



Sambo's Boys

The Rise and Fall of the New Orleans Jazz, 1974–79

THOMAS AIELLO[†]
Valdosta State University

The New Orleans Jazz was founded by California restaurant owner Sam Battistone, whose chain of restaurants known as Sambo's featured racist iconography in its establishments. Race too undoubtedly played a role in the demise of the Jazz, as it had in the dismantling of the Atlanta Hawks after its move from St. Louis, but such was not the team's principal failing. Neither had race been the principal failing of the city's American Basketball Association (ABA) predecessor, the Buccaneers. Ultimately, the Jazz was shaped by the histories of the Deep South's first National Basketball Association team and its first ABA team. Racism and the foreignness of a "black sport" like professional basketball, then, combined with an overexuberant civic ideal that sought a place for New Orleans in the burgeoning Sunbelt by bringing in professional sports to bolster a reputation that the city was not ready to embrace.

KEYWORDS: basketball, race, South, Sunbelt

Sam Battistone was the son of Italian immigrants, coal miners who wanted a better life for their son. By the 1930s, Battistone had made good, running a diner in downtown Santa Barbara, California, but he saw greater opportunity. He teamed with partner Newell Bohnett to create a new restaurant chain in 1957. Taking Battistone's first name and the first part of Bohnett's last, the pair named their new business Sambo's and decorated it with

[†]All correspondence to taiello@valdosta.edu

pictures based on Helen Bannerman's 1899 *The Story of Little Black Sambo*. Menu items were named after characters in the story, and nothing was done to hide the inherent racism in such depictions. Instead, the restaurant played them up. From that first restaurant in Santa Barbara came another in Sacramento. Battistone's son, Sam Battistone Jr. led much of the expansion. Two years later, there were six restaurants in California. By 1963, there were twenty on the West Coast. A decade later, in 1972, there were 257 across the country and hundreds more by 1974.¹

In each new restaurant, Sambo iconography adorned the walls and menus, and as those restaurants spread across the South in the 1960s and 1970s, a region still in the grips of a civil rights movement and often offended by the racist depictions hovering over their pancakes and coffee, the restaurants seemed doomed to eventual failure, an American past of overt racism and capitalist overexpansion playing on the eventual success of the franchise, which would ultimately declare bankruptcy in 1982. When Battistone Jr. decided to finance a professional basketball team and place it in New Orleans, part of that evolving Sunbelt South, the team he created would ultimately suffer the same fate in the region as did his restaurant chain, the history of racism in the southern reception of professional basketball and the National Basketball Association's (NBA) expansion into a market that had proven unready for the sport ultimately dooming the franchise known, if briefly, as the New Orleans Jazz.

Race undoubtedly played a role in the demise of the Jazz, as it had in the dismantling of the Atlanta Hawks after its move from St. Louis, but such was not the team's principal failing. Neither had race been the principal failing of the city's American Basketball Association (ABA) predecessor, the Buccaneers, and, ultimately, the Jazz were shaped by the histories of the Deep South's first NBA team and its first ABA team. Racism and the foreignness of a "black sport" like professional basketball, then, combined with an overexuberant civic ideal that sought a place for New Orleans in the burgeoning Sunbelt by bringing in professional sports to bolster a reputation that the city was not ready to embrace. It was largely an overreach in an attempt to erase the reputation of a racist past that combined with the real residue of that racism to become the final curtain of the city's first NBA experiment. That its first act was financed by a California Mormon with no intention of coming to the South and an infamously racist restaurant chain did not portend the last-act success that the team and the city hoped to achieve.

The Jazz would have two principal predecessors: the New Orleans Buccaneers, the first major professional basketball team in the city, and the Atlanta Hawks, the first NBA team in the Deep South. The driving force behind the creation of the Buccaneers was, of all people, former singer and future New York shock-television host Morton Downey Jr. Downey would live in New Orleans for less than two years, arriving in early 1966 and leaving in late 1967, but his impact would be substantial. He would in his short time in the city become the driving force behind the creation of the ABA's Buccaneers, and, despite his later demagoguery, he would also ensure that the team's original incarnation would develop without concern for the racist whims of the team's potential fans. Such was not the case, for example, in nearby Atlanta, when that city adopted the NBA's Hawks in 1968. But Downey's civic activism, despite his being a carpetbagging northerner, would ultimately develop the Sunbelt city's professional sports reputation and lay the groundwork

for its future professional basketball endeavors and the broader South's future professional basketball franchises; and precisely because he was a carpetbagger, it would do so without regard to race. Still, the team was largely unsuccessful at the box office and would only survive in the city for three seasons before moving to Memphis.

The St. Louis Hawks NBA franchise moved to Atlanta in 1968 to little fanfare, following as it did the arrival of the city's baseball and football franchises, despite the fact that the NBA was a more established, reputable professional organization than the former Buccaneers' ABA. As Jim Crow restrictions fell in the wake of civil rights legislation and as Sunbelt business imperatives began motivating Atlanta's civic boosters, professional sports teams found an eager host in Georgia. The NBA, however, was a black league appearing in the Deep South for the first time, and its reception in Atlanta was cool at best. Management responded by dismantling a highly successful and largely black team and replacing it with a less successful but more marketable white one. In this case, the economics of the South actually worked against the economics of the Sunbelt. A business designed to be a lucrative metropolitan status symbol eroded under the racial weight placed on it by the citizens who made that status symbol possible. Georgia was not hostile to the Hawks in any sustained way, but the state's lethargy was unequivocally racial and carried racial consequences that bled beyond the bounds of sports. Those consequences were most obvious in 1970, when management drafted white southern star Pete Maravich against the coach's wishes after spurning the team's black star Lenny Wilkens for wanting a modest raise in his salary. The move forced the resignation of longtime general manager Marty Blake, but ownership saw Maravich as "The Great White Hope," a potential draw to sell pro basketball in the South, so the Hawks almost bankrupted the team to give Maravich a \$1.5 million, five-year contract. The team paid him \$400,000 more than Bob Lanier, who had been drafted number one overall, and \$500,000 more than Lew Alcindor (the future Kareem Abdul-Jabar), who had been drafted first the previous season.²

Thus, the legacy of professional basketball in New Orleans was one that did not portend success. The city's first experiment in the game lasted only three seasons because of a lack of interest, and the region's first experiment with the NBA demonstrated a real vulnerability to racial politics, even as civic boosters hoped to capitalize on Sunbelt business politics. New Orleans was not even among the top thirty-five American media outlets, making it an unlikely choice for an NBA franchise. Still, stung by the loss of the Buccaneers and hoping to compete with rival Atlanta, civic boosters pushed for a new franchise in the NBA. They had, for example, done the same in the realm of professional football. Two months prior to the announcement of the city's ABA Buccaneers franchise, the National Football League (NFL) granted New Orleans a franchise, the result of boosterism in response to the newly formed Atlanta Falcons, a boosterism that manifested itself most notably in the aid of Congressman Hale Boggs of New Orleans and Senator Russell Long in spiriting NFL antitrust legislation through Congress in a virtual quid pro quo with commissioner Pete Rozelle.³

Now the city would similarly attempt to catch up with Atlanta in professional basketball. But the game's association with blackness was a concern. In February 1966, for example, *Sport* magazine published one of its most controversial articles, an investigation into NBA executives' fears about race. Journalist John Devaney delved into what he called

“pro basketball’s hidden fear.” The exposé began with a provocative question by Howard Cosell to Wilt Chamberlain. “Are we reaching the point,” Cosell asked in a WABC radio interview, “where perhaps there are too many Negro players in the National Basketball Association for box office appeal?” It was an intentionally provocative question from an intentionally provocative self-promoter, but Chamberlain’s answer was even more surprising: “I definitely think that probably we have.”⁴

Seven of the ten starters in the association’s 1965 All-Star Game, for example, were black. “Nobody wants to say anything, but of course the owners are worried,” admitted one NBA coach. “How are you going to draw with eleven colored players on your team?” It was a worrisome question to many in the association. Almost half the association’s players, two-thirds of the starters, and three-quarters of the all-stars were African American, in a league where fans were close to the players and where those players wore no hats or helmets, far more visible than in any other professional league. The problem, argued Devaney, was “race prejudice,” and it was everywhere. “The fear of NBA owners, the question that worries them is: in a society that is 90 percent white, is this prejudice—this ability of some white spectators to identify with Negro athletes—deep enough and widespread enough to hold back NBA growth?”⁵

One of the certain victims of the racial worry in the NBA was the black fringe player. One NBA official explained that “up to 1960 or so, you kept a colored player as your ninth or tenth man. You had to pay him only \$6500 or so, a lot less than you had to pay a white boy. But not anymore. Now the tenth and 11th players are white boys, to balance out the squad.” Teams replaced white players with white players, black players with black players, keeping a racial consistency that would maintain fan expectations. Stories were myriad of team executives being told by management to draft white players to mollify a fan base, ultimately missing out on black players who would become stars. So too were the stories of marginal black players losing jobs at the end of an NBA team bench.⁶

Such was, so the rumors went, the reason rosters had expanded to eleven players in 1963. “Times have changed—for the better—but prejudice did not die with the Civil Rights Act of 1964,” wrote Devaney. “The NBA knows it is facing a problem.” Again a solution seemed to be expansion, but this time with more teams, rather than more players on the end of the bench. “The thinking is that at least 50 percent of these new jobs would be filled by Negroes, but others would be taken by whites who otherwise would be shut out of the NBA.” In addition, expansion would allow the association to divide into four divisions, “giving better balance and more winners. And winners usually do well at the box office.”⁷

The area hungriest for expansion teams, for winners, and for more white players was the Sunbelt South. Thus, in early March 1974, Baton Rouge lawyer Sheldon Beychok, a former executive counsel to Governor Edwin Edwards, and Beverly Hills lawyer and agent Fred Rosenfeld met with the NBA’s expansion committee in Chicago as part of the Battistone retinue to pitch New Orleans as an NBA city. “I am very, very optimistic and quite confident all will go well,” said Beychok. Battistone, for his part, had never built a restaurant in the city. Rosenfeld explained that the group chose New Orleans after commissioning a study by the Stanford Research Institute on the best-possible places for a team. “The key factors in convincing us New Orleans was a good choice was the survey’s,” he said. “It pointed to

the Superdome as a drawing attraction and pointed to the success of sports in other domed stadiums.”⁸

And the Superdome worked. A nine-person ownership group won the NBA's eighteenth franchise for New Orleans for \$6.15 million. Joining Battistone, Rosenfeld, and Beychok were Andrew Martin, chair of Louisiana's state mineral board; Baton Rouge businessmen Jules LeBlanc and J. J. McKernan; California businessmen Jerrold Rabin and Fred H. Miller; and Biloxi's Robert Bell. The association established an expansion draft for the new team and planned to include it for the new season beginning in October. “We expect to move very quickly now,” said Rosenfeld.⁹ At a press conference the following day, he promised a competitive team: “If we have proper management and coaching and can draft the kind of people you would employ in any of your businesses, I think we will be competitive.”¹⁰

The windfall raised the expectations of the city. The *States-Item's* Scott Slonim was confident after the NBA acquisition that “the city is about to embark on what in all probability will be its last baseball season without a major league franchise to call its own.” While major league baseball never materialized in New Orleans, Slonim's surety spoke to the city's confidence in its Sunbelt legitimacy. “You would have to describe the first local exposure of Fred Rosenfeld,” said Peter Finney, “as impressive.”¹¹

While there was some optimism in response to the new franchise, there was also worry. Maurice Stern was a former executive with the Buccaneers and knew what fan apathy looked like. And he knew that it had not gone away. “I know the NBA has a lot of prestige to it,” he claimed, “but I was disappointed that when we had UCLA and North Carolina State here in the Sugar Bowl [basketball tournament], and the Auditorium was half empty.” Such was not to say that Stern did not want to see the new professional team succeed: “New Orleans deserves a franchise. I hope it makes it. I'm certainly going to be behind them.” The massive new stadium known as the Superdome, built principally for the city's NFL franchise, would surely help. “They will have a better location and better parking than we [the Buccaneers] had. That worked against us. They don't have that to worry about,” Stern said, referring to cramped venues like Loyola University's Field House and the city's downtown Municipal Auditorium. Ben Levy, executive director of the Superdome Commission, was just as enthusiastic. So too was University of New Orleans head coach Ron Greene. Both of them pointed to the Dome as the most important difference for the city's second chance at pro basketball.¹²

The *Louisiana Weekly*, New Orleans's black newspaper, diligently reported on the creation of the expansion franchise. “The reason—?” sports editor Jim Hall asked. “The Louisiana Superdome is the answer.” That too was a potential problem for black New Orleans. In the same column, Hall announced, “It is very important that all races regardless of color, be a part of the working force within the Dome.” Hall was overawed by the Superdome, just as was everyone else, sure that, with the new stadium, “New Orleans will start its big move towards becoming a big time sports center.” But the legacy of the Buccaneers was still close by. No matter what big events or professional sports the Dome attracted, “it is the general public in the New Orleans Area and elsewhere that will have to support ‘em.”¹³

The Superdome was a key component to the city's NBA offer, though it would not be open until the team's second season. The Superdome always came with controversy. The day after the NBA's New Orleans announcement, owners held a public press conference in

the city. Meanwhile, state senator Nat G. Kiefer, head of a legislative committee charged with investigating the Dome's problematic construction, fraught as it was with lengthy delays and rumors of government corruption, admitted that he was leading a group of "local investors" who were planning on buying a minority stake in the team. "I do not want to give the wrong impression, it is not a firmed-up deal where the money has been put up. But it is a group of men willing to do it," he said. "We've had, I guess, three or four meetings." To make the transaction sound even shadier, Kiefer promised the *Times-Picayune* reporter to whom he was speaking, "If we had the money in the bank, I would tell you exactly who it is [in the investment group]. But I can tell you this, you know, it is in the business community." Kiefer had recently charged, as head of his Superdome investigatory committee, that the 1971 state legislature had been "misled" by a bond ceiling placed on Dome financing. A month later, he took credit for the bond ceiling measure and claimed that it saved the stadium. Such was the nature of Louisiana politics and the danger of including politicians with a vested interest in the Superdome and a track record of duplicity as part of the team's ownership group.¹⁴

It was a relationship made only more problematic two days later when the team provided the Superdome Commission a letter of intent for a ten-year lease, promising the venue \$2,000 per game or 8 percent of gross ticket sales for the first five seasons, that number rising to 10 percent for the second five. The Superdome would also retain all income from concessions, parking, and stadium advertising, dramatically limiting the team's ability to generate revenue. The franchise would also pay for all ticket sellers and takers, ushers, security, cleaning staff, scoreboard operators, and any other game employees, with an additional 5 percent on top of those costs as an administrative fee to the Superdome. "We don't know what the NBA franchise will charge for tickets or what they will have in paid attendance," said Ben Levy, but the deal would ensure that the venue would still turn a profit from the team's games. He explained that the new stadium would have 18,000 "excellent seats" and 35,000 "really acceptable seats" for basketball, numbers beyond what any other NBA venue held or any other NBA team averaged. The deal did not seem to take any lessons from the Buccaneers' struggles; nor did it augur well for the new team's success. It was a deal, more than anything else, designed to benefit the Superdome.¹⁵

The team's first season prior to the Dome's completion would mimic that of the former Buccaneers. Municipal Auditorium manager Richie Dixon "is licking his chops at the \$1900 to \$2000 rental per night the auditorium will reap" from the new team. Municipal's more modest but realistic capacity was 8,000, with 7,500 "good seats." The team would play most of its games in Municipal and its others at Loyola's Fieldhouse, which had hosted the Buccaneers in the decade prior.¹⁶

"Professional basketball is coming to New Orleans and will be played in Loyola's Fieldhouse," the school's newspaper reported. "Sound like a seven year old announcement of the now forgotten New Orleans Buccaneers of the American Basketball Association?" The *Maroon* assured its readers that it was not. The new team, "as yet unnamed," would play at the Fieldhouse several times in January and February. "We're just a backup facility," explained Loyola's intramural director. Municipal Auditorium would be the team's regular pre-Superdome home, the team moving to the university "when they have a conflict because of Mardi Gras balls or something."¹⁷

The team's broadcaster, Rodney "Hot Rod" Hundley, was unimpressed. The Fieldhouse "had a tin roof and it sounded like machine gun fire when it rained," he later remembered. "The court was on a stage, and they had a net around the court to keep players from falling off the stage. I announced games from an orchestra pit on the side of the court." Even though the setup allowed for only several thousand fans, "we still couldn't sell the games out."¹⁸ It was a problem with which the Buccaneers had been very familiar. The *Maroon* sports editor wondered if the team could survive, recalling the city's failed ABA experiment: "In one game, in fact, the players, coaches and officials outnumbered the fans." Still, the author argued, this new team would soon occupy the Superdome, a far superior facility to Loyola's "damp, heatless concrete," and it would do so in the NBA, a more established league with a reputation that would better draw fans.¹⁹

To fill Municipal Auditorium and Loyola's Fieldhouse, much less the Superdome, team executives realized that they needed players that Louisiana wanted to see—or at least *a* player. "The demise of the ABA Buccaneers is a tombstone which marks the fact that a successful franchise is more than winning basketball," warned the *Times-Picayune's* Larry McMillen. "Winning helps, but a successful ticket selling job is the key." To that end, they eyed the Great White Hope that had come to Atlanta four years prior from Louisiana State University (LSU). "I told Pistol that he should leave Atlanta and go to New Orleans," said the Knicks' Walt Frazier. "I told him he could be a king there, but he says he doesn't think the NBA will go over in New Orleans."²⁰ That did not stop New Orleans from courting him and from offering Atlanta much of its future for the privilege. "We didn't have the population base that could support forty-one home games—unless we had something special," team vice president Gary Mendelson explained. "Pete Maravich was that specialness. We were bringing home the favorite son. He became a promotional and marketing imperative."²¹

Maravich's tenure in Atlanta had been a mix of success and failure. Most recently, however, he had experienced failure. The previous season, the Hawks missed the playoffs, and Maravich was suspended briefly for a verbal altercation with Atlanta coach Cotton Fitzsimmons. He had even discussed an early retirement after his current contract ended, feeling that the organization had scapegoated him for the team's poor performance. He was, at the very least, a player with baggage, and leveraging the team's future drafts for such a player simply could not have happened if Pete was not a white star from LSU.²²

Meanwhile, a deal could only happen if Maravich, who had a no-trade clause in his contract, agreed to it, and the curmudgeonly star refused to commit, though he clearly did not want to remain in Atlanta. "I won't make any comment at all," he said, "until I talk with my attorneys and others concerned." But "I really can't tolerate any more deceit and deception on the part of the [Atlanta] coach and present administration." Meanwhile, Jimmy Jones, a black guard from Utah's ABA Stars and a New Orleans native, wanted desperately to return to his new hometown team and publicly lobbied for the opportunity. "It's understandable that New Orleans would want him," wondered one NBA coach, referring to the team's desire for Maravich. "But I wouldn't think they would want to sink their future in him. He will put people in the stands, but a guard like Jones will put 'Ws' in the standings." Jones was at the time of those late April discussions leading his Utah

team, based in Salt Lake City, past the defending champion Indiana Pacers in the ABA's Western Division playoffs.²³

Ultimately, Maravich's frustration with Atlanta management led him to approve the deal and sign with New Orleans, making him the franchise's first player, the Great White Hope, the prodigal son returning to Louisiana to resurrect professional basketball in the state. In the words of biographer Mark Kriegel, "Even more than a championship, the erstwhile child star wanted to feel loved again."²⁴ He arrived in early in May, but his price tag shocked many. The *Times-Picayune's* Will Peneguy claimed that the new franchise "turned a \$3 phone call in early March into one of the most expensive investments in professional sports." The NBA's other Deep South team, the team that had originally overspent on Maravich, received the New Orleans first-round draft selections for 1974 and 1975, its second-round selections for 1975 and 1976, the second and third picks in the New Orleans expansion draft, and the right to switch first-round selections in 1976 and 1977. By that time, co-owner Fred Rosenfeld argued in defense of the lopsided deal; "I honestly feel we'll be ahead of the Hawks in the standings." There was no specific reason for such optimism, but both sides seemed happy with the deal. "If New Orleans called the Knicks and offered the same deal for Walt Frazier," explained Atlanta general manager Pat Williams, selling his own city on the loss of its white star, "I'd have to feel the Knicks would have jumped at the deal."²⁵

Fans seemed to agree, claiming that the price was "way too much to pay for anybody." The *Times-Picayune's* Dave Legarde lampooned the deal as the "Louisiana Purchase II." Perhaps "it wasn't as big as its 1815 [*sic*] predecessor, when the United States stole most of the South and Midwest from France for a meager \$15 million, but the reactionaries feel that despite the growing problems of present day gun legislation, New Orleans paid an exorbitant price for its 'Pistol.'" Or, the team hadn't paid a price; it had paid a "ransom fee." Such was not the impression that team management was hoping to make on entering the New Orleans market. Peneguy called Rosenfeld "the greatest thing to happen to the city of Atlanta since Sherman left town."²⁶

The Maravich deal seemed a bridge too far for the *Louisiana Weekly's* Jim Hall, as the team was prepared to sacrifice at least two first-round draft choices for the Great White Hope. "The Saints made a mistake like this, prior to their maiden season," wrote Hall, referring to the city's NFL franchise, "and they paid for it." When the deal was eventually complete, Hall was no more encouraged. "Bartender, give us a double shot of Wild Turkey, we need it after last week's deal, which could be one of the most expensive investments in professional sports."²⁷

Peter Finney had always been an enthusiastic supporter of Maravich, but even he was skeptical. "My first impression—and my second—is the price was too high." But he also questioned the deal for Atlanta, citing letters from angry fans who had lost their Great White Hope. "I find it incredible to read the Hawks are thinking of trading Maravich," went one such missive. "I had never been to a professional basketball game until he came to Atlanta, but, after seeing him play, it became my favorite sport."²⁸

Trading prominent draft choices, however, was deadly to an expansion team, as first-round picks New Orleans traded for Maravich ultimately became David Thompson and Alex English. In addition, vice president Mendelson, who had been an agent for Gail

Goodrich, convinced the team to trade a future first-round selection to the Los Angeles Lakers for his former charge. The Jazz got a thirty-three-year-old Goodrich, and the Lakers got a draft choice that ultimately became Magic Johnson. "They were so far in the hole," explained Hundley, "they were never going to get out."²⁹

It was the story of the white South in microcosm, sacrificing economic self-interest for the sake of white supremacy, in this case the supposed supremacy of one white player who the team hoped would bring revenue to compensate for the mismanaged deal. It was also the story of white southern pro basketball in microcosm, as the Hawks had made a similar move in signing Maravich out of college. Thus, in an effort to right the wrongs of the ABA's Buccaneers, the new NBA team secured a permanent though overly expensive venue and a permanent though overly expensive white star (initially the only player on the team), forgetting that it was ultimately expenses that doomed its predecessor.³⁰

After securing Maravich, the team began shoring up its front office, hiring executives in various positions, including fellow LSU alums Pat Screen, former quarterback for the football team, and Bud Johnson, the school's sports information director. The team's coach would also be a Louisiana product, Scotty Robertson, a former coach at Byrd High School in Shreveport and current coach at Louisiana Tech. It was not exactly a high-profile hire, but it was a Louisiana hire, Rosenfeld arguing that "we were not going to get" Red Holtzman or Bill Sharman.³¹ They could have acquired someone with NBA experience, however, but team executives were aware of their absentee status and wanted to make local connections where they could, even at the expense of qualifications and experience.

Rosenfeld would have loved to hire Sharman, who had coached the Lakers to the team's first NBA championship. He had represented Lakers Pat Riley, Gail Goodrich, and Elgin Baylor. Battistone was a vocal Lakers fan. The two were brought together for an expansion bid by Lakers scout Bill Bertka. "The expansion team," explained *Los Angeles Times* sports reporter Mark Heisler, "was like a Cub Scout pack to the Lakers Eagle Scouts." Bertka would ultimately become the first Jazz general manager, hiring, among others, Elgin Baylor, who had during his career stood against racism and segregation, particularly in the South, as assistant coach.³²

The team hired another former Laker, Hot Rod Hundley, as the team's broadcaster. A frustrated Hundley, however, was unimpressed with "the filthiest city I had ever seen." The team's organization was not much better. Hundley explained that the team had hired former LSU quarterback Pat Screen as a vice president largely because of his New Orleans connections rather than any legitimate knowledge about basketball. "That's the way things were when the Jazz started out." Battistone and others never actually moved to the city, and the vacuum that absenteeism created meant chaos at the top of the organization, as funds quickly dwindled and Battistone relied on his father's money to supplement the team's needs. The team was "run in those days like everyone was on vacation," said Hundley. "I knew right away that the Jazz were doomed in New Orleans."³³

The team established its offices in room 617 at the Braniff Place Hotel on Canal Street.³⁴ That became home base for the team's expansion draft. Each existing franchise was allowed to protect seven players, and New Orleans was able to choose from the rest of their rosters. They began by choosing white center Dennis Awtrey from the Chicago Bulls, a player known less for his play and more for infamously punching Kareem Abdul-Jabar on national

television. After making two picks for Atlanta as part of the Maravich deal, the team then selected Jim Barnett, white guard from Golden State. The team's fourth and fifth picks were John Block and Barry Clemens, another white center and white guard, respectively. In between those pairs, New Orleans selected Walt Bellamy from Atlanta, a black player with a history of playing for a southern team, who was prepared to deal with the racial mores that came with being in the South. Thus, the first six members of the new team included five white players, one of whom was from LSU and another who was notorious for assaulting a Black Muslim, and a black player from Atlanta. While such was clearly designed as part of "a successful ticket selling job," in the words of the *Times-Picayune*, the problem with the strategy was that Bellamy and Maravich decidedly did not get along, one of the points of friction that caused the LSU star to want out of Atlanta. The majority of the rest of the team's picks were less prominent black players to fill the roster at a discount, but the play to race as a function of fan support had clearly been a lesson hard-learned from the survival of the Hawks and the failure of the Buccaneers. And that identity-politics-as-draft-strategy left at least the white parts of the city with optimism. If Maravich played well and the draft choices worked out, the *Times-Picayune* predicted, "our nameless professional basketball team might get off on the right foot."³⁵

The team had no first-round choice in the NBA's 1974 collegiate draft, after sacrificing it for Maravich, but its first pick, taking place in the second round, was Aaron James, a New Orleans native who played at Grambling and was the leading scorer in the NCAA's small-college division. It was also during the draft that Scott Robertson was officially announced as the team's coach. "So what's a man who coached high school teams at Rodessa, La., doing in a place like the NBA?" asked *Times-Picayune* sports editor Bob Roesler. "Was it like a barefoot country boy visiting New York for the first time?"³⁶

A week later, in early June, the barefoot country boy's team had a name; as the winner of a citywide naming contest, the Jazz officially became the nickname, chosen by a local stockbroker, accompanying purple, gold, and green colors, the colors of Mardi Gras. Jazz was "a great art form which belongs to New Orleans and its rich history," Rosenfeld explained. "Jazz can be defined as 'collective improvisation,' and that would also be an appropriate description of NBA basketball at its best."³⁷

Later that month, the NBA held its annual meetings in New Orleans, which highlighted one of the city's biggest hindrances to NBA success: the Mardi Gras season that occupied Municipal Auditorium for a month during the season and made home games virtually impossible for the Jazz. Added to the various frustrations, Walt Bellamy, whom the Jazz had acquired from Atlanta, retired in exasperation with his new team. "New Orleans surely didn't want my services but because of the Pete Maravich deal they had to take me," said Bellamy, who was part of the friction with Maravich in Atlanta. "It was all a big con game on the part of the Hawks."³⁸

There was, however, a distinct affinity between the Jazz and the Hawks. "What we face in the Southeast is a tremendous marketing process," explained Atlanta general manager Pat Williams, "one of education." Knowing that the two teams were in similar situations, Williams advised, "Time and patience are important, and I think those are the most important factors for the New Orleans fans to remember. I won't say that pro basketball can become the vital influence in the Southeast that football is, but it can take its rightful place."³⁹

The original plan was for the Jazz to move into the Superdome halfway through the team's first season, but further construction and financing delays had, by August, dismantled that plan. As architects testified in front of a special legislative commission, the Jazz stewed. "I have been assured on four different occasions by Dome contractors that basketball could be played in the stadium by February 1," said Rosenfeld. "We are the only tenants the Dome has. The commission has an obligation to us." But the commission did not feel that obligation. New Orleans mayor Moon Landrieu chaired the state's Superdome Commission, and he publicly doubted a commission vote that would approve the Jazz's playing in the Superdome during its inaugural season.⁴⁰

In September, the team officially announced the hiring of Elgin Baylor as assistant coach, the same Elgin Baylor who had often stood on the barricade at the intersection of professional basketball and civil rights. "Basketball is my life," Baylor explained. "I have been offered several head coaching jobs—some in the NBA, the ABA and in college—but this is the first organization that has really impressed me."⁴¹ Such is not to say that Baylor had compromised his racial principles in any way. He hated his owner's restaurant chain and told Battistone that he "took a baseball bat" to a Sambo's sign in Washington, DC. "I knocked that damn thing down." Baylor's hire was the result of the ownership's undisguised Lakers' fandom and the real need for coaching experience after the hiring of Scotty Robertson, but the team would do its best to emphasize Baylor's basketball acumen over and against his racial stands.⁴²

The Jazz began its inaugural season on a four-game road trip before returning to Municipal Auditorium. The team lost all of its road games, and it lost its home opener, as well, starting the season 0–5. The first home game featured Dejan's Olympia Brass Band and a performance by trumpet player Al Hirt. Mayor Moon Landrieu and Commissioner Walter Kennedy were also in attendance. Announced attendance at that first contest was 6,450, a respectable showing for a stadium that seated 8,000 but a portent of problems to come when the team moved to an arena that held tens of thousands.⁴³

The poor attendance did not improve as the Jazz struggled through a 23–59 season. Scotty Robertson lasted fifteen games, fired after a 1–14 start, replaced by Butch Van Breda Kolff, "a hard-drinking, cigar-chomping ex-Marine," according to the *Times-Picayune*. On top of everything else, despite Maravich's flamboyant play, he "struggled emotionally and physically with knee injuries, alcohol, and psychological problems," none helped by his return to Louisiana. The team's problems were also substantial. The Jazz signed a deal with local television channel WDSU to broadcast ten of the Jazz away games. The telecasts that first season, however, demonstrated the team's marketing problem. Bud Johnson, the team's public relations director, remembered the first game as being heavy on public service announcements and light on paying advertisements. "All the diseases were represented: the Cancer Society, American Heart Association, leukemia. But there was not one commercial minute in that telecast. That's how much interest there was in pro basketball."⁴⁴

The team's struggles translated to financial losses of between 1.5 and two million dollars, only exacerbating the difficulty of owners in making the team's \$800,000 annual payment to cover its \$6.1 million expansion fee. Thus, the team petitioned the association in April 1975 to make its annual payment in installments. Rumors had circulated that the team was going to request that the association take over the operation of the franchise as a result of

its financial problems, but Jazz executives denied the claim, banking on a new installment plan and the opening of the Superdome for the 1975–76 season. “In the best tradition of Mark Twain,” Peneguy reported, “claims of the financial death of the New Orleans Jazz have been exaggerated. The patient may have been suffering but is by no means dead.”⁴⁵

To alleviate the massive financial burden, the team decided to create a public investment program to generate revenue from locals, offering a 25 percent ownership stake in the Jazz in \$100 increments, hoping to raise \$2.5 million. Executives were quick to assure the public that the stock offer was not a “life or death proposition” for the team but simultaneously admitted that “investment should not be made with the idea of a fast financial return.” Instead, the sale “should be considered a fun investment,” said Lee Reid, the program’s coordinator. “It’s good for kids. It’s fun to go down there and say, ‘That’s my team down there.’”⁴⁶ The sale was a stopgap measure at best and could never raise the desired amount considering that the team could not draw seven thousand fans to home games. “Investment in basketball is not what I would call a wise stock market move,” Mendelson reflected after the gimmick’s failure. “It’s a civic-support, emotional-support type of investment.” The only way to make such an investment successful was to have strong civic and emotional support to begin with, a support the Jazz struggled to maintain. “Lest we forget,” wrote the *Times-Picayune’s* financial writer Gil Webre, “the New Orleans Basketball Club is designed to be (hopefully and eventually) a money-making outfit.”⁴⁷

Making money was not happening. After the move to the cavernous Superdome, “we were giving away tickets like mad,” said Hundley. The team would sell tickets in bulk to local businesses for fifty cents to give away to customers as promotions. “We would get 35,000 people at a game, but 25,000 would be in the balcony for 50 cents apiece.”⁴⁸ To draw in fans and create more interest, the team featured Elena Tatum, who led a second-line Mardi Gras band through the stadium and put voodoo curses on opposing players. There were various giveaways and contests for shirts, watches, even cars. If the team scored 110 points during home games, ticket stubs earned patrons free french fries at Burger King.⁴⁹

The gimmicks were palliative but not curative. The team lost an additional million dollars during the 1976–77 season and was projected to lose another 1.3 million in the 1977–78 campaign. Ownership then decided to take its civic case to those with far more resources, turning to a group of investors led by Lee Schlesinger, a third-generation New Orleans real estate mogul. At association meetings in June 1977, the NBA approved Schlesinger’s 30 percent minority stake. He had venture capital and did not require an immediate return on his investment. “I consider this a civic endeavor,” he explained, acknowledging the financial risk of sinking money into the team.⁵⁰

During the 1976–77 season, Van Breda Kolff was fired, replaced by Elgin Baylor. Van Breda Kolff’s rigid style clashed with Maravich’s improvisation, but he was beloved in the city as, in the words of Mark Kriegel, “everybody’s drinking buddy.” The hard-drinking coach had earned the devotion of fans, and, when he was fired in favor of Elgin Baylor, those fans were not happy. “My life was threatened,” Mendelson claimed. “I had to have a security guy with me for six months. People were coming up to me at the games and the cops had to step in front of them. The cops thought they were going to shoot me.”⁵¹ Even Baylor, however, could not solve team’s problems. The Jazz finished with a losing record in the 1976–77 season and again in Baylor’s two following full years as head coach.⁵²

In 1977, the Jazz also hired a new general manager, Lew Schaffel, a former agent whose first major move was the acquisition of Atlanta free agent Leonard "Truck" Robinson, one of his principal clients. "They didn't even know the basketball was round," said Hundley of Mendelson and Schaffel, "and they were running the franchise!" Schaffel saw Robinson as the team's future and Maravich as a hindrance to success, leaving Robinson free to claim that the team "didn't have enough ball movement," a thinly veiled shot at Pete. Schaffel, in turn, was to Maravich "a lying backstabbing son of a bitch who's been out to get me from the start." In the following season, that relationship did not improve when Robinson held out in training camp despite having five years left on his contract. "The Jazz has two sets of rules," said Robinson's agent, "one for Pete and one for the rest of the players." While Robinson eventually reported to camp, there was no way to escape the racial nature of the conflict, the team's outspoken black newcomer demanding more money and scapegoating the home-state white star. It was a situation not unfamiliar to Maravich and certainly not unnoticed: "I'm the white boy making the most money, so it's my fault." By 1977, there was legitimate criticism of Maravich in the city, as the team's lack of success rankled, but the Great White Hope would always benefit from a comparison with a loud, entitled newcomer when race became part of the saga. And race was always part of the New Orleans saga. It was one of the reasons Maravich had been the franchise's first player.⁵³

Or he would always benefit from such a comparison in the mainstream white press. The *Louisiana Weekly* had thrilled to the early efforts of the ABA's Buccaneers, emphasizing the team's black players from Louisiana black colleges. Jim Jones and Marlbert Pradd were the focus of the paper's attention, followed later by the exploits of Steve Jones. Its coverage of the Jazz, however, would demonstrate far less interest. Part of that absence of coverage, to be sure, was the result of more comprehensive coverage in the city's white mainstream newspapers, as the integration of sports made the black press largely compensatory in the coverage of professionals. The major reason for the paper's unwillingness to devote more resources and page space to the Jazz, however, was the composition of the team. Far from making efforts to recruit players from local black colleges, the team spent the bulk of its resources on Pete Maravich, demonstrating a decidedly different personnel strategy than its predecessor.

In addition to crippling the team to acquire a white star, the Jazz also never advertised in the local black newspaper, refusing to court black fans the way its ABA predecessor had. The *Weekly's* N. R. Davidson did provide a brief weekly update on the Jazz at the outset of the team's run in New Orleans, but he was not overly impressed. The team's first exhibition game in the city drew far fewer fans than the reported two thousand for "a lethargic affair." Time was not much of an improvement. "The Jazz is still trying to get it together having dropped its first three league games (what'd you expect)," Davidson reported. "Now we're hearing it again that they're tired. Well at this writing they've got exactly 79 more games to go before they can get a good rest." If that were not enough, Robertson did not seem interested in giving playing time to the team's draft choice from Grambling. "Folks have been calling in to ask why Aaron James, the Jazz number one draft pick, has not been playing." Under the leadership of Morton Downey, drafting players from state black colleges had been an effective way to maintain black interest in the team. The Jazz seemed to

have been following that model with the choice of James, but it would count for naught if he never saw the court. Davidson continued to serve as the designated commentator on Jazz basketball for the early portion of that first season, devoting a small section of his column to the team. With that exception, the paper remained largely uninterested in the Maravich-led Jazz. The paper only carried sporadic coverage of the team through its rocky tenure in New Orleans.⁵⁴

The racial motivations behind that disinterest were laid bare as the team closed its final unsuccessful season in the city. "I have said it before and I will say it again," wrote the *Weekly's* Champ Clark. "By and large, there is, perhaps, more racial bias and prejudice emanating from members of the local sports media than anywhere in the nation." He cited the race baiting of NFL receiver Kenny Burroughs and of boxer Muhammad Ali. And racial coverage was present in New Orleans, too. "So, the local writers covering the Jazz games, intimated and implied that most of the Jazz problems would be solved with the trade of Truck Robinson. Prejudice is reflected, too in the makeup of the local TV and radio stations," he argued:

Why isn't some black star on the airways? Neither Channels 4, 6, or 8 have Black Sportscasters on air as anchormen. That is one of the things that Truck meant by Double standards. Look at the stat teams at the games. The only Black you will see is George Wilkes. The Jazz employed several hostesses. Why couldn't one be Black[?] How can these persons assigned to the papers and radio and TV stations accurately report a game when they have been nursed, suckled and weaned on the theory that White is superior and Black is inferior?

Clark celebrated that Robinson's trade to Phoenix put him in the playoffs, while the Jazz sat at home after another losing season. It was the root of black disinterest in the Jazz in one statement. Unlike the Buccaneers, the Jazz had been largely uninterested in black support and had made no effort to court it.⁵⁵

Thus, it was without finances, victories, a large fan following, and a stadium of their own that could accommodate easy scheduling in January and February that Battistone and his fellow owners began to look elsewhere. Hyatt Management Corporation, which managed the Superdome, booked a series of trade shows and conventions during basketball season that dramatically limited possible home dates for the Jazz, calculating that profit would simply be higher for such conventions than they would be for a basketball team that averaged a mere four thousand fans in the 1978–79 season, exacerbating the team's financial losses at a time, five years into the New Orleans NBA experiment, when it was supposed finally to be turning a profit. And so, in April 1979, the team's California ownership began talks with officials in Salt Lake City, Utah, about the possibility of moving the team. Though Salt Lake was an even smaller market than New Orleans, it was more affluent and had a history of success with the ABA's Utah Stars. In addition, Sam Battistone Jr. was a devoted member of the Mormon church.⁵⁶

Hyatt responded to the news by reminding the team that it was in its fourth year of a ten-year lease. "We are looking forward to next season," a spokesman said. The Jazz countered by arguing in cryptic language that Hyatt "has breached its agreement" with the team, "and that leaves us free to do what we want to do." When pressed on what exactly the breach entailed, the team refused comment.⁵⁷

Times-Picayune sports editor Bob Roeseler attempted to call the team's bluff, arguing that it "sounds like the Jazz brass is preparing to set up the Superdome as the 'heavy' in this little fairy tale. You know, the big, bad Dome is running the poor little Jazz to Utah." That, he claimed, was a red herring. "The fact of the matter is that the Jazz operation here has been a disaster. Attendance has dwindled to a precious few," and, to make things worse, the Jazz "have no general manager, they're looking for a new coach, and they've made some bad trades." The Superdome presented scheduling problems, but they were problems eliminated with better management and better play. The *Picayune's* Jimmy Smith argued that Superdome scheduling was not the problem, and neither was Hyatt Management. "The failing situation the New Orleans Jazz finds itself in," he wrote, "can be traced to one basic fact—those who know hamburgers don't necessarily know basketball."⁵⁸

The *Times-Picayune's* Will Peneguy maintained the theme. "In their infinite chili-burger-to-go wisdom," the team's California ownership had decided to move the team to Salt Lake City after a falling out with a management company based in Chicago that had inquired about purchasing the Jazz. "Somewhere in the middle of this controversy involving Utah, California, and Illinois, someone has forgotten about the people of New Orleans." It was an understandable frustration. The Chamber of Commerce responded similarly by urging the team to stay, calling the Jazz "an integral part of the sports culture here."⁵⁹

But the Jazz were not integral to the city's sports culture, and no one had forgotten about its people. The team averaged roughly four thousand fans per game in its final season in the cavernous Superdome, and poor attendance drove most professional sports relocation decisions. Still, Mayor Ernest Morial met with team officials in an effort to convince them to reconsider, to no avail. Lee Schlesinger and the local minority ownership tried to help by announcing that they would divest themselves of their 30 percent stake in the team should it move to Salt Lake.⁶⁰

In May 1979, the team submitted a proposal to the NBA requesting permission to move the Jazz to Utah. The proposal, not intended for public consumption, was leaked to the local press and its arguments paraded for the public and ridiculed by local commentators. The proposal acknowledged that the team had failed to field anything resembling a championship team and that success on the court could change many of its fortunes, "but it is a fact of life that most NBA teams are not champions—and it would be imprudent to base business survival decisions on the success or lack of success of the basketball team." It was a fairly baffling statement, to be sure. The team built its argument for relocation on its problems with the Superdome, the "socio-economic makeup of the population," and the city's "current antagonism toward Jazz operations." It was, the team claimed, "very difficult to get fans to regularly attend several games scheduled in short periods of times, especially in New Orleans where a relatively smaller population base and low economic base combine to restrict the draw when home games are spaced too closely together." It was a way of scapegoating the city and the Superdome for the team's broader lack of success. "As has been the case with most of the New Orleans Jazz' managerial decisions," wrote a frustrated Jimmy Smith in the *Times-Picayune*, the team's relocation proposal "is loaded with errors and ridiculous logic."⁶¹

That month Mayor Morial announced the formation of a "Save Our Jazz Committee," which came following Battistone and Jazz management signing a twenty-year lease with Salt

Lake City. It was a public relations move more than a good faith effort to keep the team; but city officials had to save face in the wake of the transfer, and they did legitimately want to maintain the franchise in New Orleans.⁶² Louisiana governor Edwin Edwards supported Morial and the city. "I am not going to allow the state to be blackmailed or blackjacked by owners seeking to feather their nest," he said.⁶³

At the federal level, Senator Russell Long talked to Larry O'Brien, who had replaced Walter Kennedy as NBA commissioner in 1975, and convinced him to delay a vote on the team's move for at least a week, hoping to provide time for a new ownership group led by officials of the Fair Grounds racetrack to buy the team and keep it in New Orleans. The Fair Grounds, however, ultimately passed. "We were very enthused," said President Joseph B. Dorignac, "until we went through all the Jazz's financial statements." He explained that the Jazz had "a lot of deferred payments that ran the thing up much more than it appeared." And even with its disastrous financial situation, Battistone and the ownership group wanted twelve million dollars for a team that originally cost \$6.1 million prior to all of the failure and debt. "You can't be that civic-minded," said Dorignac, "to dig down into your pockets all the way down to your ankles."⁶⁴

The failure of the Fair Grounds bid, however, would not be the end of the Jazz saga, as the city became far more interested in the team after its planned move. Hyatt Management threatened a lawsuit that would include the city, state, radio, and television distributors, among others, as plaintiffs; the suit did go forward. In July, a New Orleans civil court judge issued a ten-day restraining order halting the Jazz from moving to Salt Lake City, but the seven-million-dollar bond he required of Hyatt for the order was prohibitive. The NBA wanted the bond because delay carried with it the possibility of a heavy financial burden on the league, which was then finalizing the coming season's schedule. And while the high bond kept Hyatt from paying and the restraining order from holding the team in New Orleans, the city added pressure to the Jazz by joining the suit and asking the team for an additional \$17.9 million, ten million for "damage to its good will and reputation," and another 7.9 million for "loss of revenue" caused by the move. The city claimed in addition that the team owed \$24,000 in amusement taxes and \$14,000 in sales taxes.⁶⁵

Ultimately, the NBA's owners voted unanimously to approve the team's move to Utah, basing their decision in particular "in terms of low season ticket sales and poor playing dates." By the time of the team's exodus to Salt Lake City, the Jazz were running at a five-million-dollar deficit. Jimmy Smith wrote, "There will be no more bows, no more encores, no more opening nights. The final curtain rang down on the New Orleans Jazz." The team announced that it would reimburse the "several hundred holders of minority interests in the Jazz" who had purchased shares of the team in its first season to help alleviate the team's early debt, a debt that was never alleviated.⁶⁶

As the team packed up and began its move west, Battistone's restaurant began to suffer a series of lawsuits over his restaurant's name, the NAACP, Urban League, and Human Rights Commission involved in many of them. During the Jazz's first Utah season, six hundred Sambo's managers went on strike in response to corporate restructuring. Then there were more lawsuits. Then, health code violations. In 1982, the chain filed for bankruptcy, completing an ignominious end that began around the same time that New Orleans professional basketball was experiencing its own.⁶⁷

That end came as the result of several intervening factors: the racial stigma that attended professional basketball and the management of the Superdome; the failure of the team to win, largely because of mismanagement and the leveraging of future draft picks to acquire Pete Maravich; and an absentee management that left an organizational vacuum in New Orleans. Mostly, however, the failure of the Jazz in New Orleans was the result of a Deep South city attempting to take its place in the expanding post-civil-rights era Sunbelt through an expansion of professional sports that the city simply was not ready to accommodate. In that sense, the problems of the Jazz were the intertwined southern issues of both the Buccaneers and the Hawks, the unlearned lessons of the ghosts of basketball past.

NOTES

1. Andrew Romano, "Pancakes and Pickaninnies: The Saga of 'Sambo's, the 'Racist' Restaurant Chain America Once Loved," *The Daily Beast*, 30 June 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/30/pancakes-and-pickaninnies-the-saga-of-sambo-s-the-racist-restaurant-chain-america-once-loved.html>, accessed 3 June 2018. See Charles Bernstein, *Sambo's: Only a Fraction of the Action: The Inside Story of a Restaurant Empire's Rise and Fall* (Burbank, CA: National Literary Guild, 1984).

2. For more on the Hawks, see Thomas Aiello, "'You're in the South Now, Brother': The Atlanta Hawks and Race, 1968–1970," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 98 (2014): 155–91.

3. For more on the founding of the Saints, see Michael Martin, "New Orleans Becomes a Big-League City: The NFL-AFL Merger and the Creation of the New Orleans Saints," in *Horsehide, Pigskin, Oval Tracks, and Apple Pie: Essays on Sports and American Culture*, ed. Jim Vlasich (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006), 119–31. There was also a complicated racial sports legacy from the previous decade, when the 1965 AFL All-Star Game was forced to move from New Orleans to Houston after a boycott by black players over treatment they received in the city. For more, see Maureen Smith, "New Orleans, New Football League, and New Attitudes: The American Football League All-Star Game Boycott, January 1965," in *Sports and the Racial Divide: African American and Latino Experience in an Era of Change*, ed. Michael E. Lomax (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 3–22.

4. John Devaney, "Pro Basketball's Hidden Fear," *Sport*, February 1966, 33.

5. Devaney, "Pro Basketball's Hidden Fear," 33, 89, 90.

6. Devaney, "Pro Basketball's Hidden Fear," 90.

7. Devaney, "Pro Basketball's Hidden Fear," 91.

8. Bob Roesler, "NBA-N.O., Speed, Etc.," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), 6 March 1974, sec. 3–10; "NBA May Decide Status of N.O.," 7 March 1974, sec. 3–4; Bob Marshall, "NBA in N.O. Business-like," *States-Item* (New Orleans), 9 March 1974, A-8; and Brian Kensel, "Can Pro Basketball Survive Here?" *Maroon* (Loyola University), 21 March 1974, 12.

9. "New Orleans Becomes Home of NBA's Jazz," *Shreveport Times*, 13 March 2015, B5; Frank P. Jozsa Jr., *The National Basketball Association: Business, Organization and Strategy* (Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2011), 32; and Bob Roesler, "Rosenfeld the Boss," *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), 9 March 1974, sec. 2–6.

10. Bob Roesler, "Behind the Sports Scene," *Times-Picayune*, 9 March 1974, sec. C-28.

11. Marshall, "NBA in N.O. Business-like," A-9; Peter Finney, "Fred Rosenfeld, Basketball Boss," 11 March 1974, C-4.

12. The Buccaneers also played select games at Tulane University. Though the team never really had a sustained home, Loyola University was the closest thing to it the Buccaneers had in New Orleans. "NBA Expansion Team Franchise Given N.O.," *Times-Picayune*, 8 March 1974, sec. 1–1, 3.

13. Jim Hall, "Time Out," *Louisiana Weekly*, 16 March 1974, sec. 2–6; Jim Hall, "Time Out," 23 March 1974, sec. 2–9, 11; "New Orleans Only New Team Named to NBA for '75 Play," 6 April 1974, sec. 2–11; Jim Hall, "Baseball Needed Hammering Hank Aaron," 20 April 1974, sec. 1–9.

14. Bob Roesler, "Behind the Sports Scene," *Times-Picayune*, 9 March 1974, sec. 2–6. See "Filing No. R0000, Street No. 01500, Poydras St., Louisiana Superdome, 1970/11/16, Permit No. 91600, Architect: Curtis and Davis, Edward B. Silverstein and Associates," Building Plans in the City Archives, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

15. Kensel, "Can Pro Basketball Survive Here?" 12; and Paul Atkinson, "N.O. NBA Letter of Intent Guarantees \$2000 a Game," *Times-Picayune*, 11 March 1974, sec. 1–3; quote from Levy.

16. Paul Atkinson, "Levy Singing the Superdome Blues," *Times-Picayune*, 14 April 1974, sec. 1–2. See "Municipal Auditorium," Richard Remy Dixon (1911–1991) Papers, ca. 1958–1977, MS 326, Manuscripts Collection, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library. The extant records for Municipal cover only the period 1927–73, prior to the Jazz's brief tenure in the building but demonstrate its place as the logical landing spot for the team as it waited for the Superdome to be completed. See Records of the Municipal Auditorium, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

17. Brian Kensel, "The NBA Cometh," *Maroon*, 14 March 1974, 15. The auditorium needed no remodeling for basketball, as it had undergone a relatively extensive renovation a few years prior in 1968, making it ready for its new professional residents. "Filing No. R0269, Street No. 01201, St. Peter St., Municipal Auditorium, Additions, Repairs and Alterations, 1966/09/21, Permit No. 67030, Architect: Mathes, Bergman, Favrot and Associates"; "Filing No. R0181, Street No. 01201, St. Peter St., Municipal Auditorium, Repairs, Alterations, and Additions—Phase II, 1968/02/09, Permit No. 74820, Architect: Mathes, Bergman, Favrot and Associates"; "Filing No. R0188, Street No. 01201, St. Peter St., Municipal Auditorium, Concessions, 1968/02/19, Permit No. 74952, Architect: Mathes, Bergman, Favrot and Associates," Building Plans in the City Archives, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

18. Hot Rod Hundley and Tom McEachin, *Hot Rod Hundley: You Gotta Love It, Baby* (Champaign, IL: Sports Publishing, Inc., 1998), 155.

19. Kensel, "Can Pro Basketball Survive Here?" 12.

20. McMillen, "The NBA: A Touch of Class," *Times-Picayune*, 19 May 1974, sec. 6–2; Bob Roesler, "Along the Sports Beat," 17 March 1974, sec. 6–2.

21. Mark Kriegel, *Pistol: The Life of Pete Maravich* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 230–31.

22. Jerry Lepre, "Jazz to Hit Sweet Note," *Maroon*, 3 October 1974, 8; and Will Peneguy and Fred Robinson, "New Orleans Courting Pete," *Times-Picayune*, 25 April 1974, sec. 5–1, 2.

23. Will Peneguy, "Now Hear This," *Times-Picayune*, 26 April 1974, sec. 4–1; "Maravich Considers N.O. Play," 27 April 1974, sec. 2–6; "Jones Leads Utah Rout," 28 April 1974, 2.

24. Kriegel, *Pistol*, 230.

25. Lepre, "Jazz to Hit Sweet Note," 8; and Will Peneguy, "For Pete's Sake, What a Price!" *Times-Picayune*, 4 May 1974, sec. 4–1, 3.

26. Dave Legarde, "Fans React: Pistol's Price Was High, But..." *Times-Picayune*, 5 May 1974, sec. 6–1; Will Peneguy, "Rosenfeld: Preparing to Finish Last Offends Me," 10 May 1974, sec. 2–14.

27. Jim Hall, "NBA, ABA Stars to Help NAACP, UNCF," *Louisiana Weekly*, 4 May 1974, sec. 2–6; Jim Hall, "Pete Maravich's Deal and Week's Wash," 11 May 1974, sec. 2–8.

28. Peter Finney, "The Deal for Pete—Two Views," *States-Item*, 7 May 1974, A-13; Peter Finney, "Atlanta—Now a Dull Loser?" 8 May 1974, D-1.

29. Hundley and McEachin, *Hot Rod Hundley*, 156.

30. Tom Gage, "New Orleans in Second Crusade," *Times-Picayune*, 20 May 1974, sec. 2–6.

31. Hundley and McEachin, *Hot Rod Hundley*, 157; Peter Finney, "Scotty Robertson for NBA Job?" *States-Item*, 19 March 1974, C-1; and Bob Roesler, "Think Scotty Can Win," *Times-Picayune*, 9 May 1974, sec. 6–1; Tom Gage, "New Orleans to Name Robertson, Players," 28 May 1974, sec. 2–8.

32. Mark Heisler, "Jazz Has Been Well-Managed," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 March 2008, sec. 4–1.

33. Hundley and McEachin, *Hot Rod Hundley*, 153–55; Finney, "Scotty Robertson for NBA Job?" C-1; and "New Orleans Becomes Home of NBA's Jazz," *Shreveport Times*, 13 March 2015, B5.

34. The location is now the Jung Hotel. "N.O. Operations Underway," *Times-Picayune*, 19 May 1974, sec. 6–5; and Hundley and McEachin, *Hot Rod Hundley*, 153.
35. Peter Finney, "Walt Bellamy—Yes or No?" *States-Item*, 10 May 1974, C-1; and Bob Roesler, "New Orleans No-Names Now Have Players to Identify With," *Times-Picayune*, 21 May 1974, sec. 3–1, 7.
36. Bob Roesler, "Scotty on Maravich," *Times-Picayune*, 29 May 1974, sec. 3–8; and Peter Finney, "Windfall for NBA Expansion Club," *States-Item*, 20 March 1974, B-12.
37. Marty Mule, "Jazz Is Born in City—Again," *Times-Picayune*, 8 June 1974, sec. 4–1. One alternate suggestion was the Pigeons, the letter writer arguing that pigeons were "the first to inhabit the Superdome." Carrier pigeons were originally used to get pictures of football games from Tulane Stadium to newspaper offices to meet deadlines. In addition, "pigeons have a nuisance value that will always provoke uneasy thoughts with the opposition." Peter Finney, "Mail Call—N.O. Pigeons," *States-Item*, 14 May 1974, A-11.
38. Hundley and McEachin, *Hot Rod Hundley*, 157; and Will Peneguy, "New Commissioner at NBA Meetings?" *Times-Picayune*, 17 June 1974, sec. 3–12; Will Peneguy, "N.O. Hearing More Jazz," 18 June 1974, sec. 4–1; Will Peneguy, "NBA Tempers Short at Long Meeting," 20 June 1974, sec. 6–1, 3; Will Peneguy, "Walt Can't Dance to Jazz Tune; Quits," 21 June 1974, sec. 4–1.
39. Will Peneguy, "Will Fans Tune in the Jazz?" *Times-Picayune*, 21 June 1974, sec. 4–1.
40. "Super Dome Problems," box 7, tape 8, subject 4, 11/16/75, Joseph Culotta, Jr. Collection, Audio Tapes, 1975, Manuscripts Collection, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library; and "Showdown Slated on Dome Opening," *Times-Picayune*, 6 August 1974, sec. 1–5; "Jazz Irked by Dome Tactics," 25 August 1974, sec. 6–4; John LaPlace, "Dome Chances Slim," 27 August 1974, sec. 3–1.
41. After Baylor, the Jazz added Celtics legend Sam Jones to the coaching staff. Larry McMillen, "Baylor Joins Jazz," *Times-Picayune*, 12 September 1974, sec. 5–1; "Jazz Reveals TV Schedule," 14 September 1974, sec. 2–6; Fred Robinson, "Jazz Lands Sam Jones as Assistant," 18 September 1974, sec. 4–8.
42. Hundley and McEachin, *Hot Rod Hundley*, 155.
43. Will Peneguy, "On the NBA Road," *Times-Picayune*, 25 October 1974, sec. 2–1. The team began its life with an eleven-game losing streak and lost its first fifty road games, never coming close to a winning season while in New Orleans. "New Orleans Jazz," *Basketball Digest* 30, December 2002, 1.
44. Kriegel, *Pistol*, 240.
45. Kriegel, *Pistol*, 235; Jozsa Jr., *The National Basketball Association*, 32; and Will Peneguy, "Sam and Jazz Marked for NBA Clemency," *Times-Picayune*, 26 April 1975, sec. 2–1.
46. "Jazz Sale Starting to Build," *Times-Picayune*, 29 August 1975, sec. 1–7.
47. Gil T. Webre, "Jazz Tickets Promotional Items to Barry Mendelson," *Times-Picayune*, 14 February 1976, sec. 2–5.
48. While the team was able to take advantage of such seating to break single-game attendance records, that level of attendance was exceedingly rare. Hundley and McEachin, *Hot Rod Hundley*, 156.
49. "New Orleans Jazz (Basketball Team)," vertical file, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library; and Kriegel, *Pistol*, 241.
50. Marty Mule, "Jazz Ownership on Agenda of NBA," *Times-Picayune*, 14 June 1977, sec. 3–1; Marty Mule, "Congrats: Jazz Owner Gets Okay; NBA Gives Four Delay," 16 June 1977, 3–1; and *Lee H. Schlesinger, et al. v. Corporate Realty Inc., et al.*, 2 F.3d 135 (5th Cir. 1993).
51. Kriegel, *Pistol*, 247.
52. Milt Northrop, "No Excuses for Jazz, They Were Awful—Elgin," *Times-Picayune*, 7 December 1977, sec. 3–1; and "1976–77 New Orleans Jazz Roster and Stats," Basketball-Reference, <http://www.basketball-reference.com/teams/NOJ/1977.html> [accessed 3 June 2018]; "1977–78 New Orleans Jazz Roster and Stats," Basketball-Reference, <http://www.basketball-reference.com/teams/NOJ/1978.html> [accessed 3 June 2018]; and "1978–79 New Orleans Jazz Roster and Stats," Basketball-Reference, <http://www.basketball-reference.com/teams/NOJ/1979.html> [accessed 3 June 2018].
53. Hundley and McEachin, *Hot Rod Hundley*, 157; and Kriegel, *Pistol*, 254–56, 262–63.

54. N. R. Davidson, "Jazz Notes," *Louisiana Weekly*, 12 October 1974, sec. 2–6; N. R. Davidson, "Jazz Notes," 19 October 1974, sec. 2–8; N. R. Davidson, "Jazz Notes," 26 October 1974, sec. 2–8; N. R. Davidson, "Jazz Notes," 2 November 1974, sec. 2–6; "Jazz Announces Preseason Games," 30 August 1975, sec. 2–6; "Jazz On TV," 24 January 1976, sec. 2–7; N. R. Davidson, "Jazz Goes Wild with 'Intense' Hoop Play," 7 February 1976, sec. 2–6; Peter W. 'Champ' Clark, "Sports Parade," 28 May 1977, sec. 2–11; Peter W. 'Champ' Clark, "Sports Parade," 25 June 1977, sec. 2–10; Peter W. 'Champ' Clark, "Sports Parade," 2 July 1977, sec. 2–8; Peter W. 'Champ' Clark, "Sports Parade," 3 April 1979, sec. 2–7.

55. Peter W. 'Champ' Clark, "Sports Parade," *Louisiana Weekly*, 21 April 1979, sec. 2–6. The *Weekly* never reported on the team's move to Utah. They just began referring to the Utah Jazz in brief mentions of the team later in 1979. "McElroy Reluctant about Signing with Utah Jazz," 30 June 1979, sec. 2–7.

56. "Superdome Schedule, 1975–1985," box 2, Senator Sidney J. Barthelemy Collection, MS 323, Manuscripts Collection, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library; and Jimmy Smith, "Jazz Moving?" *Times-Picayune*, 12 April 1979, sec. 1–12.

57. The team's basic argument was that, since Hyatt was not part of the original lease when the team signed with the Superdome, the original lease was now invalid. Jimmy Smith, "Hyatt Opened Door for Jazz?" *Times-Picayune*, 12 April 1979, sec. 1–1.

58. Bob Roesler, "Column," *Times-Picayune*, 11 April 1979, sec. 2–1; Jimmy Smith, "Jazz Move May Camouflage Problem," 12 April 1979, sec. 7–1.

59. Will Peneguy, "Dear Commissioner..." *Times-Picayune*, 13 April 1979, sec. 2–1; "Chamber Urges Jazz to Stay in New Orleans," 14 April 1979, sec. 1–11.

60. Ed Anderson and Jimmy Smith, "Jazz Not Packing Yet: Owners to 'Reconsider,'" *Times-Picayune*, 15 April 1979, sec. 1–5; Jimmy Smith, "Jazz Still Views Salt Lake City," 19 April 1979, sec. 4–1; Jimmy Smith, "Mayor Wires Owners," 20 April 1979, sec. 2–1.

61. "Salt Lake Collecting for Jazz Tickets," *Times-Picayune*, 24 April 1979, sec. 4–1; Jimmy Smith, "Illogics," 15 May 1979, sec. 4–1.

62. "Save Our Jazz Committee (basketball team)," 4 May 1979, tape 12, side 2, Sound Recordings: 1978–1985, box G27, subseries I—Press Conferences, Intergovernmental Relations Administration, Public Information Office Records, Mayor Ernest N. Morial Records, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library; and Jimmy Smith, "Jazz Committee Counters 20-Year Salt Lake Lease," *Times-Picayune*, 5 May 1979, sec. 4–1.

63. Jimmy Smith, "A Split under Delusions of Adequacy," *Times-Picayune*, 6 May 1979, sec. 6–1; Paul Atkinson, "Edwards on Jazz: 'A Contract Is a Contract,'" 9 May 1979, sec. 1–15.

64. Bob Roesler, "Looney Tunes on Hold," *Times-Picayune*, 31 May 1979, sec. 4–1; Bob Roesler, "Fair Grounds Forms Jazz Committee," 1 June 1979, sec. 2–1; Bob Roesler, "Fair Grounds Out of Jazz Bidding," 2 June 1979, sec. 1–1; "Businessmen Plan Petition to Save Jazz," 4 May 1979, sec. 1–16.

65. Jimmy Smith, "Jazz Move Reports Bring Hyatt Threat," *Times-Picayune*, 13 April 1979, sec. 1, 1, 17; Bob Roesler, "Fair Grounds Out of Jazz Bidding," 2 June 1979, sec. 1–1; Jimmy Smith, "An Abysmal Adieu to All That Jazz," 4 June 1979, 3–1; Bob Roesler, "Hyatt Sues Jazz Team," 6 July 1979, sec. 1–11; Art Roane, "Hearing, Bond Ordered by Judge," 7 July 1979, sec. 2–1.

66. Jozsa Jr., *The National Basketball Association*, 33; and Jimmy Smith, "Jazz Judgement Predetermined?" *Times-Picayune*, 20 May 1979, sec. 6–2; Jimmy Smith, "Jazz Has Green Light for Move," 9 June 1979, sec. 1–1; Jimmy Smith, "Sam Battistone Finally Succeeds with the Jazz," 10 June 1979, sec. 6–1; Smith, "An Abysmal Adieu to All That Jazz."

67. Romano, "Pancakes and Pickaninnies"; "Sambo's to Alter Northeast Names," *New York Times*, 11 March 1981, D-1; "Chapter 11 Petition is Filed by Sambo's," *New York Times*, 28 November 1981, F-18; and "A New Name," *Time*, 17 August 1981, 67.