

## Magic faces whole new ball game

When I clicked on the TV Friday night, I was shocked to see an old, familiar face in an old, familiar setting. I didn't even have to listen to anything that Magic Johnson was saying in his interview with TNT's Craig Sager from a gym in Los Angeles to know what was going on.

Magic was toying with the idea of coming back to the Lakers again. Haven't we all seen this before?

It was made official in a news conference Monday afternoon. With a five-year break from professional basketball behind him after he learned he had the HIV virus, Magic will return to play Tuesday for a home game against Golden State.

By my count, this is the third time (not counting the 1992 Olympics) that Magic has attempted a National Basketball Association comeback.

Think back to the days of Showtime, when Magic and his ultra-talented Lakers team catapulted the NBA out of obscurity in the '70s to its popularity in the '80s.

Magic, along with pals James Worthy, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Byron Scott, threw a life preserver to the drowning NBA and turned it into the most popular professional sport America had ever seen. Magic did more than save the NBA; he transformed the game into the fast-breaking, up-tempo style that pervades the league today.

All the while, there was Magic, the league's poster boy, mugging for the cameras and starring in shoe commercials. He loved the camera as much as his patented no-look passes and Showtime fast breaks.

At the height of his career, Magic was the prototype of the modern-day sports/media celebrity. He was just as at ease joking around with the press or making one of his 5,000 appearances on the Arsenio Hall show as he was on the court. At his peak, Magic's personality makes Deion Sanders look shy by today's standards.

Magic did everything for the NBA. He won five championships, went to 11 All-Star games, won an Olympic gold medal, coached the Lakers, did color commen-

### OPINION



Pete Schneider

## Ducks end successful California road trip

■ **MEN'S TENNIS:** The Ducks went 2-1 on their first road trip of the year to Southern California

By Ryan Frank  
Freelance Sports Reporter

The Oregon men's tennis team improved its record to 7-3 over the weekend as it took care of St. Mary's 4-3 on Saturday and San Jose State 6-1 on Sunday, but was swept by California on Monday. Oregon's two straight wins on Saturday and Sunday were the first back-to-back wins for the Ducks since November.

No. 1 Hans Forsberg and No. 2 Dougal Williams switched rankings and both went on to victories that led Oregon to the win over St. Mary's. Forsberg defeated Matt Grintsag 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 and Williams defeated Keita Arisawa 6-3, 6-4. Jeff Strong and Miguel Arriaga also won their matches. Arriaga beat Humido Sumida 6-3, 6-4. Only Arriaga and Williams won in straight sets.

The team of Forsberg and Williams were

the only doubles team to win their match, 8-4. John DeVors and Mike Goldstein lost their doubles match 8-6. Jeff Strong and Michael Williams did the same, losing 8-1. The loss dropped St. Mary's to 0-2 on the season.

Oregon's win over San Jose State on Sunday did not come as easy as it would appear. Only two Ducks won their matches in straight sets. No. 1 singles player Williams defeated Steve Riley 6-3, 6-4, while No. 6 Arriaga beat Jason Reeder 6-1, 6-3.

Ryan Sellschop picked up the only win for San Jose State by defeating Oregon's Carlos Navarro 7-5, 1-6, 7-5. No. 2 Forsberg, No. 4 DeVors and No. 5 Strong all won long matches. Forsberg beat Todd Dissly 7-5, 2-6, 6-2. DeVors beat Orion Wiehe 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 and Strong beat Josh Baruch 6-4, 2-6, 7-5.

Forsberg and Williams led the charge for Oregon's doubles teams with a 8-5 win. DeVors and Goldstein, along with the team of Navarro and Michael Williams, finished out the sweep of the Spartans in doubles.

"We swept San Jose State in doubles," head coach Chris Russell said. "That was the first time it happened since the fall season. That is very promising for us."

In the final match of the three-day road trip, No. 14 Cal lost only two sets as it swept the Ducks 7-0 on Monday afternoon. No. 1 singles player Dougal Williams and No. 2 Forsberg were the only two who were able to push their matches to three sets.

Williams lost to Michael Hill 1-6, 6-0, 6-0 and Forsberg was beaten by Casey Louie 3-6, 6-0, 6-2. Hill and Louie were ranked No. 4 and No. 23, respectively, in the national pre-season poll.

No. 3 Navarro, No. 4 Strong, No. 5 Goldstein and No. 6 Arriaga all lost in straight sets. And the teams of Williams and Forsberg, Strong and Goldstein and Michael Williams and Navarro were unable to muster a win in doubles action.

Oregon will travel south again, this time to face Arizona State and Arizona in back-to-back matches on Feb. 4 and 5.

## New-look Lakers to use Magic against Warriors

■ **COMEBACK:** Saying this was the time to return, Magic Johnson makes it official on Monday

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Magic Johnson returned to the NBA today from an off-and-on retirement he entered after learning in 1991 that he had the AIDS virus.

Johnson signed a contract for the remainder of the season and will return to the Los Angeles Lakers on tonight when they play the Golden State Warriors at the Forum.

"It's now or never," Johnson said after practice Monday. "I'm 36. If this is the last hurrah, so be it, if it's next year, we'll see."

"I can still do some of the things I'm used to doing," he said.

Johnson, who has been practicing with the team for two weeks, won't be playing point guard — the position he played when he led the Lakers to five NBA championships in the 1980s. Instead, he'll be in the lineup as a forward, and much of the offense will probably run through him.

"After I practiced with the Lakers, I realized I could still do some things that will help this team. They don't have to fit in with me, I have to fit in with them."

Johnson will be playing in his first NBA game other than exhibitions since June 12, 1991. He retired five months later, just prior to the 1991-92 season, after testing positive for the virus that causes AIDS.

Johnson said he was "not worried" about experiencing the kind of negative reaction that some players expressed about competing with someone who is HIV positive during an abortive comeback in the 1992-93 pre-season.

He said NBA commissioner David Stern "has done a wonderful job of educating the players."

Johnson said he has competed

# Magic Johnson

## HISTORY

- June 25, 1979 — Lakers formally select Johnson with the first pick in the 1979 draft.

### 1980s

- May 16, 1980 — Starting at center in place of the injured Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Johnson scores 42 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists against Philadelphia to lead the Lakers to the title and become the first rookie named MVP of the Finals.
- March 13, 1986 — Records his 5,000th career assist.
- Feb. 5, 1987 — Scores his 10,000th point.

### 1990s

- Nov. 7, 1991 — Announces his retirement at age 32 after testing positive for the HIV virus. He leaves the NBA ranked first in career assists with 9,921 and second in career steals with 1,698.
- Feb. 9, 1992 — Wins MVP honors in the NBA All-Star Game as the West beats the East 153-113 in Orlando, Fla.
- Aug. 8, 1992 — Wins gold medal as the United States beats Croatia 117-85 in the Olympic Games in Barcelona.
- Sept. 29, 1992 — Announces he will return to the Lakers and play limited schedule in the 1992-93 NBA season.
- Nov. 2, 1992 — Announces his retirement again in a statement issued by the Lakers.
- Oct. 1, 1993 — Failed in bid for NBA expansion franchise in Toronto.
- March 22, 1994 — Named coach of the Los Angeles Lakers, replacing Randy Pfund.
- April 16, 1994 — Announces he won't return as coach of the Lakers.
- April 24, 1994 — Finishes the season with a 5-11 record as coach, including a franchise-record 10 straight losses to end the season.
- Jan. 29, 1996 — Signed contract for the remainder of the season with the Los Angeles Lakers after selling his interest in the team.

MATT GARTON/Emerald

in enough exhibition games to allay those fears.

"If you play against players all summer, there's no difference with playing against them in a game," he said.

Johnson's agent, Lon Rosen, said the Lakers great signed a contract just before practice at Loyola Marymount University and sold his interest in the Lakers.

"He will be playing tomorrow night; No. 32 will be back," Rosen said.

There have been several abortive Johnson comebacks since his original retirement, and several other speculative comebacks. Johnson continually changed his mind and finally, last summer, said he would never return.

For Johnson, however, the word "never" hasn't been a definite thing.

"We're happy to welcome Earvin back," Stern said. "Even

after his retirement from the NBA, he continued to bring joy to millions of fans from around the world through his global travels. We're pleased that he has decided to once again showcase to NBA fans his talent and unique enthusiasm for the game."

Rosen said Johnson will decide following this season what he wants to do thereafter. Johnson will be 37 by the time the 1996-97 season starts.

"He'll continue in all his businesses," Rosen said. "His touring team will postpone its tour."

Lakers coach Del Harris expressed excitement about Johnson's move.

"It's an exciting day, obviously, for everybody," Harris said. "There's no doubt the players are looking forward to playing with him on a real basis."

"I've been excited about it for some time. The team's playing

well and now we expect to play even better. I'm more happy for Earvin, really, than anything else."

"He adds so much," Lakers guard Sedale Threatt said. "He can play five positions. I think teams will have to concentrate on him and, with the nucleus we already have, it will make us the best team in the West."

Teammate Cedric Ceballos said Johnson wanted to play Tuesday to "warm himself up for Michael Jordan."

The Lakers play the Chicago Bulls on Friday night at the Forum.

"I'm on record, coast-to-coast, as saying I've always been in favor of it, and our team is in favor of it," Harris had said prior to the announcement.

Johnson was surrounded by reporters when he arrived at practice, working out at center and forward.

"Yes, I am back, and I'll see you guys later," he said. "Hey, I'm back. It's that time. I have to go to work."

Before his retirement, Johnson led the Lakers to five NBA championships in 12 seasons and won three most valuable player awards. Often referred to as the world's tallest point guard, Johnson retired as the NBA career assist leader, a position since passed by Utah's John Stockton.

In his comeback, Johnson is expected to spend most of his time at power forward.

"We had a few guys on the team who called him and told him we want him back," the Lakers' Eddie Jones said. "What he brings to the team is a winner's attitude."

Johnson left Michigan State after his sophomore season in 1979 and joined the Lakers as the NBA's No. 1 draft choice. Johnson, who led Michigan State to the NCAA championship in his final season, helped the Lakers win the NBA crown as a rookie.