

# Sport Talk

by Ron Sykes, Sports Editor



What a difference a year makes. At the beginning of the '80-'81 basketball season, there were three centers coming out of the prep ranks that most basketball experts considered the cream of the crop of prep basketball, UCLA's Stuart Gray, Georgetown's Patrick Ewing and Missouri's Mark Stepanovich. Those three were named to play in the National Sports Festival and UCLA's Gray emerged as the top prospect. He was chosen as the National Prep Player-of-the-Year. So what happened?

Gray started 26 games as a freshman for the Bruins, averaged 4.9 points per game and 4.2 rebounds. In contrast, Georgetown's Pat Ewing averaged 13.6 points per game and 11 boards in leading the Hoyas' to the final four. After viewing two highly touted, it seems incredible that one could ever consider the two in the same breath. Ewing has all the qualities necessary to become a dominant player in the college game, while Gray is terribly lacking in the same.

Pat Ewing can run the floor, block shots, is a fierce rebounder and more than adequate scorer. Stuart Gray has had trouble adjusting to the speed of the college game which caused him to be benched for lack of quickness.

Gray's benching left the number three ranked Bruins terribly short in the middle. They now must go with a front line of 6-8 Darren Daye, 6-5 Miguel Nigel, and 6-7 Kenny Fields. With a front line like that it will be hard to win consistently in the Pac-10.

UCLA was the early season pick to dethrone three-time Pac-10 champion Oregon State. The Beavers, 5-3, appear to be strong in the middle, boasting a front line of 6-8 Charlie Sitton, 6-8½ sophomore A.C. Green, and 6-10 freshman Steve Woodside.

Steve Woodside, after a shaky start, seems now to be learning Ralph Miller's unsophisticated but

demanding offense. Woodside has the speed and intelligence to play well and could make the difference in OSU's effort to make it four in a row.

Oregon State got off to a bad start, but is rapidly regaining the poise that led them to a 25-5 record last year. If UCLA is forced to play without a strong center, then look for the Beavers to once again rule the Pac-10.

### Atlanta vs. New Orleans

Falcons, after losing 38-7 to Green Bay, should rebound against the Saints. Injuries to quarterback Kenny Stabler have left Coach Bum Phillips without anyone to take control. Atlanta has already clinched a play-off berth and will be playing only to stay sharp. Take Falcons by 6.

### New York Giants vs. Philadelphia

Philly and the Giants have identical 3-5 records and both are still mathematically in the running for a playoff spot. It's a must win situation for both teams. The Eagles surprised Dallas 24-20 last Sunday and appear to be ready to battle for the last berth. Take Eagles by 5.

### St. Louis vs. Washington

The Redskins, 7-1, are already in. St. Louis, 5-3, is also in. Redskin Quarterback Joe Theismann is red hot and rolling. St. Louis quarterback Neil Lomax is gaining confidence with each game. Take Washington by 3.

### Green Bay vs. Detroit

The Packers are the most improved team of this abbreviated season. The Pack, 5-2-1, are an explosive offensive unit. They have the best pair of wide receivers, John Jefferson and James Lofton, in the game today. Detroit is the most disappointing team of the season. The Lions were expected to have a good season. But injuries to key linemen

have rendered them an also-ran. Take Green Bay by 1.

### Chicago vs. Tampa

This game will eliminate the 3-5 Bears of any chance for the playoffs. Quarterback Doug Williams will riddle the Bear secondary with passes. Take Tampa Bay by 7.

### Buffalo vs. New England

Buffalo, 4-4, and New England, 4-4, are tied with Cleveland with an identical record. These three teams will battle for the last two playoff spots in the AFL. Needless to say, the game is crucial for both. Buffalo failed miserably against Miami in the Orange Bowl but should rebound to bop the Patriots. Take Buffalo by 5.

### New York Jets vs. Kansas City

This game matches one team, the 6-2 Jets, going somewhere, and the 2-6 Chiefs, going nowhere. New York by 10.

### L.A. Rams vs. San Francisco

49ers need to win their two remaining games to have any chance of going to the playoffs. There are six NFL teams vying for the two remaining spots. The Rams, 1-7, are the only NFL team mathematically already eliminated. Take 49ers by 11.

### Hall of Fame Bowl at Birmingham, Ala.: Vanderbilt (8-3-0) vs. Air Force (7-5-0)

Vanderbilt, having played the toughest schedule and losing only to North Carolina, Alabama and number one ranked Georgia Bulldogs, should have little trouble defeating the Fly boys from Denver, Colorado. Take Vandy by 14.

### Peach Bowl at Atlanta: Iowa (7-4-0) vs. Tennessee (6-4-1)

Hawkeye running game should be enough to offset the strong passing

game of Tennessee Iowa by 6.

### Blubonnet Bowl at Houston: Arkansas Razorbacks (8-2-1) vs. Florida Gators (8-3-0)

Gators looked awesome earlier defeating the Miami Hurricanes 17-14, Southern Cal 17-9, and Mississippi State 27-17. Gators' speed should present them with a slim 3-point win.

### Fiesta Bowl at Tempe, Arizona: Oklahoma (8-3-0) vs. Arizona State (9-2-0)

Sun Devils are one of the most physical teams in the country. Their offensive line averages 255 pounds and should dominate the Sooners. Arizona State is the 7-point favorite at home.

### Rose Bowl at Pasadena: Michigan (8-3-0) vs. U.C.L.A. (9-1-1)

The Bruins were the early season pick to finish third in the Pac-10, but surprised all by outdistancing the Washington Huskies and U.S.C. This one should be a classic. In the earlier meeting U.C.L.A. came from behind in the 4th quarter to down Michigan 31-27 at Ann Arbor. At home, the Bruins should enjoy the same margin of victory.

### Sugar Bowl at New Orleans: Penn State (10-1-0) vs. No. 1 ranked, undefeated, Georgia Bulldogs

This one will decide the mythical NCAA National Champion. Georgia, led by the remarkable Herschel Walker, this year's winner of the Heisman Trophy, proclaiming him the best football player in America, and all who have watched him would agree. Penn State, loser only to Bear Bryant's Crimson Tide, 42-21, will offer a strong defense to stop the running of Walker. Walker's awesome power should propel the Bulldogs to victory. Georgia by 3.

## Spain's Higuera joins invitational

The surprise addition of Spain's Jose Higuera, currently the world's tenth-ranked player, makes the Louisiana-Pacific Invitational field the strongest in its 13-year history, said Brian Parrott, who has directed the tournament since its start.

Higuera made the headlines this past summer when he ended Jimmy Connors' bid for a grand slam by bumping him out of the French Open and he got a lot of TV time when he won the U.S. Clay Court Championship at Indianapolis. But his rise from No. 42 on the ATP computer to as high as No. 8 also included wins over Vitas Gerulaitis in the Italian Open, over Wojtek Fibak and Victor Pecci in the Austria Cup, over Eddie Dibbs and the colorful Mel Purcell in the Volvo in New Hampshire where he reached the final with Ivan Lendl, and over Peter McNamara to win \$40,000 in Hamburg. He has won more than \$200,000 this year. He also has big wins over Mats Wilander, Sandy Mayer and Eliot Teltscher.

Higuera, aiming to be in top shape for the \$300,000 Pro Indoor Championships in Philadelphia which follow the L-P event in Portland, joins Roscoe Tanner, John Sadri, Bruce Manson, Victor Amaya, Hank Pfister, Purcell and Butch Walts for the \$50,000 shoot-out at Eastmoreland Racquet Club Jan. 12th through the finals Sunday Jan. 16th.



LARRY FRAZIER

## Frazier-Hussein fight scheduled

The on-again off-again fight between Larry Frazier and Ishar Muhammad Hussein is back on again for January 13 at the Paramount Theater. The same card is featured plus an additional 10 rounder with Greg Haugen, the Auburn sensation.

The Frazier-Hussein fight should result in the winner fighting for a proposed West Coast championship at the Forum in Los Angeles. This is the result of a recent meeting in Los Angeles between Thad Spencer and John Jackson and Jerry Buss who are promoting a boxing tournament at the Lost Angeles Forum.

In addition to this important heavyweight bout the card features Seattle's Irish Randy McNurlin vs. Hatti Jemenez from Mexico and Tacoma's Dale Grant vs. King David Smith of Los Angeles.

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Terry Cummings (left), of the San Diego Clippers, battles Buck Williams of the New Jersey Nets for position in a National Basketball Association game. Cummings, who played last year at DePaul University, averaged 24.1 points, 10.1 rebounds, and 36.9 minutes was named the Miller High Life/NBA Rookie of the Month for November. Williams, a second year performer who played his collegiate ball at Maryland, was Rookie of the Year last season.

Reserved seats are \$7 and \$10. Play will start at 5 p.m. for the first three days, and will include women's matches and outstanding men's doubles. For more information, call (503) 653-0820.

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