

# Barkley entertaining thoughts of retirement again

PHOENIX (AP) — Charles Barkley is talking retirement again. This time, though, he may be serious.

Last year at this time, after the Houston Rockets beat the Suns in Game 7 of the Western Conference finals in which Barkley was hobbled by back and groin injuries, he said his career was over.

A month later, Barkley said he was coming back for at least one more try at an NBA championship.

But after the Rockets eliminated the Suns on Saturday in another seven-game playoff series, Barkley said he's calling it quits.

Probably.

"More than likely, I have played my last game," he said. "It's not debatable or discussable. ... I'm also saying it's not 100 percent done."

Barkley, who did not immediately return telephone calls Sunday, plans to meet with Suns president Jerry Colangelo soon to discuss his situation.

"We'll talk at a time when he may not be as emotion-

al, not after a seventh-game loss in the playoffs," Colangelo said Sunday. "He's hurt and disappointed."

"I think it's important to wait a few days and let the pain go away before making a decision like that. I do think it's important to find out one way or another soon, but I don't think it needs to be today."

Barkley had 18 points and 23 rebounds Saturday despite playing on a strained left knee.

"I break down in the playoffs," the 32-year-old forward said. "I'm fighting Father Time. It's frustrating when your body breaks down. I can't see my skills getting better. I can only see them getting worse. And I don't want to push anything to the limit."

Barkley collapsed in training camp in October 1993, and doctors diagnosed a bulging disk in his spine. He was in pain most of that season, playing a career-low 65 games and averaging 21.6 points per game, the lowest since his second campaign.

One month after announcing he was retiring, Barkley called a news conference to say he was committed to rehabilitating his ailing lower back and returning for at

least one more season.

He said teammate Danny Ainge had talked him out of retirement by challenging his pride.

"Last season, my heart wasn't into it," Barkley said Saturday. "I didn't want to retire. All it took was people prodding me. This year is a totally different scenario."

"My heart is definitely with this decision. I have been talking to my family and my friends all season about retiring. It's just time. I'm tired of working, tired of traveling, tired of getting beat up every night."

"The regular season is a grind. It's a grind to get to the playoffs. The league is up and coming. I don't know if I want to play against really good 25-, 26-, 27-year-olds every night."

This season, Barkley finished seventh in scoring (23.0) in 68 games. His average of 11.1 rebounds would have ranked him fourth, but he didn't have the league minimums of 70 games or 700 rebounds.

But he also shot a career-low 48.6 percent, and despite his 47-point effort in Game 3 of a 3-0 sweep of Portland, his shot deserted him often against the Rockets.

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RECYCLE

## TRACK

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because USC's Eric Bell and UCLA's Avery Anderson tied for fourth at 14.07 seconds, Livingston earned eighth place.

The Ducks were hurt by several unexpected falters, including sophomore Daniel Das Neves' 9:25.11 mark in the 3,000-meter steeplechase and senior Kanon Vanderhoff's foul in the long jump, in addition to several sub-par performances that could have resulted in additional Oregon points.

Despite a jump of 6-10½, sophomore Chris Nelson managed to salvage fifth place in the high jump, but his personal best jump of 7-2½ — which he recorded at the Oregon Twilight — would have easily earned him second place.

Nelson rebounded, however, and took sixth in the triple jump with a mark of 48-10½, placing just behind teammate Greg Bleakney, who jumped 48-11.

## Putter fails Snead in final round

MALVERN, Pa. (AP) — Jim Colbert won the Bell Atlantic Classic by following one of the golden rules of golf: Don't let the leader's mistakes go unpunished.

When J.C. Snead's putter left him midway through Sunday's final round, Colbert was there to take advantage.

He shot five birdies over an eight-hole stretch to move past Snead for his third seniors championship of the season.

"I have great instincts, and there's just a certain time where you just clear your head and do it," Colbert said. "I just got into that. I just get into a higher level, and today it was in my putting."

His 2-under-par 68 gave him a 207 total, one shot better than Snead. It was the highest score for a win on the Senior Tour this year.

Snead, the leader for the first two rounds at the Chester Valley Golf Club, had a 70 to finish one shot ahead of Jack Nicklaus, who had a final-round 68.

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