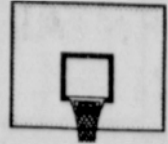


THE LOCKER ROOM



Michael "Air" Jordan Impressed By The TrailBlazers

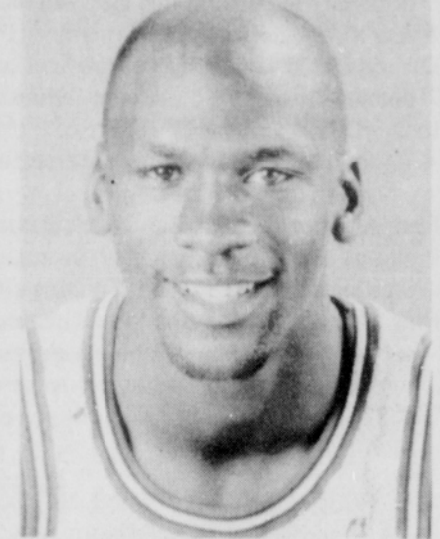
BY ULLYSSES TUCKER, JR.

Like several players opposing the Portland Trail Blazers this season, "Air" Michael Jordan is convinced that they are a legitimate contender and own a very strong bench. The Chicago Bulls, picked by Sports Illustrated to challenge for the NBA Title, found out firsthand what a year of maturity and a trade can do for a franchise.

"They are much stronger and have more confidence," he said, comparing last year's team that won 59 games. "With [Danny] Ainge, they are much better. He is going to really educate them and help them to really educate them and help them in pressure situations. He is not afraid to take the big shot. Portland is a good basketball team."

Jordan, an All-Star in each of his six NBA seasons and four-time scoring champion, says that it is going to take more than some Nike Air tennis shoes and Wheaties to sidetrack Portland this year. He calls Portland the toughest team the Bulls have played this season. Jordan holds Clyde Drexler in high esteem and considers him one of the most difficult players to guard in the league.

"Clyde presents all types of problems," he said. "He's big, strong, and he gets out on the break. Whenever I



MICHAEL JORDAN

shoot the ball, he releases very fast. Someone needs to get back quick because he will eventually score some very easy baskets. I'm sure everyone playing the two spot in this league has the same problem with him, not just me. He can also post-up pretty good. I enjoy playing against Clyde."

When questioned about Sports Illustrated's prediction for the NBA Finals, Jordan, who has a career scoring average of 32.5 points, things that it caused the team some problems early on.

"We've totally gotten SI out of our minds now," he said. "I think that's the reason we started off so slow. We shouldn't have worried about the prediction before the season started. I think we are focused now. All we want to do is put ourselves back in the same position as last year and take the next step. It takes hard work to accomplish that and I think we will do well." The Bulls lost to Detroit in the Eastern Finals.

Though Jordan might not believe in the SI jinx, curse, or kiss of death--he should take a closer look at the Blazers. Portland is taking the Sports Illustrated prediction seriously, very much so.

It doesn't pay to be named the NBA Digital Coach of the Year these days as glamorous as it might sound. Six of the last ten winners are no longer coaching. Jack McKinney (81), Gene Shue (82), Frank Layton (84), Mike Fratello (86), Doug Moe (1988), and Pat Riley (90) are gone from the bench. Chuck Daley (8 years) and Lenny Wilkins (5 years) are the only coaches with more than four years with their current team. Living on the edge, not job security, is a fact of life for those in the coaching fraternity. Four coaches (Wilkins, Schuler, Lynam Adelman have Portland on their coaching resume.

There are 65 new faces on rosters as of opening day in the NBA. 45 of them came directly from college and the others secured positions via the free agent route. Allan Bannister (7'5") is the tallest and Steve Henson (5'11") is the shortest. They play for the Jazz and Bucks respectfully. According to NBA news, the average player in the league is 27.1 years old, stands 6'7" and weighs 216 pounds. 4.08 is the average number of years of experience in the NBA. All of the figures are up from last season. Perhaps, the publication will come out with the average salaries in the league.

A recent study, according to KATU-TV (ABC), indicated that sex on the day before a game can enhance an athlete's performances. James Worthy, star forward for the Lakers, was arrested hours before tip-off in Houston. Had he waited for the survey to be published this past Tuesday, he might have saved his Wheaties and Oldsmobile commercials. Have you seen them lately?

Warren Moon, passing his way to possible MVP

by Aaron Fentress

With five games remaining on the 1990 NFL regular season schedule Houston quarterback, Warren Moon is moving closer and closer to becoming the first African-American quarterback to win the NFL's Most Valuable Player award.

Through 11 games Moon has compiled 3,352 yards passing and thrown 25 touchdowns. As impressive as those statistics may sound the two statistics which stand out the most are Moon's 62.8% completion percentage and his low 11 interceptions in 428 attempts.

Operating out of the Oilers' "red-gun" offense has given Moon the opportunity to totally exploit his passing abilities. The Oilers' pass-run ratio is an NFL high 70-30. Four of the Oilers' receivers (Ernest Givens, Curtis Duncan, Haywood Jeffires and Drew Hill) rank among the top six in the AFC in pass receiving. There's no denying that the Oilers have committed themselves to Moon and the pass.

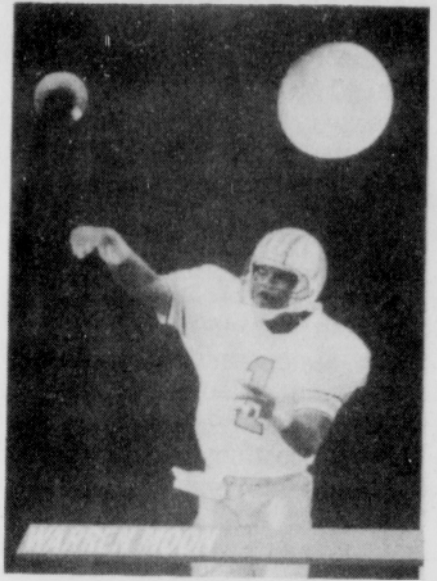
With Moon's numbers through 11 games his projected 16 game statistics look like this: 4,875 yards on 391 completions out of 622 attempts (62.8%), 36 TD passes and 16 interceptions. Definite MVP numbers. The only problem is San Francisco's Joe Montana is still in the league, and playing well.

Statistically Moon's numbers are as good or better than Montana's (projected season statistics: 4,650 yards, 382-of-596 attempts, 64%, 33 TD passes, 19 interceptions) in every category, except victories. Montana's 49ers stand at 10-1 while the Oilers are 6-5. If the Oilers fail to make the playoffs Moon's MVP hopes will also fail. If the season ended today the Oilers would be in as a wild card team. Just good enough.

For Moon an MVP award would

finally put him amongst the elite of NFL quarterbacks. Namely Montana, Miami's Dan Marino, Cincinnati's Boomer Esiason and Denver's John Elway. At 33 Moon's career is winding down making every year crucial to making his niche in NFL history. But in football history Moon's niche is more like a crater when you look at the statistics he piled up in the Canadian league.

Despite a bright career at the University of Washington, where he led



Warren Moon

the Huskies to a 1978 Rose Bowl victory and was named Pac-8 Player of the Year, Moon was only projected as a fourth round NFL draft pick. Moon decided to settle for a career in the CFL (Canadian Football League) where he played seven seasons with the Edmonton Eskimos.

At Edmonton Moon led the Eskimos to five straight championships from his rookie season in '78 to '82. In his seven seasons Moon threw for over 21,000 yards, rushed for another 1,700 yards and posted back-to-back 5,000 yard passing seasons. Moon's 5,648

yards passing in 1983 is tops amongst pro football quarterbacks. In any league.

Although Moon's numbers in Canada are impressive they have no bearing on his NFL career. Those numbers must stand on their own. So far they have.

"Look at the quarterbacks who make the Hall of Fame, and you'll see they have two things in common," said Moon in a recent Sports Illustrated article. "One, they have a minimum of 10 solid years in this league. And two, you have to get to a championship. If I last 10 years, I should have some pretty good numbers piled up."

For Moon the numbers will be there after his career is over. A championship is another thing. The Oilers could, or could not make the Super Bowl before Moon retires. If they don't he will need that MVP award to have a chance for the Hall of Fame.

From a political standpoint Moon winning the MVP award would add another bright chapter to the long legacy of the black quarterback. A legacy which doesn't have many bright chapters before the eighties.

In 1979 Doug Williams became the first black quarterback to lead an NFL team to a divisional championship and the playoffs when he guided the Tampa Buccaneers to the NFC Championship. In 1984 Moon became the NFL's first million dollar black quarterback. In 1988 Williams took the Washington Redskins to the Super Bowl and was named the games MVP. In 1989 Philadelphia's Randall Cunningham signed a three million dollar contract. Now if Moon could win the NFL's MVP award in 1990, all the black quarterback firsts in the NFL will be accomplished.

Except an induction into the Hall of Fame. Maybe the Moon will also rise to that challenge.

Project Scholarship: Looking For donors

When Bill Barker arrived in Portland in 1987, he wanted to reach out and touch the lives of youth whose academic deficiencies prevented them from obtaining a college education, either through an athletic scholarship or grant. Barker is keenly aware that Proposition 48 forces many outstanding high school athletes to look for alternatives life styles in the long sought after college education.

A chance visit to Oregon some five years ago (at the invitation of a friend to "do some fishing") lured Barker back to the state when his former employer (Ford Motor Co.) offered him early retirement.

But a determination to "get involved," led him to foster the idea of working with youth and launching Project Scholarship.

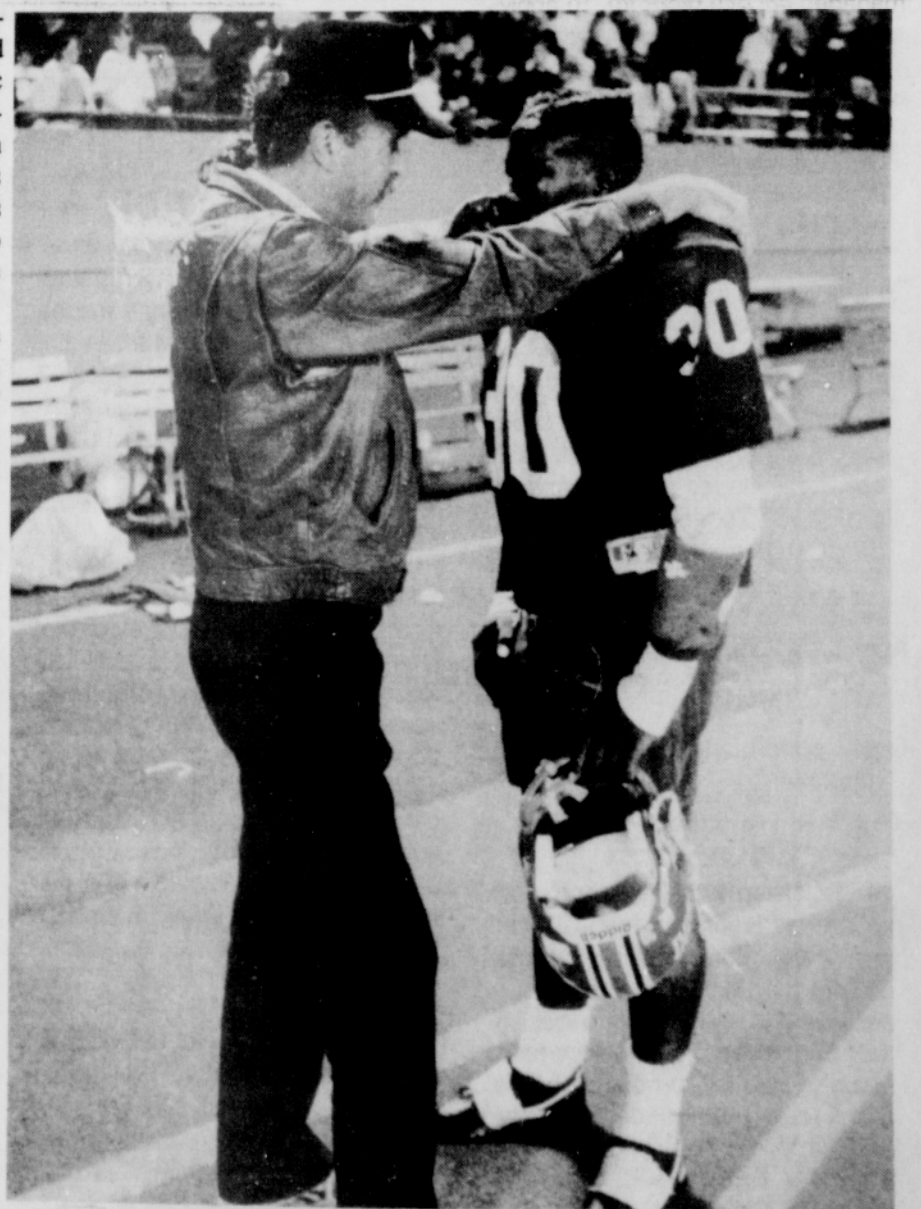
Project Scholarship is a program that sends college athletes back to school to talk to boys and girls in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades and emphasize the importance of maintaining a grade point average acceptable for college entry. These athletes are beneficiaries of the Project Scholarship Program themselves.

They are given small stipends for these appearances.

Barker concentrates on students who are not necessarily Division I material, but have college potential.

His primary concern at the moment is sponsors for the program. He is available to talk to groups, agencies, corporations, churches or just about anyone who is interested.

Barker is a former coach at Molar High School in Cincinnati, Ohio, and



now serves as a volunteer for the Benson Techmen High School football team in Portland.

Interested donors may contact the Observer at 288-0033, or write: P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon, 97208.

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