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**New York Knicks 2006–07 Preview**

**By Jake Gambler**

One of the biggest disasters in all of sports in recent history, the Knicks have to prove that their

enormous payroll can win games or face a not–so–good future. With most of their money locked up with selfish swing men new head coach Isiah Thomas will have his hands full trying to fulfill New York fan expectations.

The most talented player on the Knicks is point guard Stephon Marbury. The problem with Marbury is that he is often too selfish for a point guard and usually finishes on losing teams because of his attitude. It is hard to imagine the Knicks succeeding if Isiah can't get Marbury to start playing team basketball. Behind Marbury is young, and short, Nate Robinson. Nate is a good option off the bench and can score points, but his size makes him a serious defensive liability.

At the two position are Jamal Crawford and Steve Francis. Both players are selfish shoot–first players with a lot of talent. Both players also have to find a way to be more effective in scoring. Expect the two to share time unless one of them emerges as a reliable option game in and game out.

The forward positions are filled by Jared Jeffries, Quentin Richardson, David Lee and Channing Frye. Of the four, Frye is the one with the brightest future as a Knick. Channing had a great rookie season, averaging 12.3 points and 5.8 rebounds a game and should expand upon those numbers with a year under his belt. Jeffries was acquired from the Wizards and the Knicks are hoping that he will bring toughness and defense to a team without either.

Finally at the center position is Eddy Curry, who once was referred to as a possible second coming of Shaq. Curry is not one of the brightest players in the league, but should be able to score in the paint enough to help the Knicks stay balanced. Right now, it is a pretty safe bet that the Knicks are regretting trading their picks for him.

The Knicks of 2006 are not much different than 2005, but a new coach, who is coaching for his job, and maybe desperation might help them score more wins. It is hard to see the playoffs for a team with as much selfishness as this one, but they certainly have the talent to do so if they find a way to play together.

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## **The Road More Travelled**

**By C.J. Felton**

### **The Road More Travelled by C.J. Felton**

With Larry Brown, you're never quite sure if he is coming or going. What's almost certain is he isn't staying – for long.

Speculation that Brown might bolt the Pistons to become the Knicks' floor boss next season has been rampant since the beleaguered Lenny Wilkens departed New York last week. And the oft-traveled Brown didn't do much to help convince the management, players, and fans in Detroit that he was staying put. First, he let it slip to the New York media that the Knicks job had always been his dream, and spoke of his great respect for their President, Isiah Thomas. Then on Saturday, with the Knicks in town to play the Pistons, Brown ducked the media both before and after the game, presumably to avoid questions from the gathered New York press he wasn't prepared to answer honestly. Or maybe to see how long and hard the wind kept blowing him east. Either way, he left a credibility fire burning in the Palace that was approaching five alarms.

Why would Brown want to leave what would be any other coach's dream job in the Motor City? He might have the most supportive (and most hands-off) owner in professional sports in Bill Davidson, a GM in Joe Dumars who will give him everything he needs to compete for several more NBA titles, the deepest starting five in the game complemented by an above average bench, almost all devoid of egos, and the adoration of some of the best fans in the league – The Brawl aside. Most coaches in pro sports toil a lifetime to find two or three of those stars align in one job, yet Brown has them all in Detroit. Oh, and there are the other 15 million reasons to stay, the three years left on his contract at \$5 million per season.

The answer to why Brown would even consider taking the Knicks job is very simple. He is a vagabond whose bags are never fully unpacked. What keeps the 64 year old coach moving on is the challenge of picking up a bunch of broken pieces, and putting it back together "the right way". The Knicks certainly present that opportunity. A dysfunctional band of egos, a terrible salary cap mess, hungry fans, and a rabid media all face the next Knicks coach. For a born and raised New Yorker, Brown must look at that situation and hum "If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere". Some coaches are motivated by trying to stay at the top once they get there, building dynasties and legacies (see Phil Jackson, another strong possibility for the Knicks job). In Brown's case, he shows no apparent interest in the record book or how he is perceived once he feels the job is done and heads on down the road. It's the building

process that motivates Brown, and he needs to be looking up at something to fuel his motivation.

Which may explain why he has so often appeared disinterested with this Pistons team. Granted, there have been plenty of personal and professional distractions in Detroit this season. A very short summer left precious little time to recharge the batteries after the Pistons' title run and Brown's frustrating Olympic experience. An unexpected hip surgery following the Pistons' regular season opener turned the coach into a spectator for the first few weeks of the season. And then almost immediately upon his return, The Brawl. But more than anything, Brown just looks and acts like the burner is on low. Every time he has been at or near the top, he's left for the next chance to teach an organization how to do things "the right way" . The Pistons are on top, looking down, and for Larry Brown that means the next

challenge awaits, and it's time to zip up the suitcase. For Brown to end up in New York next season, Dumars would have to either fire him (very unlikely for those other 15 million reasons), or let him out of his contract, which is actually a strong possibility. Dumars has never kept a player that didn't want to play in Detroit, and here's betting he wouldn't treat a coach any differently.

On Monday, Brown finally addressed the Detroit media about the New York coaching situation. He stated, although not very emphatically, that Detroit would be his last pro coaching stop. The problem is, as he said it, he didn't look the camera in the eye, he stared at his feet. It's awfully hard to tell how sincere a guy is when you can't look into his eyes. On the other hand, maybe he was just checking to see if there was enough tread on his soles to take him to New York?

C.J. Felton is an NBA writer who writes for <http://www.hoopsavenue.com>



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