

Dream Team II looking for victory

CHICAGO (AP) — Shaquille O'Neal, by turns rap artist, fledgling movie star and All-Star center, has proper deference for his Dream Team predecessors. "Dream Team I was excellent, they didn't lose ever," he said Wednesday, sweat pouring off him in a hot Chicago gym after the opening practice for Dream Team II. "We want to play our game and do the same thing Dream Team I did."

As to how this aggregation of NBA stars — aiming to win next month's world championships in Toronto — stacks up with the 1992 Olympic team of Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson and Larry Bird, O'Neal said: "We'll beat them."

Added Alonzo Mourning: "Magic's out and Michael's in a whole another world now. I think we could give them a run, think we could take them out."

Dream Team I won eight straight games at the Barcelona Games by an average of 44 points.

"It's much better than being on an all-star team," Dominique Wilkins said. "It's unfair however, to try and compare the two teams. ... You have different players. Honestly though, I'd have to go with Dream II. These are my guys."

Don Nelson, coach of the Golden State Warriors and the world championship team, said the first Dream Team was unique.

"I don't know if there will ever be another Dream

Team I because we had some of the biggest stars to-ever play in the game at the end of their careers," he said.

"It was a real special team because of that. I don't think you can look at Dream Team II other than to say that it's full of great players and quite a few of them are young and haven't reached their stardom or potential or have enough history behind them like Magic, Bird."

Nelson is well aware that everyone is a star and wants to make a contribution to what is expected to be an easy path to a world championship. The finals are Aug. 14.

"We can't play 12 guys and they all know that," Nelson said. "It's a sensitive area we all have to work through."

Nelson said he probably would follow what Chuck Daly did in 1992 — use a different lineup each game.

"We've asked everybody to leave their egos outside the door and play for all the right reasons," he said. "And there is only one and that is to win."

O'Neal, who has another rap album in the works for a November release, said he'll do whatever is asked.

"I'll probably be a rebounder and a shot blocker, play defense, whatever Coach Nelson asks, he said.

Mariners' games postponed as Kingdome ceiling tiles fall

SEATTLE (AP) — The threat that more insulation tiles could fall from the Kingdome ceiling prompted officials to postpone the Seattle Mariners' next six games, including this week's doubleheader with the Baltimore Orioles.

Four games, Thursday through Sunday, against the Boston Red Sox were also postponed, although officials were scrambling to find another place to play those contests, Mariners spokesman Dave Aust said.

On Tuesday, four tiles fell from the ceiling of the Kingdome nearly 180 feet into the stands behind home plate, forcing postponement of that night's Orioles-Mariners game.

No one was hurt in Tuesday's mishap, but no games will be played in the roofed, concrete stadium until the ceiling's safety can be guaranteed, officials said.

Mariners president Chuck Armstrong "was telling me he heard mothers this morning saying, 'I don't want to put my kids out there with tiles falling,'" said Frank Abe, spokesman for King County executive Gary Locke.

King County owns the Kingdome.

It was the first time any sporting event was called off in the dome's 18-year history, said Kingdome spokeswoman Carol Keaton.

"This will be a chapter in the book, won't it?" mused Mariners general manager Woody Woodward as he gazed upward from in front of the Seattle dugout.

Mariners officials said they were on the phone this morning with the American League trying to find another location to play the series against Boston. They would not discuss specific locations, but Aust noted the National League's California teams are playing on the East Coast this week.

The Mariners were also looking into the possibility of playing in Triple A stadiums in Tacoma and Vancouver, British Columbia, according to Aust.

Aust said late Tuesday that workers had bolted in the tiles next to the ones that fell and had completed a visual inspection of most of the Kingdome roof. No further problems were spotted, but officials said they would call in forensic engineers to pinpoint the exact cause of the accident.

A 32-by-48-inch tile weighing about 15 pounds tumbled nearly 180 feet into the stands about 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, while players were doing their warm-up stretching. Three more of the wood-fiber tiles fell an hour later.

The gates had not been opened, and no fans were admitted to the stadium. About 15,000 to 17,000 had been expected to attend the game, Aust said.

Refunds will be offered to people who bought tickets for the Tuesday night game and to those who paid for parking on Kingdome-operated lots.

Keaton estimated \$300,000 to \$350,000 in revenue was lost because of the postponement, including tickets, concessions, souvenirs and parking.

Pacific Components Inc. was awarded a \$4 million contract in 1993 to strip the entire nine-acre Kingdome roof down to its concrete structure and resurface it. The work won't be completed until next year.

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