



## Owners and players decide to lace 'em up

NEW YORK (AP) — The NHL season was saved Wednesday when players gave-in to a management ultimatum and sacrificed some freedom to play hockey again.

Leaders of the NHL Players Association accepted the owners' take-it-or-else proposal, effectively ending the 103-day lockout and pulling off the biggest save in hockey history.

Had they rejected the 6-year contract, the NHL would have gone major-league baseball one worse by becoming the first sports league to shut down an entire season in a labor dispute.

"Are we happy about the scars that have been created for the game of hockey?" asked union president Mike Gartner. "Are we happy about losing millions of dollars? Are we happy the relations between owners and players have been severely hindered?"

"No, we're not happy about that. But we're happy that hock-

### FINALLY

**WHAT:** 103-day NHL lockout came to an end on Wednesday.

**HOW:** The NHL Players Association accepted the owners proposal.

**AT STAKE:** Had the players not accepted the final proposal, the NHL would have become the first sports league to shut down an entire season in a labor dispute.



EMERALD

ey is hopefully going to be played very soon."

The NHLPA executive committee sent the contract to the union's 700-plus members for ratification by management's noon Friday deadline. And though it is expected to receive

the necessary 51 percent approval, "there will be a lot of guys with discontent," said Mick Vukota of the New York Islanders.

"There have been hard-liners in our union who have stepped aside for the good of the game," Vukota said. "Some relationships between players and owners were in bad shape even before this started."

Although they managed to sidestep the salary cap and payroll tax favored by the owners, the players made most of the concessions during three months of often nasty negotiations.

Nevertheless, most seemed happy that they'll be practicing Friday afternoon for the first time since owners announced Sept. 30 that the lockout would begin the next day.

"It's our livelihood," said Eric Weinrich of the Chicago Blackhawks. "This is what most of the guys have done their whole

lives. All we know is hockey. We want to play hockey because that's what hockey players do."

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, who on Tuesday night delivered the owners' take-it-or-leave-it offer to union head Bob Goodenow, said the season would start late next week, possibly Friday.

The regular season, probably 48 games, will be followed by four best-of-7 playoff rounds. The NHL normally plays an 84-game schedule, and most owners said as recently as this week that any season shorter than 50 games wouldn't be "legitimate."

In the end, the owners felt losing 36 games from this season's schedule was a small price to take back some of the control they lost in settling the 10-day strike before the 1992 playoffs.

"I think players realized that something had to change," said Edmonton general manager

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THURSDAY

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### NAMES IN THE GAME

PHOENIX (AP) — Hours after accepting the head coaching job at Phoenix College, former NFL running back **Stump Mitchell** turned down the position Wednesday after being told he couldn't continue to coach at Casa Grande High.

The school district board voted Tuesday night to allow Mitchell to coach Phoenix College, but Mitchell said he did not want to abandon the prep program.

"I feel like I have an obligation to the kids at Casa Grande, kids that I care about," he said. "I can't just run off and leave them hanging."

NEW YORK (AP) — **Dennis Mitchell**, the world's top-ranked 100-meter runner in 1994, will put his prestige on the line against a strong field of sprinters in the 60-meter dash at the Chemical Bank Millrose Games Feb. 3 at Madison Square Garden.

Mitchell won bronze medals at the 1992 Olympics and the 1991 and 1993 World Championships.

His closest competition is expected from training partner Jon Drummond, ranked third in the world and a teammate of Mitchell's on the gold-medal, world record-setting 400-meter relay team at the 1993 World Championships.

BEIJING (AP) — China's top women's long-distance runner has vowed not to return to training under controversial coach Ma Junren, complaining that he treated his athletes poorly.

**Wang Junxia**, who set world records in the 3,000 and 10,000 meters in 1993, was among 16 athletes who walked out of Ma's camp in mid-December over differences over their prize money and excessive discipline.

"If coach Ma had treated us better, we would have worked ourselves to death," Wang told the *Beijing Youth News*.

## Recent events a blessing for Oregon athletics



CHRIS METZ

I never thought I'd be saying this, but it's a great day to be a Duck fan.

Not that any other day is a particularly bad time to be a fan of Oregon athletics, but even the snottiest of fans would probably admit that the Ducks have done nothing but impress in 1994-95.

In one week, the Oregon football team played the No. 2 team in the nation to a stalemate through three quarters of play in the greatest postseason bowl ever — some would even call it "the granddaddy of them all."

And before Oregon fans could even unpack from their trip to

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GARY GRASS/Emerald

1994 was an incredible year for Oregon and its fans, who were treated with a trip to Pasadena, and 1995 looks to be heading in the right direction as well.

## USC Seven-footer out for season with torn ligaments in knee

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Backup center Kirk Homenick will miss the rest of the Southern California Trojans' basketball season because of torn ligaments in his left knee.

The 7-foot Homenick, who averaged 2.3 rebounds and one point a game in limited duty this season, will have surgery on his knee on Friday, the school announced Wednesday.

He hurt his knee during practice on Dec. 31.

Homenick is the second Trojan player to be sidelined by a knee injury this season. Tremayne Anchrum, a 6-5 forward, hurt his knee in practice Oct. 26 and had to have surgery, which ended his season.

USC has only nine basketball scholarship players available now, and only one player — 6-11 David Crouse, also a backup center — taller than 6-7. The Trojans have been using a three-guard lineup.

## Hockey settlement not exactly something to write home about

Jim Litke

Counterfeit seasons are like stereos bought out of the trunk of some oily guy's car: They look like a good idea until you actually try and play them. Now that the hockey deal is finally done, watch what happens when the switch gets thrown.

Unrepentant owners, unprepared and unhappy players, unexciting games and an unbalanced schedule — all the elements are in place for an unmitigated disaster of a season. And all because those unnecessary delays in August, September and October gave rise to a 103-day lockout that prompted this unseemly rush to get back into the pockets of the paying customers.

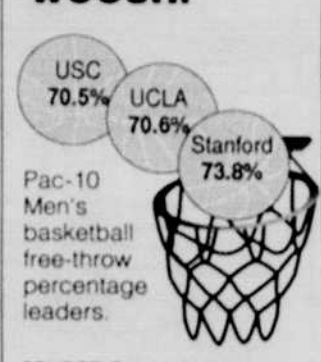
Remember the split season that baseball pawned off on its fans after the strike of 1981 (and may yet be forced to repeat in 1995)? Remember the 1987 NFL fiasco that featured three games played by impostors before the real owners of the uniforms, fresh from the picket lines, showed up to fill them out?

Well, when this hockey season ends in July, there won't be a Zamboni anywhere big enough to erase the bad memories, either.

Earlier this week, New York Rangers general manager Neil Smith called plans to start the season next Monday "unrealistic and improbable." And that was before all of Tues-

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### WOOSH!



SOURCE: Pac-10 Conference

MATT GARTON/Emerald