

# Jordan steps into politics with Bradley endorsement

By Laura Meckler  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — His airness Michael Jordan, the most marketable athlete to ever pitch a product, is trying to give Bill Bradley a lift in his first political endorsement ad. It's also a test of whether Jordan can pitch politics.

Bradley, a former New York Knicks star, already has collected endorsements and cash from his basketball buddies. But the new Jordan ad may be the most prized dividend from his days on the court as he seeks the Democratic nomination for president.

Jordan, who retired from the Chicago Bulls as a superstar, takes in some \$69 million each year selling sneakers, soft drinks, cologne and underwear. He stars in ads for long-distance phone companies, batteries and hot dogs. If Bradley had to pay market rate for his services, he couldn't afford them.

But Jordan and Bradley are friends, and that persuaded the sports icon to make the ad, said

Kristen Ludecke, Bradley's spokeswoman.

"Michael Jordan is so well-known across the country that he is able to introduce Bill Bradley to a very wide audience," she said.

The 30-second spot shows Jordan declaring his support for Bradley based on his commitment to health care for children, gun control and other issues. It will air in more than a dozen states, including many holding primaries on March 7, a critical date in Bradley's race against Vice President Al Gore.

The Gore campaign professed to have no fear about the ad.

"We've got Shaquille O'Neal. He's bigger," said spokesman Chris Lehane. The Gore camp also noted that the vice president has an endorsement from Jordan's mother.

Sixteen states hold primaries on March 7, including California and New York, but Bradley's campaign refused to say where or how frequently the ad would run. It also would not release a script or video of the commercial until Friday.

Jordan's endorsement, taped two months ago, is being used at an important point in the Democratic race. Bradley lost to Gore in both Iowa and New Hampshire and must do better to maintain the viability of his candidacy.

But it was far from clear whether Jordan's support will translate into votes.

"The return is huge because so many people will follow his lead," said Lesa Ukman, editor of IEG Sponsorship Report, which tracks sports marketing. She guessed the endorsement was worth more than \$10 million in commercial terms, though she said, "No amount of money could pay for this."

By way of comparison, Bradley has raised a total of about \$27 million for his campaign.

Ukman suggested Jordan may persuade young voters, particularly black men and people living in cities with NBA teams, who otherwise might not vote. Gore has considerably more support than Bradley does among blacks, though Bradley is courting young

people.

Either way, research suggests celebrity endorsements do not translate into votes, said Frank Greer, a veteran Democratic strategist who is not affiliated with Gore or Bradley.

"No matter how heroic a figure he is, no matter how popular a sports figure, no matter how much I like him, the question is, 'Why should I listen to Michael Jordan as to who should be my next president?'" Greer said. If celebrities could sell candidates, they'd be in ads all the time, he said.

Still, Jordan's commercials will help viewers remember Bradley's name, said Brian Murphy, editor of Sports Marketing Letter, which covers the business of sports.

"The question is, 'Can Michael Jordan sell Bill Bradley to America?'" Murphy asked. "The answer is no endorser can, not even Jordan, not even Babe Ruth."

The endorsement also is a tricky one for Jordan, a new part-owner of the Washington Wizards basketball team, who has never

gotten involved in politics before.

A decade ago Jordan declined to endorse Democrat Harvey Gantt, a black man making a strong run at Sen. Jesse Helms in Jordan's native North Carolina. Jordan explained to an author that he wasn't into politics and didn't know the issues. With an eye toward his Nike show contract, he once said: "Republicans buy shoes, too."

Bradley, meanwhile, has won endorsements from many other former top players. In November, he raised \$1.5 million at a star-studded Madison Square Garden fund-raiser featuring his former Knicks teammates. Bill Russell, the retired all-star Boston Celtic, also made ads for Bradley that urged voters in Iowa and New Hampshire to get to the polls.

Jordan, who was traveling to Oakland, Calif., for the NBA All-Star weekend, could not immediately be reached for comment Thursday. Bradley will also be at the game, meeting with several former All-Stars.

## Supreme Court considers ruling

Punishment or treatment? That is the question the Supreme Court is being asked to decide in a challenge to Washington state's sexual predator confinement program.

If the Special Commitment Center at the state prison on McNeil Island is found to be punishment, say lawyers for Andre Brigham Young of Tacoma, he should be released because he already has served his sentence.

In their appeal of a 9th U.S. Circuit Court ruling, lawyers for Washington state argue that the program is treatment.

The case could affect the other

110 sex offenders in the program, and a ruling by the high court could have implications for the 16 states that authorize civil commitment of violent sexual predators after they have completed their prison terms.

Young, now in his 50s, was convicted of raping four Tacoma women in 1962, some at knife point. He was convicted of a rape in Auburn in 1976 and of another rape in West Seattle woman in 1985.

Last year the appellate court found he had not been given a fair hearing in state courts on whether the program was punitive or thera-

peutic and ordered a hearing for him before a federal judge in Seattle.

The state's appeal to the Supreme Court on Jan. 14 countered that the appellate ruling conflicted with state Supreme Court rulings in a case involving another sexual offender who, like Young, was committed to the center indefinitely.

Young also should be barred from claiming he is being held unconstitutionally because of the conditions of confinement, state assistant attorney general Sarah Sappington said.

The Associated Press

## Web sites try to shield themselves from hackers

By David E. Kalish  
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Alarmed by a rash of hacker attacks on some of the most popular Web sites, big Internet companies rushed to fortify their computer systems Thursday in a high-tech game of cat-and-mouse with the vandals.

Taking advantage of an apparent lull in major disruptions, big Web companies and government agencies stepped up training of technicians in detecting unusual activity. Others installed advanced software filters to detect and block suspicious data.

No major new attacks surfaced during the day Thursday, after a three-day spree that briefly shut down Yahoo!, eBay's auction site, ETrade's on-line brokerage, the ZDNet technology news site and others.

Technicians at Yahoo!, the Web's most visited site, raced to install special filters to monitor Internet traffic and weed out assaults, spokeswoman Diane Hunt said. Yahoo! was crippled Monday by a bombardment of data.

Several leading Web companies refused to divulge their high-tech precautions for fear of inviting more attacks.

Envisioneering, a small high-tech consulting firm in Seaford, N.Y., said it programmed its computers to turn away messages from anonymous sources. On Tuesday, hackers apparently

commandeered Envisioneering's computer servers as a launching pad for attacks on popular Web sites, said Richard Doherty, the company's president.

"When we put up all those shields, then they stopped," Doherty said.

Companies that have been spared so far also took precautions.

Prodigy Communications Corp., the big Internet service provider, stepped up training of the 100 technicians at its data center in Yorktown, N.Y., which has more than 400 powerful computers handling Web sites as well as Internet traffic for 2 million subscribers.

"The fact is, this is the kind of attack that once started, it's going to cause some damage," Prodigy chief technology officer Bill Kirkner said. "The big question is whether you can stop the damage and how quickly you can get the systems back up. My confidence is not in my systems, it's in my workers."

The Pentagon said that all of its computers with Internet access will be checked to make sure they are not used as unwitting agents in the attacks. Hackers can hide certain vandalism tools known as "daemons" on hundreds or even thousands of other people's computers and then trigger them to launch simultaneous attacks on a single target.



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