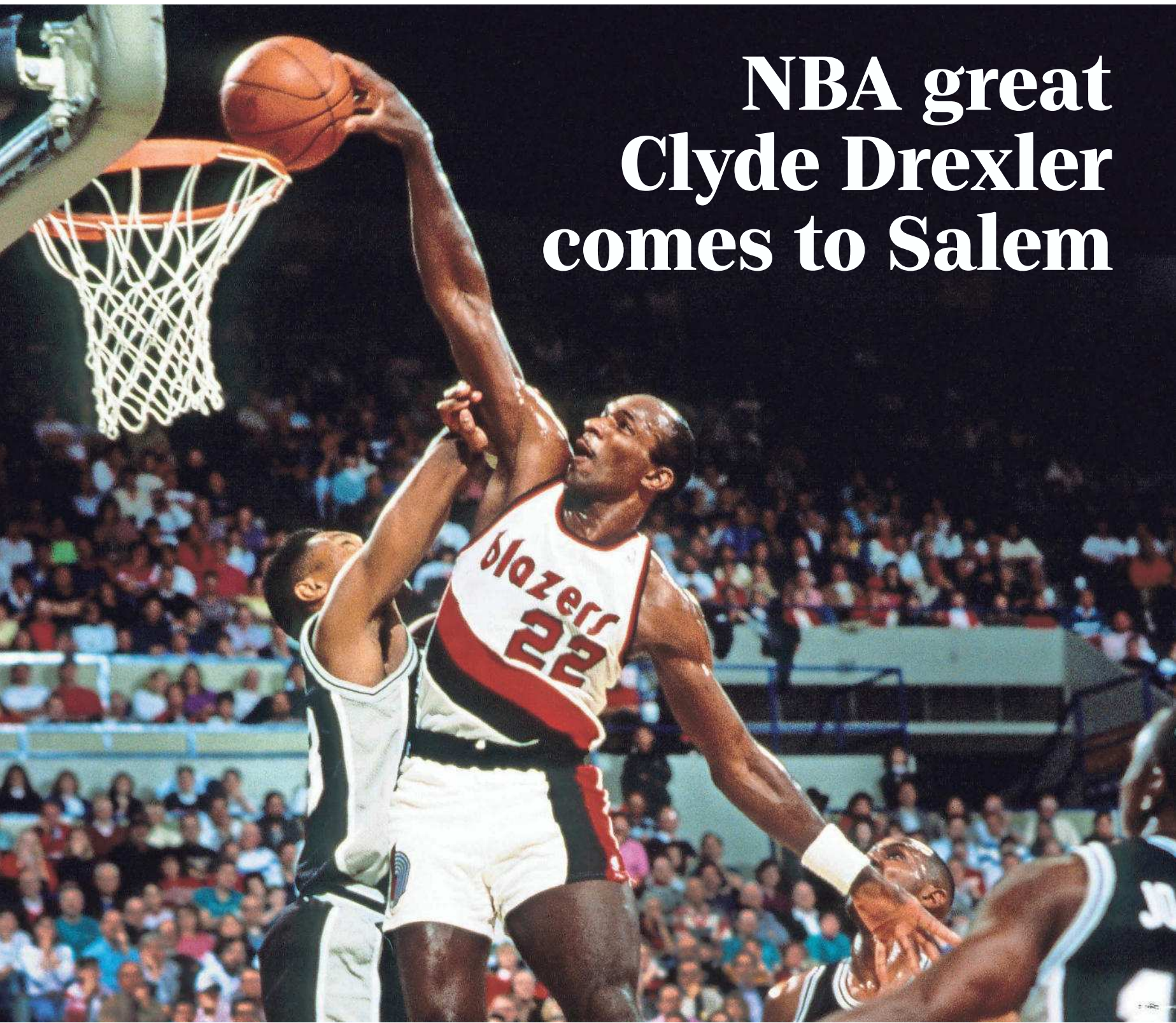


Sports



NBA great Clyde Drexler comes to Salem

Former Portland Trail Blazers guard Clyde Drexler dunks the ball against the San Antonio Spurs at Memorial Coliseum. Drexler will make a rare public appearance as the special guest at the Statesman Journal Mid-Valley Sports Awards on June 4. USA TODAY SPORTS

Former Portland Trail Blazers guard to be guest at Statesman Journal Sports Awards

Capi Lynn Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Clyde Drexler gave me a buzz this week.

We shot the breeze about the Portland Trail Blazers, public appearances, the Houston Rockets, fan adoration, the BIG3, his nickname and his children — not necessarily in that order.

Drexler will be our special guest the Statesman Journal Mid-Valley Sports Awards on June 4 at the Salem Convention Center as we celebrate high school sports and the best and brightest of our local athletes in 19 sports at 36 schools.

“I’m honored to be there for your banquet,” Drexler said, calling from his home in Houston, Texas. “It’s going to be a lot of fun.”

We’re the ones who should be honored.

“I maybe do two a year, sometimes none,” he said of public appearances and speaking engagements.

So, this is rare for us to have secured you for this event, I ask?

“Very rare,” he said.

Tickets are still available for the red-carpet dinner event. You don’t have to be related to or know someone being honored. Longtime Blazers fans are go-

ing to want to take advantage of this opportunity to see and hear from Drexler.

He couldn’t remember his last public appearance in Oregon it’s been so long.

The last time he made one in Salem was 10 years ago, headlining the grand reopening of Circuit City at Keizer Station. A few years before that, he was in town at a couple bookstores promoting his autobiography, “Clyde the Glide.”

He kept a home in Portland long after the Blazers traded him to the Rockets, but sold it in 2005.

Houston has always been home base. That’s where he grew up, played college basketball, and returned home to help the Rockets win an NBA championship.

Drexler’s Hall of Fame career was in the record books well before the athletes we’ll honor at the Sports Awards were born. He retired 20 years ago.

Many of them wouldn’t recognize him at a shopping mall. Some might not even know the name, except perhaps on video games.

“If they’re under 30 or under 25, nowadays they have to be sports fans,” he said. “If they’re not sports fans, you can slide right by them.”

Parents of the athletes will know who he is. He’s one of the most beloved Blazers in franchise history. As a proud fa-

ther, Drexler will be able to relate to what they’ll experience at the Sports Awards.

While he’s exceptionally protective about his private life, he made an exception to brag a bit about his children, ages 31 to 24.

“They’re all doing incredible things,” he said. “I’m proud of all of them.”

The oldest, Erica, has a master’s degree in divinity and works for a Christian organization in Houston.

Son Austin has a film degree from the University of Southern California and is a video game developer in the Los Angeles area.

Daughter Elise just graduated from UCLA film school and is looking for employment.

The youngest, Adam, is playing professional basketball in Japan and hopes to find a spot on an NBA roster.

“He should be playing for the Blazers,” Drexler said. “He’s that good.”

I imagine Dad has some pull with the franchise, which retired his No. 22 jersey in 2001.

“I need to make a few calls,” Drexler said. “But I hate to do stuff like that.”

If he’s as smooth at the negotiation table as he was on the basketball court, his son has a shot.

Drexler was known for his silky-smooth, high-flying moves to the basket, the reason he has one of the coolest nicknames in basketball, maybe in all sports.

He’s had it since high school when one of his teammates made a comment about how he glided to the basket as he took off beyond the free throw line for a dunk.

Drexler went on to become a 10-time NBA All-Star and was named one of the 50 Greatest Players in league history.

Blazers fans were crushed when Drexler asked to be traded to a contender and helped the Rockets win an NBA title.

“Portland was the team that drafted me. Other teams had the opportunity that passed. That’s why I was so loyal for so many years,” Drexler told me. “I didn’t think about leaving until they started rebuilding.”

Portland will always have a special place in his heart, especially Blazers fans, whom he calls “the greatest in the league.”

He remains involved in basketball as a color analyst for the Rockets, who are in the NBA playoffs, and as the commis-

See DREXLER, Page 3B

Free fishing weekend coming up June 2-3



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

There’s an old chestnut that is trotted out in almost every Journalism 101 class that has been held since coal was trees.

The professor will write the word “ASSUME” on the board, then underline each section as they say “when you assume something, it makes an ASS out of U and ME.”

Wise words indeed for any larval or veteran journalist in pursuit of truth, justice, and the American way.

I said “veteran” in the previous sentence because I have fallen into the ass-u-me trap more than once.

A decade and change ago, yours truly, the sharp-penciled sultan of snark, wrote a column that Free Fishing Weekend didn’t make a lot of sense. At that time it was a one-and-done annual event in the Beaver State.

During the coming June 2 and 3 weekend, no fishing license or tags are required to fish, go crabbing or clamming in Oregon.

Since that long-debunked column, Oregon has added six more free fishing days to the annual calendar – the next are Sept. 1 and 2 for Labor Day, and Nov. 23 and 24 for Thanksgiving (the first two were Feb. 17 and 18 for President’s Day Weekend).

The discredited premise of the long-ago skreed was that since most of the events sponsored by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife are for

kids who don’t need fishing licenses, Free Fishing Weekend was something of a misnomer.

For which I was roundly doped-slapped verbally by a courteous but adamant reader who informed me, at length, that Free Fishing Weekend was the ONLY time that she and her family ever went fishing.

Free loaner equipment, free instruction, even free cleaning and bagging of their catch at the sponsored events, she ticked off the incentives. It’s like going to the fish market, only outdoors and for free was the way that she described it.

Busted. See what you get when you ASSUME?

Several years ago, Oregon moved the June dates from the first weekend after

See FISHING, Page 3B



Free Fishing Weekend in Oregon is mostly kids stuff, but adults love it too. HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL