

# The Star-Ledger

## Knicks: Brown changing direction by shortening rotation

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

**MATT BEARDMORE**  
For the Star-Ledger

GREENBURGH, N.Y. -- The man with eight NBA coaching stops and repeated promises of team loyalty has apparently decided on employing some continuity.

Less than 24 hours after watching his team drop a demoralizing 112-92 decision to Milwaukee, and describing his players' performance as the "worst effort in terms of hustle and effort," Knicks coach Larry Brown revealed after yesterday's practice that his carousel of 14 different starting lineups in 20 games has come to a grinding halt.

Or so he says.

"I'm going to shorten the rotation a little bit so guys will know when they're going to play," Brown said. "I've got a better feel of who should play together.

"I hope by doing that we see a little better continuity at both ends."

This revelation represents a significant change in philosophy from the first quarter of the season, when Brown constantly juggled the inactive list, and sent in at least 11 players in 17 of the first 20 games. The 84-79 loss to the Los Angeles Clippers last Wednesday marked the first game this season in which only nine Knicks saw action.

Brown said this new rotation will include four guards, three to four centers and two small forwards. Stephon Marbury and Quentin Richardson, who Brown said will ideally not play at small forward, appear locked into the starting backcourt slots, with Nate Robinson and Jamal Crawford filling in off the bench.

"They seem to play well together," Brown said of Robinson and Crawford.

Newcomer Qyntel Woods seems to be a Brown favorite at small forward. Woods signed with Knicks on Dec. 6 as a free agent.

"I don't think he's in real good shape, I think he doesn't know exactly what we're trying to do, but I love his athleticism," Brown said. "He really wants to learn, he can shoot the ball. I think he was a first-round pick for a reason."

Woods, whom the Portland Trail Blazers selected with the 21st pick in 2002, appeared in his first game as a Knicks on Monday against the Bucks. He had five points in seven minutes.

Trevor Ariza will also see minutes at the three-spot, but for now, will not break into the starting lineup.

"I love Trevor's heart," Brown said. "He's not ready, in my mind, to be a starter in this league. But he comes to practice every day, he gets better every day."

That leaves Jerome James, Malik Rose, Antonio Davis, Jackie Butler, Maurice Taylor and David Lee fighting for time at the power forward and center positions. Eddy Curry and rookie Channing Frye will remain fixtures in this new rotation.

Although Brown is looking forward to employing this new rotation for the final 62 games of the season, the team did take a step backward yesterday.

"Today was like training camp," Brown said. "We're trying to teach them how to screen, how to block out. ... "I still think there's a lot of things as a staff we can't take for granted. If we're struggling with something, obviously we haven't drilled it enough."

The team did not watch film of Monday's loss and practiced for only about one hour and 45 minutes, but according to Frye, the intensity was high and his teammates were visibly irritated by their sub-par effort against the Bucks.

"Everybody was angry and upset and a lot of fights almost broke out," Frye said. "But that's good, it shows people care."

Notes: Frye got the best of 2005 No. 1 draft pick Andrew Bogut on Monday, outscoring the Aussie 30-4, but the Knicks' rookie will have his hands full tonight as last year's No. 1 overall pick, Dwight Howard, hits the Garden floor. "He's a good player, he works hard, he's a good rebounder," Frye said. "I'm not going to take the challenge on an individual basis."...

Curry did not practice because of flu-like symptoms. The first-year Knick scored 15 points on 7-of-12 shooting against Milwaukee, and is averaging 16.7 points and 7.3 rebounds during the team's current three-game losing streak.... Penny Hardaway, inactive for Monday's game against Milwaukee, did not practice because of right knee tendinitis. He was scheduled for an MRI yesterday.