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Pistons' play like that of '70s Knicks

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AUBURN HILLS, Mich. -- Chauncey. Yeah, he's definitely Clyde. Cool, makes the big shot, runs the show.

Rip. He's Barnett with the shot, though not the "fall back, baby" fade away Dick Barnett was famous for.

Tay. He's Dollar Bill, the worker, mostly unnoticed, smart, always in the right place at the right time.

No one's really quite Dave D., the ultimate hustle guy playing bigger than his size, a native Detroit guy.

And C-Web, yeah, he has a little Willis in him, especially the hobble, but he will make that shot and take you away from the basket.

"I always said when I came here last year, from the first practice, that's who this team reminded me of -- the '70 Knicks," Pistons coach Flip Saunders said. "The unselfish play. They don't seem to care who scores. Over the course of the game they never beat themselves. They don't turn the ball over and rely on making the right basketball play.

"Everyone on the floor does something to make the other guys better, and that's how you want to play."

No, this Pistons model, without Ben Wallace and with Chris Webber, isn't quite the '04 championship team yet. But it can make a big step in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference semifinals against the Bulls tonight at the United Center.

With a 2-0 series lead, the Pistons could be on the verge of their fifth consecutive Eastern Conference final, the only team in the NBA to do that since the Bulls from 1989 through 1993.

But what makes this Pistons team special is its versatility. Saunders isn't the only one drawing parallels to the Knicks of the early '70s, one of the NBA's great teams.

The comparison isn't lost on these Pistons, who have yet to come close to the Knicks' success -- NBA titles in 1970 and 1973 with slightly different casts. But with the addition of Webber midway through this season, the Pistons have changed in character and come close to mirroring that classic team.

"Yes, I think about that," Webber said. "I remember talking to (Dave) DeBusschere. He had come back to UD (University of Detroit) and he was talking about team, trusting one another.

"This team is by far the best I've ever been on as far as trusting each other. It's not

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the most athletic team, not the youngest, but the best as far as focusing on what it needs to do."

In the first two games against the Bulls, the Pistons have been remarkable in doing just that.

The Pistons have shot well -- 48 percent, and 49 from three-point range -- and have outrebounded the Bulls by about 15 per game. They also have averaged almost nine more assists per game.

They moved the ball for good shots, had position to rebound and control the pace and played defense aggressively and relentlessly, holding the Bulls to about 33 percent shooting.

The only real surprise has been an unusually high number of turnovers (18 per game) for the team that was the best in the NBA at taking care of the ball this season. But in blowout games, that stat can be distorted.

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