. Fratello and Morris McHone were former pro and college assistant coaches, but were never head coaches in college nor did they play pro basketball. Inspiration for the style of this page came from examples in Gomez-Palacio and Vit, *Graphic Design Referenced*, p37.

² Referenced by: <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2483621-mitchell-ness-break-down-best-nba-players-by-uniform-number> in 2015 and http://www.espn.com/sportsnation/post/_/id/12992832/best-

[players-nba-history-wear-jersey-number](#). The original article from the Mitchell & Ness site is no longer available.