

YOU'VE BEEN DRAFTED.....WHAT'S NEXT?

After the excitement of being drafted into the NBA, what comes next for the following 12 months can come as a surprise for some, if not all rookies. Following is a month by month breakdown of what a rookie can normally expect.

JUNE:

From the third week of June, on draft night, until the first of July, you will be on a whirlwind. Interviews, introductions to the local media, meeting new teammates and coaches. Everything will be about YOU. The higher you are drafted, the more attention you will receive. If you are drafted onto a poor or struggling team, the excitement will seem great as you will sometimes be seen as "The Savior". Don't be fooled, this attention will not last.

JULY:

For the first few days of July, you will play in your first "mini camp", to prepare for summer league. This is usually 4 days of intense indoctrination into the NBA style of play, terminology and plays sets/coverages. For most, it will seem overwhelming compared to what they were taught in college. Players will quickly learn that NBA coaches are less concerned about fundamentals, and more concerned with you learning the plays and defensive coverages. Some players leave the first few workouts with their head spinning. After a few days of mini camp, summer league arrives. For most this means 10 days in Las Vegas. There will be practices, film sessions, walk throughs and games. As a drafted rookie, you will be showcased and expected to play major minutes in all the games. Your game will be scrutinized, dissected and criticized. Many times you will be going up against hungry, older, stronger and experienced players. Many rookies struggle with this first taste of professional ball. In addition, the media will want to talk to you after games, after shoot arounds and in between games.

MID JULY TO END OF JULY:

You finally get a chance to catch your breath. The team will usually give you the last 2 weeks in July to go home and see family.

AUGUST:

The team will want you to report to their training facility for workouts. This also means finding your housing, moving into a new city and getting acclimated. It also means that for the first time, you have long stretches of time on your hands with nothing to do. You may work out 3-4 hours a day, but after that you are on your own.....and with more money than you have probably ever had. In addition, you are working with a new set of coaches, being pushed by a strength and conditioning coach as never before and meeting with a team nutritionist to set up meal plans.

SEPT.

With the full team reporting after Labor Day, you will finally be around the guys with whom you will spend the season. But first, you must attend a "Rookie Transition Program" in NYC

for all rookies. 3-4 days of listening to presentations on how to avoid being a “knucklehead” in the NBA. When you return, the head coach is now around for the first time to see you play. You will be expected to workout more often and at a higher intensity level than the veterans. Be prepared to play pick up games with your new teammates. And you will be assigned a veteran to become “his rook”. Be prepared to do crazy, ridiculous things...getting donuts, wearing cartoon backpacks, getting drinks....anything that the vets say to do –you do.

OCTOBER:

Training camp starts and you get very little “reps”, especially in scrimmages, unless you go to a team where you are expected to start. Otherwise, be prepared to work harder in pre-practice workouts than in the actual training camp practices. And be prepared to sing in front of the team. And, be prepared to have the coaches on your ass for missing or not knowing assignments. In the pre-season games, it may be the only chance you have to show the coaches what you can do, so you will get minutes. But don’t be too optimistic, because once the season starts, unless you are in the rotation, you will play very little. For the first time in your life, you will be a bench player.

NOVEMBER:

The season starts and you are excited. You have achieved your lifelong goal of being in the NBA. Be prepared for this: Coming to practice 2 hours early to work on the court with the coaches either by yourself or with other low minute players, then to spend 45 minutes with the S/C Coach before practice. Teams rarely practice, so don’t expect to stay in shape and sharp by practicing 5 on 5. You have to keep ready by playing 2 on 2, 3 on 3 and doing cardio with S/C coaches. If there is a practice day, the reps will be taken up by the guys in the rotation, so expect a lot of standing on the sidelines. You will also be expected to come back in the evenings for extra work.

DECEMBER:

More of the same.....not playing, working out by yourself or in small groups and getting used to the NBA travel.

JANUARY:

The “Wall” may hit during this month. The travel, daily workouts and games will add up by this time you will have played more games than an entire college season. At this time, some rookies who don’t play will get frustrated. You may feel as if no one ever talks to you, and you rarely play so you don’t get to show the coaches what you can do. And its usually cold.....

FEBRUARY:

At least you have the All Star break to look forward to. And at the end of Feb. you either are excited for the playoff run, or you look forward to the season ending.

MARCH:

More of the same.....

APRIL:

The Playoffs or going home.....that's what you are faced with. If it's the playoffs, it's the most exciting time you could imagine. They are everything they are hyped up to be....and more. If you are not in the playoffs.....the season finally ends and you can take a breath and reflect on what you need to do to improve. They usually let you take 2-3 weeks off, and then return to work out.

MAY:

Some rookies will be expected to play in the upcoming Summer League, so they must prepare for that. Conditioning, mini camps and getting ready for the 10 day league all over again.

JUNE:

The upcoming draft will be all about the next wave of new guys, and you will be an afterthought. Hang in there.....at least you kinda know the ropes by now.