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**Jesse Thomas**  
Go the distance

## L.A. Lakers' additions ridiculously inequitable

Oh yes, Wednesday will be a great day for Los Angeles: It's the first day of free agency and the first day the Glove and the Mailman officially become Lakers.

A day when all other NBA franchises look at one another and say, "Oh S#&T!"

As you should already know, Gary Payton and Karl Malone verbally committed last week to join the Lakers. And the Spurs would be lucky to make a BB's dent in the steel armor of the Lakers' starting lineup, especially with the Admiral retiring, the failure to pick up Alonzo Mourning and Jason Kidd's decision to stay in New Jersey.

Four future Hall of Famers: the league's second all-time leading scorer, the most dominant big man ever to play, the best defensive guard and a man who used to sleep with his basketball at night — all with the Lakers.

Oh, and the fifth man — who cares? They shouldn't get one, it's unfair enough as is. But for kicks, I heard Annika Sorenstam was interested in taking up basketball and joining the men's ranks.

And did I mention the bill was only \$6.4 million for the construction of America's new dream team? That's one-sixth what Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant will make combined next season. Hell, if I knew they came that cheap, I would have taken out more school loans and bought them myself.

Malone and Payton are nearly 75 years old combined, but Phil Jackson is still driving a freight train that is unlikely to stop short of 70 wins and a sweep through the playoffs.

The Lakers starting line-up is like Barry Bonds, and then some. You can throw any combination you want, but they're still going to knock you out of the park. With Kobe, Shaq, the 18.3 points and 7.4 assists career average from Payton and 36,374 career points of Mail delivery, you're going to need the 1992 Dream Team to stop them.

But since every question has been asked, every critic has criticized and the stats speak for themselves, I offer the good, the bad and the worse of "2003-04 Lakers' Domination," coming to a court near you.

### The Good:

1. Lakers' fans shouldn't have any doubt that their team will win its fourth title in five years. Easy enough, right? Nobody will deny that they're the overwhelming favorite.

2. It's nice to see that some players would rather see a ring on their finger than a 50-karat dollar sign around their neck. Since Payton and Malone have never played on a championship team, this is the perfect opportunity.

3. Bill Gates and Mitch Kupchak can sit around with a bottle of cognac and a few Cuban cigars while laughing at the beauty of owning monopolies.

4. No more having to see Mark Cuban being obnoxiously loud about his team's chance of making a title run. Because it

## Ems stroll to 6-5 victory against Bears

Eugene takes the win Monday with a balk and closes out the series with the Yakima Bears

By Jesse Thomas  
Sports Editor

The Eugene Emeralds won the last game of a five-game series against the Yakima Bears in an unlikely fashion Monday night.

As the Ems headed into the bottom of seventh tied 5-5, Yakima pitcher Danny Muegge wound up for a pitch and simply dropped the ball. The umpire signaled a balk and Ems first baseman Fernando Valenzuela was able to stroll to home plate for the game's final run, putting the score at 6-5.

But it wasn't an easy stroll altogether for the Emeralds, who won their second straight and third of the series against the Bears.

Shortstop Alex Garcia got things going early for the Ems by scoring the first run in the bottom of the first inning. In four at bats, Garcia had one hit and one RBI.

"It feels good that we won and the important thing is to win day after day," Garcia said. "Today wasn't either a good day or bad day."

By the top of the fourth inning the Bears were in stride and led 2-1. Left fielder Alex Frazier earned an RBI on the Bears' second run by knocking in designated hitter Conor Jackson.

But the Ems would not be denied for long. Left fielder Ryan Johnson came to the plate with two outs in the bottom of the fourth inning and cracked one over the right wall on a 1-2 pitch count.

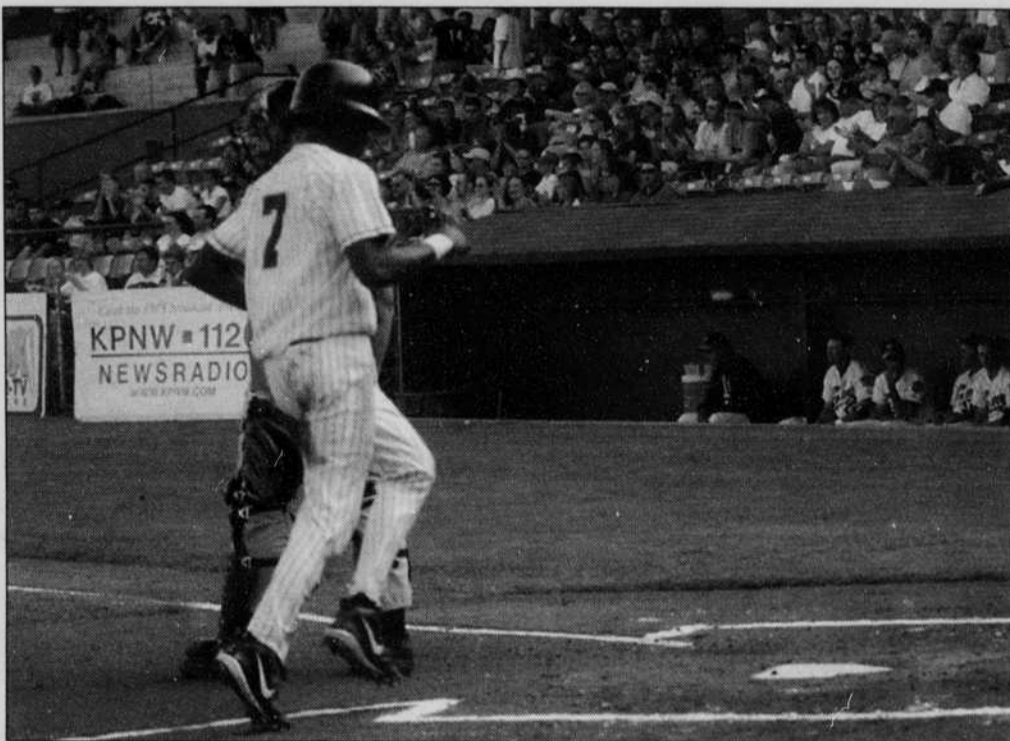
"It was a good night and we just kind of let the adrenaline do the work," said Johnson, who was playing in his first game as an Emerald. "With two strikes I was trying to put the ball in play and it just worked out well."

The Ems took a 3-2 lead heading into the fifth as Johnson also brought home Ems catcher Omar Falcon.

"He's a kid that I saw for a little bit and noticed he's a good hitter," Manager Roy Howell said. "It was clear he was a good hitter and this was a very good start."

And as the adrenaline began sweeping through the crowd it became a cat-and-dog fight for the two rivals with four lead changes on the night.

The Bears had the answer for the Ems in the top of the fifth inning. As catcher Phil Avlas and shortstop Adam Haley stood on second and third bases, second baseman Matt Morgan put one over the second



Jessica Waters Emerald

Shortstop Alex Garcia crosses the plate to score the Emeralds' first run Monday night against the Yakima Bears en route to a 6-5 win. Garcia had one RBI and one hit in the win.

baseman's head as the Bears regained the lead, 4-3.

The Bears would soon increase their lead in the top of sixth inning as third baseman Jamie D'Antona stepped to the plate and cleared the left wall.

The Ems needed an answer and got one in the bottom of the sixth inning. Falcon earned a single into left followed by Johnson getting walked to first, advancing Falcon to second.

As Jacobo shot one past the shortstop into left field, Falcon scored the first run of the inning. The comeback began, and Garcia came to the plate with the bases loaded, grounding into right field to score Johnson for the tying run.

Relief pitcher Dirk Hayhurst did his job in the top of the seventh by striking out three batters and leaving two looking.

By midway through the seventh inning, the Bears had no more answers for the cards Eugene was dealing. As Valenzuela eventually scored from

third on the balk, Eugene closed out the scoring with a one-run margin of victory.

"It was more like a tennis match tonight, and in the minors you don't usually see a game-deciding run on a balk," Howell said.

The Ems got the win Monday night but lost the series on the year 6-4. This comes after Eugene's romping of Yakima last season 10-0.

Hayhurst (2-0) got the win on the night after pitching two innings, allowing no hits and striking out four batters. Muegge (1-1) takes the loss for the Bears after throwing two strikeouts and allowing one earned run, which happened to be the deciding factor.

Eugene (15-12) will get a rare day off from competition today before heading to play Boise (7-19) Thursday in a five-game series. The Ems currently top the Northwest League West Division.

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## Rizzo gets her groove back



Courtesy

Angie Rizzo will play in her second LPGA Tour event of the year starting Thursday in New Rochelle, N.Y.

Three years after graduating from the University, Angie Rizzo is slowly gaining her footing on the LPGA Tour

By Jesse Thomas  
Sports Editor

Golf has its high and lows. Great shots erase all bad ones, and the game is never mastered. And through the good and bad, even a two-week absence can affect one's game.

Angie Rizzo missed nearly a year. But after her highest finish ever this weekend at 20th, Rizzo looks to be back on the right track for finding her game again.

After leaving an LPGA Tour event in April 2002, the 2000 University graduate was rear-ended in a car accident and suffered severe whiplash and cervical, thoracic and lumbar strains that required several months of rehabilitation.

"I've never been injured before," said Rizzo, who majored in business and sports marketing. "So that was a setback both physically and mentally."

The former 4-year member of Oregon women's golf has been in and out of LPGA Tour events the past three years. As a student of former women's

head coach Renee Baumgartner, Rizzo won the State Farm Collegiate Championship in 1999 and placed in the top five on four occasions.

Rizzo was also a two-time Academic All-American while attending the University.

"She was a diamond in the rough for us," Baumgartner said. "She had incredible talent. She hits the ball farther than any player I've ever coached and she was part of the best teams I've ever coached." At the end of her Oregon career, Rizzo turned professional in August of 2000. In 2001, the Coon Rapids, Minn., native earned exempt status on the SBC Futures Tour, a smaller version of the LPGA Tour, where she was able to compete in every event.

In her return to qualifying school in 2001, Rizzo finished in a tie for 45th at the LPGA Final Qualifying Tournament, allowing her non-exempt status for the 2002 season, meaning she could play in selected tournaments.

"In this generation, she was the first one to really make it and that was really exciting," Baumgartner said. "She's worked very hard and

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