



ED O'BANNON: KNEE-DEEP IN THE NBA

In the weeks leading up to last spring's NBA draft, Dr. Michael R. Shapiro found himself a most popular fellow. The head of the Los Angeles Knee & Sports Medicine Clinic received phone inquiries from numerous NBA team representatives and members of the media wanting information on something Dr. Shapiro knows intimately: Ed O'Bannon's knee.

It was Shapiro who repaired NCAA tourney MVP O'Bannon's knee in October 1990 with a then-controversial allograft—the procedure of using a cadaver tendon in replacing the anterior cruciate ligament—after it sustained four separate injuries devastating enough to make it appear “like an explosion” on the X-rays.

With lottery picks regularly making or breaking NBA franchises, you can understand the concern exhibited by the Raptors, Nets, T-Wolves, et al. Shapiro gave them the speech they wanted to hear: “I really felt that [Ed's] play was speaking for everything. You can't get 30 points and 17 rebounds against Arkansas in a championship game on a bum knee. Certainly not without a brace on. I'm very optimistic about his pro career.”

Expected by many to be picked by Toronto with the seventh selection, O'Bannon “dropped” to nine, going to elated New Jersey.

“If he dropped, I don't think he dropped that much,” says Shapiro, still considered a sort of MVP himself for his huge contribution to the success of the champion UCLA Bruins.

Shapiro fielded questions from the 76ers, who had the third overall pick.

“If Jerry Stackhouse had been taken No. 2 by the Clippers, I think O'Bannon would've been taken third by the 76ers,” Shapiro says. “It was the 76ers who talked to me and expressed an interest just about equal with their interest in Stackhouse.” —Paul M. Johnson