

= 1975 ? 76 Buffalo Braves season =

The 1975 ? 76 Buffalo Braves season was the sixth season for the expansion Buffalo Braves franchise in the National Basketball Association and its Atlantic Division . It was the team 's fourth season under head coach Jack Ramsay . The team 's official home arena was Buffalo Memorial Auditorium .

Bob McAdoo led the league in scoring for the third consecutive year with 31 @. @ 1 points per game . It was the third year in a row that the Braves made the playoffs . The Braves had a record of 46 @- @ 36 . In the playoffs the Braves wound up against the Philadelphia 76ers . The series went the full three games but the Braves found themselves on the road for Game 3 . The Braves emerged victorious in overtime with a hard @- @ fought 124 ? 123 victory . It was the first playoff series win for the franchise . In the second round of the playoffs , the Braves and Boston Celtics would once again battle . After four games , the series was even at two wins each . Once again the Celtics would take the series in six games .

The season was marked in controversy . Ernie DiGregorio was benched and McAdoo was suspended . Following the season the Braves allowed coach Jack Ramsay to depart for the head coaching job with the Portland Trail Blazers . The team did not resign its auditorium lease and went through the season without a contract . Subsequently the team was sold , the city sued and the sale was not consummated .

= = Offseason = =

= = = NBA Draft = = =

The Braves had no selections during the first two rounds of the 1975 NBA Draft and no players drafted by the team that year played for the 1975 ? 76 Buffalo . 1974 NBA Draft pick Tom McMillen played for a year in Europe before joining the 1975 ? 76 Buffalo Braves . McMillen played in the Italian League for a team in Bologna , Italy and completed the first year of his Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford University . However , he reached an agreement with Oxford to complete his second year during the summer in order to begin his National Basketball Association career . McMillen only played basketball in Italy on the weekends .

= = = Exhibition games = = =

On October 4 , 1975 , the Braves opened their preseason exhibition schedule against the Indiana Pacers of the American Basketball Association . Bob McAdoo had 29 points in the contest in Indianapolis but the Pacers won , 106 @- @ 105 . On October 11 , 15 @, @ 000 fans attended the Braves ' home game against the ABA 's New York Nets . The Braves held New York 's star Julius Erving to 16 points but the Nets prevailed 109 @- @ 83 . On October 14 the Braves traveled to Louisville , Kentucky to face the ABA 's Kentucky Colonels . The Colonels won , 120 @- @ 116 . Two nights later on October 16 , 1975 the Braves hit the road to face the ABA 's San Antonio Spurs . Bob McAdoo had 22 points and 16 rebounds but the Spurs won 101 @- @ 90 behind 22 points each for James Silas and George Gervin . The very next night the Braves again faced the New York Nets , this time at Seton Hall University in New Jersey . Bob McAdoo scored 31 points but the Nets won 117 @- @ 97 . The Braves closed out their preseason exhibition schedule with a record of 0 @- @ 5 against ABA teams .

= = Transactions = =

On October 14 , 1975 , the Braves lost Lee Winfield on waivers to the Kansas City Kings . Paul Ruffner did not return to play for the 1975 ? 76 Buffalo Braves and never again played in the NBA . On November 20 , 1975 , Steve Kuberski was waived . On November 27 , 1975 , Jack Marin was

traded to the Chicago Bulls for a 1977 NBA Draft 1st round pick . On February 1 , 1976 , Gar Heard was dealt with a 1976 NBA Draft 2nd round pick to the Phoenix Suns for John Shumate . After the season , the Braves sent Ken Charles and Dick Gibbs and cash to the Atlanta Hawks for Tom Van Arsdale . Van Arsdale never played for the Braves who traded him in August to the Phoenix Suns for a 1977 NBA Draft 2nd round pick .

= = Roster = =

= = Regular season = =

The Braves went the entire season without a winning streak or losing streak exceeding six games . The Braves attendance decreased by nearly 50 @, @ 000 to 418 @, @ 696 in their 41 home games , and the team fell to 11th of 18 teams .

Shumate , who played 43 games for Phoenix and 32 for Buffalo led the NBA in field goal percentage ( 56 @. @ 1 ) and earned first team All @- @ rookie honors . DiGregorio , who played 67 games posted a 91 @. @ 5 % ( 86 / 94 ) free throw percentage , which would have been second to Rick Barry 's 92 @. @ 3 if he had posted a qualifying number of attempts . Marin , who played 12 games for the Braves before being traded , finished 9th in the NBA in free throw percentage ( 85 @. @ 6 % ) . McMillian ranked 3rd in field goal percentage ( 53 @. @ 6 % ) and 8th in free throw percentage ( 85 @. @ 8 ) . Randy Smith , who played all 82 games for the fourth consecutive season , represented Buffalo in the 1976 NBA All @- @ Star Game and earned 2nd team All @- @ NBA honors . Smith ranked third in steals per game ( 2 @. @ 5 ) , fourth in assists per game ( 6 @. @ 5 ) , seventh in points per game ( 21 @. @ 8 ) and ninth in minutes per game ( 38 @. @ 6 ) . Smith 's speed was a difference maker on the Braves ' fast breaks . McAdoo appeared in the third of five consecutive NBA All @- @ Star games and placed second in the MVP voting despite not making the All @- @ NBA team that included centers Kareem Abdul @- @ Jabbar and Dave Cowens . McAdoo led the winning east team in scoring with 22 points in the All @- @ Star game , but Dave Bing was selected as MVP . Over the course of the season he made both the most field goals and most free throws in the NBA . He led the league in minutes played ( 42 @. @ 7 ) and points per game ( 31 @. @ 1 ) while ranking seventh in rebound average ( 12 @. @ 4 ) and sixth in blocks per game ( 2 @. @ 1 ) .

October ? December

As the season began , the Braves refused to sign the lease terms for Memorial Auditorium because Braves owner Paul Snyder felt it was unfair for the Braves to be held to different terms than their co @- @ tenant , the Buffalo Sabres . Although the Buffalo Common Council had approved a lease in July , the Braves entered the season without an agreement .

During the November 14 game at Milwaukee a bench @- @ clearing brawl erupted as a result of an incident between Bucks Gary Brokaw and Bob Dandridge and Brave Dick Gibbs . The following week McAdoo broke the Cleveland Coliseum single @- @ game scoring record by posting 50 points in a 23 @- @ point deficit come @- @ from @- @ behind overtime victory . He surpassed his own 49 point performance the prior year at the Coliseum ; both games were against his friend Jim Chones . On December 2 , 1974 NBA Rookie of the Year DiGregorio was benched in favor of Charles for the sake of team defense . In Charles ' first start , he led the team in scoring with a career @- @ high 24 on the way to the franchise record 37 @- @ point December 5 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers . In late December , McAdoo was suspended by the team for failing to make a doctor 's appointment as the Braves claimed his self @- @ diagnosed back injury was dubious .

January ? February

The Braves began the new year by playing in three consecutive one @- @ point contests , first splitting with the New York Knicks on January 2 and January 3 , and then defeating the Los Angeles Lakers on January 6 . All games were won by the home team . The Braves established an all @- @ sport all @- @ time attendance record for Memorial Auditorium of 19 @, @ 226 on January 31 when they hosted the Boston Celtics . That night , John Havlicek became the NBAs fourth leading scorer ,

surpassing Elgin Baylor . The day before the game the Braves had reached an agreement on sharing playing dates with the Sabres and decided not to attempt to leave town . On February 1 during the All @-@ star break , the Braves dealt Heard for Shumate . At the time the Braves had a 30 ? 20 record and they would go 16 ? 16 for the rest of the season . During the February 3 , 1976 NBA All @-@ Star Game , Smith scored 8 points , while McAdoo had a game @-@ high 22 . McAdoo contributed to a key fourth quarter spurt that propelled the East to victory .

March ? April

As the season wound down , the Braves were battling with the Philadelphia 76ers for home court advantage in the opening round series . The Braves defeated the Celtics twice in the final two weeks to even their season series at three games a piece while winning five of their last seven games . The Braves were scheduled to host the New York Knicks on April 6 , but when the Buffalo Sabres qualified for the 1976 Stanley Cup playoffs , the National Hockey League scheduled the Sabres to be the home team on the same date . When the Braves set a \$ 25 @, @ 000 price tag on the date , the Sabres swapped home game dates with the St. Louis Blues and lost on St. Louis in a best of three series on that date .

= = = Season standings = = =

The following were the season standing in the Atlantic Division .

= = = Record vs. opponents = = =

= = = Season schedule = = =

Source : [www.basketball @-@ reference.com](http://www.basketball @-@ reference.com)

= = Playoffs = =

In the 1976 NBA Playoffs , McMillian boosted his 15 @.@ 8 points per game to 17 @.@ 2 , and Smith also boosted his production to 8 @.@ 6 assists per game , which led the league , while contributing 22 @.@ 6 points . For the second year in a row , McAdoo led the league in minutes per game in the playoffs ( 45 @.@ 1 ) , while posting 28 @.@ 0 points per game .

First round

The Braves concluded the regular season tied with the Philadelphia 76ers for fourth place in the Eastern Conference with a 46 ? 36 record . The Braves lost the regular season series with the 76ers 4 games to 3 giving Philadelphia home court advantage for the three @-@ game Eastern Conference First Round series between the conference 's fourth and fifth place teams . During the series , the road team won each of the three games including the final game , which Buffalo won 124 ? 123 in overtime .

In the first round , the Braves won the first game 95 ? 89 on 36 points from McAdoo and 6 points from McMillian in the final 1 : 23 . Although the Braves led most of the way , it took a three @-@ point play by McAdoo with 4 : 37 left to give them the lead for good at 87 ? 85 . George McGinnis posted 34 points as the 76ers evened the series with a 131 ? 106 victory in game 2 . The Braves clinched game 3 in overtime as McAdoo scored two free throws to tie the game in regulation and two more with 17 seconds left in overtime as Buffalo won 124 ? 123 . The game included clutch shots by Shumate and a strong shooting performance by Smith . Philadelphia took the lead in the first quarter and did not relinquish it until the McMillian gave the Braves a 95 ? 94 lead with 8 : 11 remaining in regulation . McGinnis had fouled out with 8 : 50 remaining . The Braves held the lead until Doug Collins scored with 41 seconds left to tie the score at 109 and Fred Carter gave Philadelphia a 111 ? 109 lead with 6 seconds remaining . After a couple of offensive rebounds on their final possession Clyde Lee fouled McAdoo who tied the score from the line . Shumate had 11 fourth quarter points and a pair of early overtime baskets . Smith gave the Braves the lead for good

with 51 seconds left in overtime .

#### Second round

In the second round , the Braves opposed the Eastern Conference regular season champion Boston Celtics in the Eastern Conference Semifinals . The first five games of the series went to the home team and then Boston won game six in Buffalo to clinch the series .

Dave Cowens accumulated 30 points , 19 rebounds , 7 assists and 5 steals in leading the Celtics past the Braves by a 107 ? 98 margin in game 1 . Although McAdoo scored 40 points in game 2 and the Celtics played without John Havlicek , his replacements Don Nelson and Steve Kuberski stepped up to enable the Celtics to take a 2 ? 0 lead in the series on a with a 101 ? 96 victory . In game 3 , the Braves won 98 ? 93 , as Smith scored 29 and McAdoo added 24 , including 10 in the fourth quarter . Buffalo had fallen behind by 12 points after one quarter . Starter @-@ turned @-@ reserve DiGregorio entered the game in the second quarter with the Braves behind 32 ? 22 , but he posted 8 points and 5 assists in the quarter to spark a 21 ? 4 surge that gave the team a 43 ? 36 lead . He finished with 10 assists . In game 4 , Smith made a 25 @-@ foot jump shot with three seconds remaining to give the Braves a 124 ? 122 victory and tie the series 2 ? 2 . Havlicek , who missed games 2 through 4 with a foot injury , returned to help the Celtics win game 5 as Paul Silas had 15 points and 22 rebounds and Cowens amassed 30 points and 16 rebounds . After a 32 ? 32 tie , Cowens , who had 14 second quarter points , led the Celtics to a 46 ? 36 halftime lead . The Braves closed to within 50 ? 46 , but the Celtics pulled away and took a 76 ? 65 lead after three quarters . Although Charlie Scott fouled out in the fourth quarter , so did McAdoo . In game 6 , the Celtics led 30 ? 27 after one quarter , but trailed 55 ? 50 at the half and 78 ? 77 after three quarters . At one point , 9 third quarter points by McMillian helped push Buffalo to a 9 @-@ point lead . Scott scored 13 of his game @-@ high 31 points in the final quarter . Jo Jo White had 23 points and Cowens had 10 points and 16 rebounds in the final game as the Celtics clinched the series 4 ? 2 with a 104 ? 100 victory .

= = = Playoff schedule = = =

Source : [www.basketball @-@ reference.com](http://www.basketball-reference.com)

= = = Postseason news = = =

Coach Ramsay had been hired in 1972 to a three @-@ year contract . He served the 1975 ? 76 season on a one @-@ year extension . His contract was not renewed . Ramsay had guided the Braves to the playoffs three years in a row after enduring a 21 ? 61 season , accumulating a 158 ? 170 overall record . Local reports noted a personality conflict with owner Snyder . The Braves promoted assistant coach Tates Locke and signed him to a two @-@ year contract .

Snyder threatened to sell the Braves if they did not sell 5 @, @ 000 season tickets by June 12 , 1976 . However the season ticket drive by the Chamber of Commerce and other civic groups only resulted in 2 @, @ 552 sales by the deadline date . In June 1976 , Diplomat Hotel owner Irving Cowan obtained an option to purchase the Braves for \$ 6 @. @ 1 million , and planned to bring them to South Florida and the Hollywood Sportatorium . Pledges of more than 8 @, @ 000 season tickets were received in Florida . On June 15 , Snyder announced the planned sale . The Wall Street Journal estimated the sale price to be in the \$ 7 ? 8 million range . However , the next day the city of Buffalo sued the Braves for breach of contract and sought a restraining order preventing the move . The suit was filed in New York Supreme Court for seeking \$ 10 million from the Braves and the NBA for breaking a promise to sign a new 15 @-@ year lease . Another suit was filed as an anti @-@ trust case in United States district court against the rest of the NBA seeking \$ 48 million in damages in the event of a move . The anti @-@ trust case alleged that the move was an attempt to eliminate competition against a future Toronto NBA franchise and to discourage expansion of the American Basketball Association to southern Florida . The damages arose as treble damages related to a March 1 promise to sign a lease . Although Cowan claimed the move would still take place , the effort collapsed under the weight of the lawsuit and the Braves ended up signing a new lease with

the city of Buffalo . In July , the Braves signed a new lease with the city for the Memorial Auditorium with the understanding that there was an ongoing effort to sell the team to local interests . The signing of the lease settled the lawsuits .

= = Player stats = =

= = Awards and honors = =

Bob McAdoo , NBA Scoring Champion

Bob McAdoo , 1976 NBA All @-@ Star Game

Randy Smith , 1976 NBA All @-@ Star Game

Randy Smith , 1976 All @-@ NBA ( 2nd team )

John Shumate , NBA All @-@ Rookie Team ( Note : Shumate started the season with the Phoenix Suns but ended the season as a member of the Buffalo Braves )

John Shumate , NBA Field goal percentage champion