

HAWKS NOTEBOOK: Improving knee helps Jackson find the range

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So, how much better can Jim Jackson play? Atlantans are about to find out. Jackson is going back to Toronto next week for another treatment on his vastly improved left knee. And he says he will take one more treatment at the Sonorex Therapy Center in February.

"I have two more coming so I might as well take advantage of it," Jackson said Wednesday. The Hawks don't play from Sunday to next Friday so Jackson won't miss any time.

"I'm going up Monday and returning Monday night," he said. "Then when we play up there (Feb. 8) I'll get a treatment."

He said the preferred method of recovery with "shock-wave therapy" is to take treatment and then rehab on machines. Instead, Jackson has been rehabbing by playing almost 40 minutes a night on the court. The results are impressive.

"I think Jim Jackson played better in the last couple of weeks than Isaiah Rider," Milwaukee's George Karl said Tuesday night after Jackson sank 4 of 8 3-pointers and scored 30 against the Bucks.

Jackson's 3-point shooting is one of the great personal success stories of this NBA season. He entered Wednesday's game with Detroit ranked third in the league on 44-of-92 shooting, .478, behind Hubert Davis of Dallas, .500, and Matt Bullard of Houston, .482. Over the past 16 games he is 36-for-68, .529. Overall, Jackson has made 137 of 282 shots over the past 19 games, .486.

This is remarkable for a player, always known as a slasher and who has never shot better than .363 on 3-pointers. That was in 1995-96 at the shorter distance of 22 feet. Now the line is back to 23-9. Entering this season, Jackson's career 3-point shooting average was .332.

"When I looked at our team before the season I saw there would be a lot of double-downs, so I knew there would be a lot of 3-point opportunities," Jackson said.

Hawks top assistant Stan Albeck said rival teams are still a little skeptical that Jackson can do it all season, "but that's fine with us because he's really got the stroke down. It's a set shot for him and he's worked on it. He's one guy who comes to practice to get things done."

Coles over Sugar Bowl loss.

Virginia Tech alumnus Bimbo Coles says he's recovered from his alma mater's loss in the Sugar Bowl.

"I talked to my old roommate this morning and he said Florida State just had too many athletes. They kept bringing in fresh players who were great athletes and we got people hurt. It was overwhelming."

Coles likes Tech's chances next season, though. "We only lose one guy on offense."

Maybe next year he can recoup his losses to teammates who backed FSU.

Wilkens still under the weather

Lenny Wilkens is still recuperating from flu-like symptoms. The Hawks do not expect him at practice today and there is no guarantee he will be able to coach the team Friday night when Toronto visits.

Meanwhile, Albeck is having fun. Before Wednesday's game, he bumped into old Spurs assistant Mo McHone, now with Detroit, who teased him.

Albeck said, "I had a problem with the chalkboard, though. I forgot how to write upside down so the players could read it. Then I had a dilemma about wiping it clean. Lenny takes the sleeve on his \$1,000 suit and rubs it off. I looked at my \$150 suit and I used my hand."

ILLUSTRATIONS/PHOTOS: Man in the middle: Hawks assistant coach Stan Albeck, filling in for ailing Lenny Wilkens, tries to rally the Hawks during a first-half timeout. / W.A. BRIDGES JR. / Staff (Metro edition only)
The Hawks' Dikembe Mutombo (15 points) shoots his baby hook in the first half. / W.A. BRIDGES / Staff

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