

ANALYSIS

Key to Knicks' next jump may be in this class of free-agent 'big's'

BY KYLE STACK
Special to amNewYork

Not even the Knicks' first playoff appearance in seven seasons could mask the team's need for a second viable starting big man.

Despite a 13-win improvement that galvanized their fans in 2010-11, the Knicks know they must address their Achilles heel — the gaping hole next to Amar'e Stoudemire in the frontcourt — to continue their growth.

amNewYork granted anonymity to an NBA Western Conference scout for a telephone interview where he assessed which unrestricted free-agent forwards and centers could best fill the Knicks' needs in the middle.



(PHOTOS: GETTY)

Kwame Brown F, 29, 6-foot-11
Career averages: 6.8 ppg, 5.6 rpg, 0.6 bpg, .492 FG%

2010-11 salary
\$1.2M
with Charlotte

The 2001 draft's No. 1 overall pick has been a bust, but Brown was athletic and capable enough defensively to start 50 games for the Bobcats last season. The scout still isn't impressed. "If he was really, really good, he wouldn't be floating around as much as he has," the scout said of Brown's five teams in 10 seasons. Brown may be able to use his 270-pound frame to score around the basket, but Stoudemire and Carmelo Anthony's inside scoring ability calls for a big man who can stretch the floor with mid-range shooting, the scout said.



Tyson Chandler, C, 28, 7-foot-1
Career averages: 8.3 ppg, 8.8 rpg, 1.3 bpg, .568 FG%

2010-11 salary
\$12.6M
with Dallas

Chandler's ability to potentially cover up defensive lapses from Stoudemire and Anthony may make him the optimal choice for the Knicks — if they can afford him. "He does it for Dirk [Nowitzki] right now," the scout said. Both wiry and powerful, Chandler can rebound, block shots and move his feet as well as any other free-agent big man. The scout noted that Chandler can block and alter shots at the rim as well as defend the pick-and-roll on the perimeter. Ultimately, the Knicks' \$59.6 million in salary commitments for next season — the 2011-12 salary cap is unsettled yet may not exceed last season's \$58.044 million — could doom their chances of signing Chandler.



Samuel Dalembert, C, 30, 6-foot-11
Career averages: 8.1 ppg, 8.3 rpg, 1.9 bpg, .520 FG%

Dalembert's career rebound and block averages are above average, and he's durable, having missed just two games in the past five seasons.

The scout praised Dalembert's ability to play post defense: "He's hard to score on because he's so long," the scout said. Yet the scout described him as an "okay" pick-and-roll defender. That's noteworthy given the propensity of teams to expose the Knicks' poor overall defense by running pick-and-rolls to create mismatches. Dalembert also isn't an accomplished offensive player. "He's not going to post you up," the scout said. "He's going to prefer to shoot jump shots."

2010-11 salary

\$13.4M
with Sacramento

Josh McRoberts, F, 24, 6-foot-10
Career averages: 5.2 ppg, 3.8 rpg, 0.8 bpg, .525 FG%

McRoberts, at 240 pounds, brings an energy and activity level that the scout compared to ex-Knick David Lee, who now plays for Golden State. "I like Josh," the scout said. "He's gotten a heck of a lot better than when he came into the league." The scout described McRoberts as a pure power forward with decent shooting range and a competent defensive game. "He's athletic; he can get better," the scout said. "I think he has upside."

2010-11 salary

\$885K
with Indiana



Report: Yank brass angry at Jeter for absolving Posada

BY ERNIE PALLADINO
Special to amNewYork

Just two days after Jorge Posada pulled himself out of the lineup for no good reason other than a bruised ego, Derek Jeter was in hot water for voicing his support for the 39-year-old catcher turned designated hitter.

According to The New York Times, Jeter participated in a conference call with top Yankees

officials and said that now "everyone is on the same page." According to an ESPN.com report yesterday, the front office had been "surprised and frustrated" by the 36-year-old shortstop's friendly words for a player Jeter regards as a brother during an extended interview Sunday.

"It's not the first time a player asked out of a lineup," Jeter told the New York Daily News. "[Manager] Joe [Girardi] says if you feel

like you need a day, let him know. It's understandable."

He added that Posada owed no apologies to his teammates. Posada thought his own actions — a tirade that reportedly included asking out of the Yankees — egregious enough to apologize to Girardi on Sunday.

Posada did not start what became the Yankees' fifth straight loss, but he did draw a pinch-hit walk against the Red Sox.



Derek Jeter, left, and Jorge Posada (GETTY)

HEADLINES

GOLF

- Tiger: 'No new damage' on leg, likely for mid-June U.S. Open

MLB

- Astros to sell to Houston grp. for \$680M, end McLane era

- La Russa back with Cardinals after treatment for shingles

- Phils RHP Oswalt back from 15-day DL, set to start today

- Reds LHP Chapman (inflamed shoulder) goes in 15-day DL

NBA

- Nets owner Prohorov agrees to head new pro-Kremlin party

NFL

- Court grants stay of lockout injunction, June 3 hearing next

- Fans vote Brady predecessor Bledsoe into Pats Hall of Fame

OLYMPIC SPORTS

- Marathon champ Wanjiru, 24, dies in fall from balcony

TENNIS

- Red-hot No. 2 Djokovic first to qualify for year-end ATP finals



RETWEETS

- "Looks like ruling is a serious blow to the players, w/ judges agreeing w/ owners on Norris-Laguardia. A loss on appeal = devastating for PA." @AlbertBreer (NFL network reporter, explaining that the yesterday's Minnesota court ruling was a blow to the players because it agreed with the owners' anti-injunction arguments)

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TV SPORTS TODAY

CYCLING

VS Tour of California, 5 p.m.

MLB

MY9 Yankees (RHP Ivan Nova, 3-3, 4.70) at Tampa Bay (RHP James Shields, 4-1, 2.08), 7 p.m.

SNY Florida (RHP Ricky Nolasco, 3-0, 3.02) at Mets (LHP Jon Niese, 2-4, 5.03), 7 p.m.

MLBN Game TBD, 8 p.m.

NBA PLAYOFFS

ESPN Oklahoma City at Dallas (tied 0-0), 8 p.m.

NFL PLAYOFFS

VS Tampa Bay (leads 1-0) at Boston, 8 p.m.

SOCCER

FSC English Premier League, Stoke City at Manchester City, 2:30 p.m.

Last night's Yankees-Rays and Marlins-Mets games were too late for this edition.