

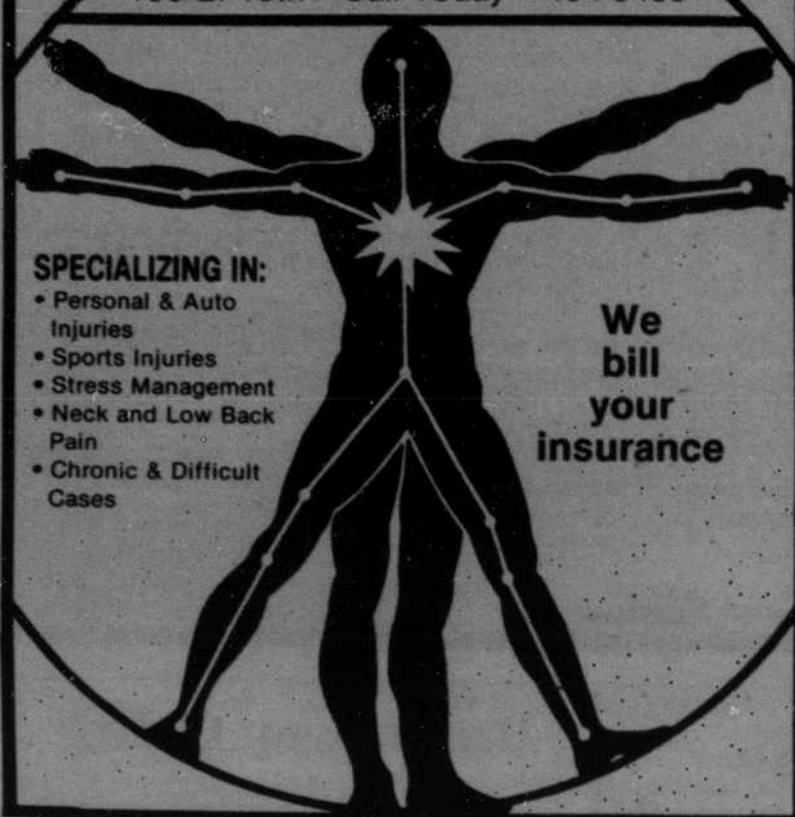
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# Blazers tangle with Lakers

**PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)** — The Portland Trail Blazers are playing their best basketball of the season, and Coach Jack Ramsay says there's no single reason for the team's recent turnaround.

"When a team is playing well, there's no one thing that makes it play well," Ramsay said. "It's a combination of things."

The Blazers, winners of seven of their last nine games, begin their final long road trip of the National Basketball Association season Wednesday night when they play the Los Angeles Lakers.

The trip also includes stops in Milwaukee, New York, Cleveland and Indiana.

Although Ramsay says there is more than one factor to the team's success, he says much of the credit must go to the improved play of forward Mychal Thompson.

Thompson, often maligned for what has been perceived as a laid-back attitude, is averaging just 14 points per game this season. But in his last four games he's averaged 23.3 points per contest.

"There's a big relationship between Mychal Thompson's performance and the team's performance," Ramsay said. "When Mychal plays well, the team plays well."

"I think Mychal decided he's got to do it... He's really gone after it much better," Ramsay said. "He's played more aggressively and that's the key to that success."

Eleven games ago, Ramsay decided to remove Darnell Valentine from the Blazer picture and shift Steve Colter into the starting point guard spot.

"I think that clarified some roles a little better for the guards," Ramsay said of the move. "And it also enabled me to give Jim Paxson some more minutes on the floor."

Paxson, often in the playmaking role, has averaged 7.6 assists in each of his last eight contests.

At the same time Valentine was removed from the lineup, Clyde Drexler voluntarily left his starting role and became the first player off the bench. His game since has exploded.

In four games last week, Drexler averaged 21.3 points, nine rebounds, 9.3 assists and 2.8 steals per contest. He hit 61.3 percent of his field goal tries and had two "triple doubles" — games in which he hit double figures in points, rebounds and assists. The effort earned the 6-foot-7 guard NBA player of the week honors.

Ramsay doesn't think Drexler's improvement can be traced to his decision to relegate himself to a reserve role.

"He's doing very well off the bench, but I think Clyde would do as well if he started. I don't think there's necessarily a change in his play," Ramsay said, "but I think the team has benefited from him coming off the bench."

There are other indications of the team's improvement. Kiki Vandeweghe's scoring average over the past nine games is 27.2, about four points higher than it has been the rest of the season. Center Sam Bowie has hit 69 percent of his field goals the last five contests.

"I think everybody has picked up," Ramsay said.

The Blazers have made just 49 percent of their field goal tries this season, but have shot better than 50 percent in each of their last nine games. Portland, notoriously weak on the boards in the early season, has had a rebound advantage in 11 of its last 14 contests.

Despite all the improvements, the Blazers should know the road trip may not get off to a great start. The Lakers, who have an eight-game lead over Portland in the Pacific Division, have beaten the Blazers 11 of the last 13 times the two teams have met.

## Sports shorts

**CALENDAR:**

Jan. 8 (Wednesday):  
WRESTLING — San Jose State at McArthur Court, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 9 (Thursday):  
WRESTLING — Fresno State at McArthur Court, 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 10 (Friday):  
GYMNASTICS — San Jose State at Gerlinger Annex, 7:30 p.m.

MEN'S & WOMEN'S SWIMMING — Puget Sound at Leighton Pool, 7 p.m.  
WRESTLING — Chico State and Oregon State at McArthur Court, 7 p.m.

Jan. 11 (Saturday):  
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL — Utah at McArthur Court, 7:35 p.m.

MEN'S BASKETBALL — Oregon State at McArthur Court, 7:35 p.m.  
WOMEN'S SWIMMING — Chico State at Leighton Pool, 7 p.m.

Jan. 13 (Monday):  
MEN'S BASKETBALL — Stanford at Palo Alto, Calif., 7:35 p.m.

**RECREATION  
AND INTRAMURALS  
CALENDAR:**

Bowling: Entry deadline: Jan. 13, Start: Jan. 15

Basketball Tune-up: Entry deadline: Jan. 14, Start: Jan. 15  
Basketball: Entry deadline: Jan. 14, Start: Jan. 16

## Wrestling team busy

The Oregon wrestling team will take on the San Jose State Spartans tonight in a dual meet. It will be the first of three straight nights of action for the matmen as they will meet Fresno State University Bulldogs on Thursday night and then take on the Oregon State University Beavers and Chico State University in a double dual on Friday night.

Wednesday and Thursday matches will be at 7:30 p.m. while Fridays match will begin at 7 p.m.

Oregon is coming off a sixth place team finish at the Doc Peterson Invitational in Chico, Calif. Oregon's Scott Harter won the 177 pound weight class at the meet. It was Harter's second Peterson Invitational title in as many years.



Dave Williford

## Williford celebrates

Oregon's newest assistant sports information director Dave Williford celebrates his 31st birthday today.

Williford joined the Oregon staff from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa in July of 1985.

Williford is a graduate of the University of Kansas and has been an invaluable addition to the Oregon SID staff according to his counterpart John Lashway.

"Dave is really a nice person, and he adds a great deal to our office," Lashway says.

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