

Pyle: NBA suffers a big loss

Continued from Page 7 leading 44 stolen bases. New York — which has long been known as the "Bronx Bombers" due to the long-ball contributions of legends such as Babe Ruth, Mickey Mantle and Reggie Jackson — has always been ridiculed for its severe lack of speed. Those days are over with Knoblauch, Williams, shortstop Derek Jeter and Co. shutting the basepaths with reckless abandon.

New York looks like the definite early season favorite to claim its second World Series title in three seasons. If that happens, my fellow reporter Rob Moseley (he of the infamous predictions) will have finally been correct in one of his forecasting columns. Just between you and me, I badgered Moseley — who bleeds Dodger blue — until he surprisingly saw the light and made the Yankees his pick.

"The Glide's" farewell

It was not the way Clyde Drexler would have written the last chapter to his superb NBA career. Drexler was bounced from the playoffs and into retirement when his Houston Rockets fell to the Utah Jazz in the decisive fifth game of their first-round series Sunday.

"The Glide," who announced late in the season that he would become the head coach at his alma mater, the University of Houston, at the season's end, did not come near to approaching his career regular season and playoff average of 20.4 points per game as he scored just six points on one-for-13 shooting in the loss.

But in typical Drexler fashion, he accepted the bittersweet ending with a big smile and pure class, waving to the Utah crowd as he walked off the court for the last time and joking with NBC analyst Steve Jones in a postgame interview.

I expected nothing less from future Hall of Famer Drexler, who enchanted many Oregonian's such as myself with his slick moves and warm heart during his 11-plus seasons with the Portland Trail Blazers.

I'll always remember the time I got Drexler's autograph after a game as a kid. He was called back out of the locker room for a postgame interview with Bill Schonely at midcourt after leading the Blazers to victory.

As he navigated his way through the mob that had gathered courtside and promised autographs for everyone after the interview, one kid whined that his mom said he had to leave right away. Drexler turned around without hesitation, walked to the kid and signed his poster. My mom and I were amazed. After the interview, Drexler spent at least an hour signing for everyone.

Here's to hoping coach Drexler can instill a pinch of that genuine class into some of his future players. The NBA is losing not only a great player, but a wonderful person.

Thanks for the memories, Clyde.

Tim Pyle is a sports reporter for the Emerald.

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