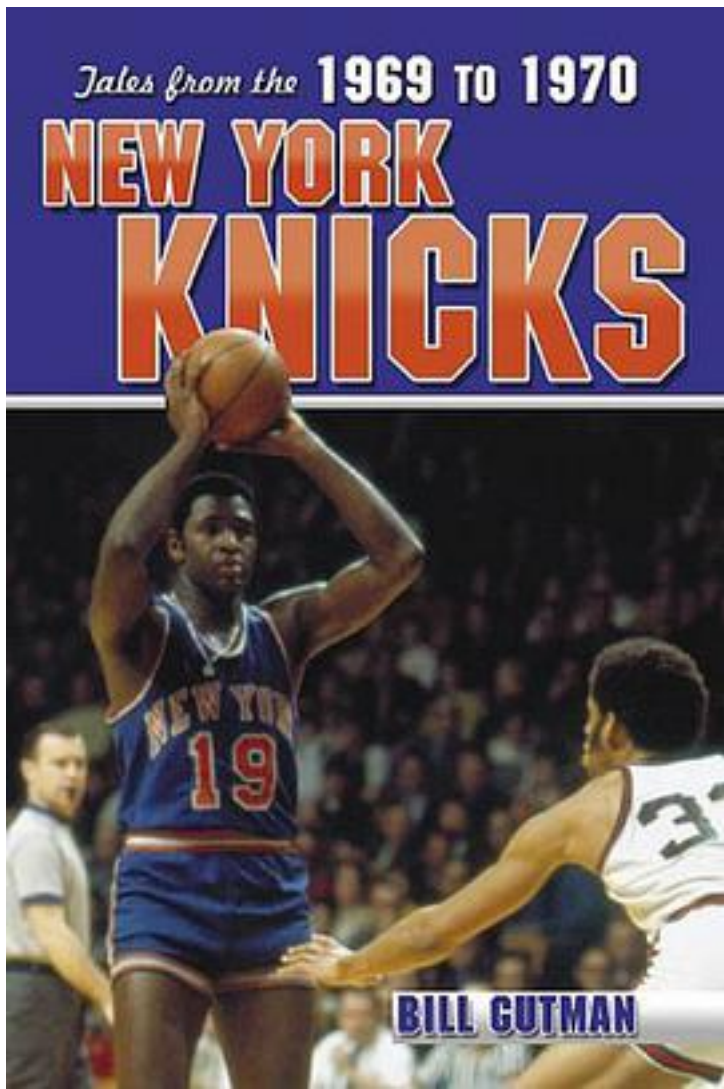


Tales from the 1969-70 New York Knicks



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When Bill Russell retired in 1969, his departure signaled the end of the Boston Celtics dynasty. The Celts, with Russell in the middle, had won 11 NBA championships in 13 years, but as the 1969-70 season opened so did the door for a new champion. Some felt the L.A. Lakers, with their superstar triumvirate of Jerry West, Elgin Baylor, and Wilt Chamberlain would claim the title. Others picked the high-scoring Baltimore Bullets or the balanced and deep Atlanta Hawks. And there were even a few people who picked the New York Knicks. The Knicks? Weren't they the team that had never won an NBA title, despite being an original franchise when the league began play in 1946? They were, indeed, but in the fall of 1969 the Knicks put a different kind of team on the floor, one they had been building for years. Center Willis Reed and guard Walt "Clyde" Frazier were the New Yorker's two best players, but it was a trade with Detroit the season before that gave Coach Red Holzman the kind of team he wanted by bringing hardworking forward Dave DeBusschere into the fold. Former Princeton All-American Bill Bradley and veteran guard Dick Barnett completed the starting five. A strong bench and the defensive minded Holzman were the other elements that allowed it to work. The old-school Holzman made defense a byword, imploring his players to see the ball, and on offense to hit the open man. With five starters playing as one, and a solid bench behind them, the Knicks unveiled the kind of team basketball that hadn't been seen in years. Playing unselfishly from the start, they ran off a record 18-game win streak and took it from there, showing the basketball world how teamwork and defense could win. Tales from the 1969-70 New York Knicks is the story of a group of individuals and a coach who created a magical season for New York fans that is still remembered today. The Knicks won it all, but not without sacrifice, struggle, and a moment of high drama that is perhaps unmatched in NBA annals.

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