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# Some aid for NBA absences

Special to amNewYork

Nagging injuries are a fact of NBA life as the calender turns to a new year.



At this point of the season, playoff-bound teams tend to hold out injured players longer than usual in order to ensure a healthier second half. Here are some alternative options for three injured stars, and another one caught up in a special set of circumstances.

#### Kevin Garnett, PF, Boston

Hyperextended right knee

Garnett was inadvertently kicked a couple of times in the same knee that he had surgically repaired last year; the resulting soreness is expected to keep him out until at least Jan. 11.

Replace KG's 15-point average with his teammate, **Glen Davis** (6.5 points, 4.8 rebounds per game; 5 percent Yahoo! ownership), a jump-shooting big man who put up 15 points in 20 minutes on Jan. 2.

Davis isn't known for his rebounding prowess, so owners may prefer



Denver's Carmelo Anthony, who averages 30 points, was expected to miss his third straight game last night. (GETTY)

Miami power forward Udonis Ĥaslem (10.4 ppg, 7.4 rpg; 39 percent Yahoo!).

#### Carmelo Anthony, SF, Denver

Right knee contusion

Melo has said he's unable to fully extend his bruised right knee, which was set to sideline him for a third straight game last night.

Look to Sacramento's Omri Casspi (18.3 ppg, 8 rpg in last six games; 44 percent Yahoo!) or former Fab Fiver Juwan Howard (10 ppg, 7.3 rpg in last seven games; 10 percent Yahoo!), who is replacing a number of injured Portland players.

#### Pau Gasol, PF, L.A. Lakers Strained left hamstring

Gasol missed the season's first 11 games with a strained right hammy that was originally ruled day-today, so skepticism is understandable. Gasol's return from this mild-to-moderate strain could

come anywhere from today to after the weekend, L.A. pivotman Andrew Bynum is an obvious



Gasol

beneficiary of Gasol's absence, but he is widely owned.

For help from outside the Lakers, try Haslem, Milwaukee big man Ersan **Ilyasova** (11.6 ppg, 7.2 rpg; 44 percent Yahoo!) or **Taj Gibson** (8.4 ppg, 6.4 rpg; 7 percent Yahoo!), who is starting for Chicago.

#### Gilbert Arenas, G, Washington

Possible suspension

It's possible Arenas will be suspended by the NBA for bringing guns to the Wizards' arena in violation of the NBA's collective bargaining agreement. Owners should prepare for any length of suspension.

**Kirk Hinrich** (10.5 ppg, 4.2 assists in last 10 games, 33 percent Yahoo!) is a reliable option in place of Arenas, although fellow Wizard Randy Foye (12 ppg in six games from Dec. 19-29; 31 percent Yahoo!) or Casspi have greater potential.

## **Bowden set to lose some wins**

The NCAA upheld its decision yesterday to vacate up to 14 victories from former football coach Bobby Bowden as part of its penalty in an academic cheating scandal.

Bowden retired as major college football's second most winning coach with 389 wins after Florida

State's 33-21 Gator Bowl victory over West Virginia on Jan. 1. Penn State's Joe Paterno, who is still coaching, has 394 wins.

Bowden was unavailable for comment, but university officials said they were surprised and disappointed by the NCAA decision.

"We believed that our ad-

ministration did everything it possibly could to ferret out any and all improprieties in this matter," Florida State athletic director Randy Spetman said.

The school still must certify in which games ineligible players competed to determine the number of wins to be nullified.



Bobby Bowden's 389 wins trail only Penn State coach Joe Paterno.

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