

# THE LOCKER ROOM



MARK BRYANT

BY: ULLYSSES TUCKER, JR.

**M**ark Bryant is enjoying basketball again this season. Not only are the Trail Blazers winning games, Bryant, who suffered through a lifetime of personal adversity in one season, is contributing strong off the deep blazer bench and living up to the promise that made him a first round pick in 1988.

"Night and day," he said, comparing the two seasons. "Last year was tough on me. I went through a lot with Ramon (Ramos) and I lost my mom and aunt in a car accident. I've grown a lot since then."

Bryant's emotional roller coaster started last summer when he and his wife, Shelly, lost most of their possessions in a fire. In December of 1989, his best friend Ramon Ramos, a teammate at Seton Hall, was nearly killed in a car accident. Ramos was in a coma for several months before miraculous recovery. This past February, Bryant lost his mother and aunt in

## Rebounding with Mark

a car accident. Bryant's brother survived the crash. Throw in a couple of nagging injuries, decreased playing time with the acquisition of Buck Williams, and you end up with a season Bryant can not forget. Compared to his rookie season, Bryant's minutes decreased dramatically and he handled it like a true professional.

"Mark is a totally different player this season", said Clyde Drexler. "He is much more relaxed and comfortable. He is also looking for his shot more and going aggressively to the boards. He went through so much for one person last year. We all have a great deal of respect for him and how he handled the situations. Mark has plenty of character and he is a survivor. I admire him a lot."

A graduate of Columbia High School in South Orange, NJ, Bryant spent the summer working out and with his family. They are all much closer. Bryant, when he wasn't around the people he cared about the most, polished up his game. He worked hard on his jump shot, low-post moves, and confidence. He came back to Portland on a mission to make the 12 man roster. With the blazers drafting 6-10 Alaa Abdelnaby in the first round of the draft (90), rumors persisted that Bryant was trade bait. Bryant ignored the tradewinds and had the best training camp of his professional career.

"I know that I can play in the NBA", he said. "It's just a matter of getting the

minutes. Minutes are important you know." Though he is averaging only four points and three rebounds per game, Bryant's contributions have been greater. He played some quality minutes behind Buck Williams and worked hard defensively. Against the Golden State Warriors, Bryant scored 8 points and grabbed 8 rebounds in a 143-119 victory. He played twenty minutes. Bryant also played big down the stretch against the Seattle SuperSonics in the Blazers Triple overtime victory.

"My only expectation this year was to get 7-8 boards a game and work hard," said Bryant. "We have a very deep team. All I want to do is contribute and win some basketball games. We learned a great deal last year in the NBA Finals and I also learned something about myself. I'm a stronger person than last season."

Some critics suggest that Bryant is playing hard because he is in the middle of a four year contract with the Blazers. He is signed through the 1991-1992 season. All the Blazers were smart considering the age of Buck Williams and the difficulty in finding a tough rebounder they would extend his contract soon. Big, tough rebounders are hard to find. "I know that I can play in this league", he said. "It's just a matter of patience."

## Cliff Robinson: A Year Older and Wiser

BY ULLYSSES TUCKER, JR.

Portland TrailBlazer center/forward Cliff Robinson wants people to one day mention his name in the same breath as Ricky Pierce of Milwaukee, Eddie Johnson of Phoenix, and McHale of Boston when it comes to playing the sixth man spot or productivity off the bench. Depending on the flow of the basketball game, Robinson or teammate Danny Ainge could be the first player off the bench for coach Rick Adelman. Ah, the luxury of having a bench in the NBA and the best record in the league can save a coach some.

Robinson, a second round draft pick in 1989 out of Connecticut, has really silenced his critics this season with some excellent play. Often criticized for his shot selection and inconsistent play last year, Robinson entered the 1990-91 season stronger physically, more mature in his game, and wiser. He's been around the NBA block once. Now, Robinson says that he knows the deal.

"I'm showing people the type of playing that I can be and and capable of being," he said. "This is just my second year. I still have a long ways to go and there needs to be improvement in other areas."

Last season, Robinson showed flashes of greatness offensively and more than held his own defensively. He ended the season shooting a dismal .397 from the field and .558 from the charity stripe. Currently, he is averaging 11.4 (up from 9.1) and shooting .571 from the field. He is third only to Buck Williams (.667, second in the NBA) and Danny Ainge (.581, sixth in the NBA) on the Blazers'

team. Robinson is ranked ninth among sharpshooters in the league. Cliff has learned to take what the opposition is giving him.

"I'm reading situations much better," he said. "I'm looking to take it to the basketball more than I was last year and looking to make things happen

Robinson, knows well the ups and downs a rookie goes through in the NBA. He has seen a great many rookies come and go in his nine-plus years in the League. When questioned about Robinson's development and maturity compared to last year, Buck laughed and looked over to his neighbor.

"I haven't seen any," he joked. "I think Cliff has really come back strong this year and worked very hard on his game. He has always had the talent. This year, he really understands what he has to do with it and what it takes to be a good ball player. He had to more or less feel the league out and get an idea as to what it takes to get off in this league. His biggest improvement has come in the area of attitude. Now, if he has a bad first half, he knows that he can come back strong in the second half. He's only going to get better."

When he talks about the current season, Robinson gets excited about his progress and excellent play. He talks about his goals and expectations for '90-'91.

"All I want to do is take one day at a time," he said. "I feel really good right now. I just want to relax and play. I'm not going to worry about the refs or how much time I'm getting. Those things can be a distraction. When I go in, I'm going to play hard and do what I have to do."

As far as winning the NBA's Sixth Man Award or competing for it, Robinson says it's no big deal. If it happens, so be it, is his attitude. "It's just good to be contributing, playing good, and being on a contender..." With Robinson's inspired play, the Blazer will definitely do that: contend for the NBA title.



CLIFF ROBINSON

for the team instead of making it difficult. This way, we still get easier opportunities." Robinson has treated the fans with his traditional jumper, but now he is driving to the basket hard for lay-ups and dunking on people.

"It's just a matter of me looking at the league and looking at my situation and realize that I'm capable of excelling at my position in this league. I have a lot more confidence this year."

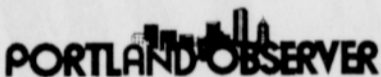
Buck Williams, star power forward and locker room neighbor of



photo by Veronica Green

Rookie running back Chris Warren celebrates scoring the touchdown that gives Seattle a 7-3 lead over Houston in the 2nd quarter Seattle wins the game in overtime on a 42 yard field goal kick by Norm Johnson.

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### Fax Helps Chase Down Top Runners

In addition to being the world's oldest and most prestigious distance race, the Boston Marathon also has the longest-standing international following of any distance race outside of the Olympics. In fact, in its 94-year history, athletes from 19 different countries have become Boston champions.

In the 1980s, however, a number of other marathons began offering substantial prize money to attract top international athletes. To remain competitive, Boston's race officials recruited corporate sponsors to offer runners similar incentives to compete.

One of those sponsors provided not only financial support, but a simple and immediate means to communicate with the athletes. Ricoh Corporation, the official facsimile sponsor of the 1992 Olympics, provided the race's organizers with facsimile machines, which are capable of delivering a document the 26.2-mile distance of the Boston Marathon—or even around the world—in less than a minute, over regular telephone lines. That's less time than it takes to lace up a pair of running shoes.

The Boston Athletic Association, the race's organizers, uses the Ricoh fax for the majority of its correspondence with runners, whether in the nearby suburbs of Massachusetts or the distant cities of

## Ismail best player despite numbers

by Aaron Fentress

Ty Detmer ended the 1990 college football season with a performance that will always remind of us that no man is ever the best. Simply great for a moment or two.

Just hours after winning the 56th Heisman trophy Detmer proceeded to throw four first half interceptions against Hawaii. The cougars of BYU lost 59-28. And Detmer lost some respect.

Heading into the Heisman announcement Detmer was the clear favorite as far as statistics were concerned. 4,869 yards passing, 66% completions, 38 touchdown passes and oh yeah, a questionable 24 interceptions. Aside from the interceptions one would have to consider Detmer the winner easy. But you must consider the interceptions. You must consider the five picks he threw against Oregon, and the five against Air Force. You must consider all the factors which present themselves when selecting the Heisman trophy winner. After all isn't the award supposed to go to the best player. Not his numbers.

The problem with the Heisman is the priority placed on statistics. That's why a quarterback or running back wins the award annually. There aren't statistics that can glorify any other position like yards and touchdowns glorify the quarterback and running back position. Prior to Detmer's winning of the Heisman he was asked why he thought no other BYU quarterback had ever won the Heisman. Preceding Detmer in BYU history were the likes of Robby Bosco, Steve Young, Jim McMahon and Marc Wilson. For Detmer to answer the question why doesn't he simply look at the list of his predecessors. Only McMahon went on to some achieve somewhat of a pro career. Young backs up Montana for a million a year while the thrice waived Wilson has lead New England to a 1-10 record this season. As for Bosco, I'm not sure what ever happened to him. Despite their numbers were they better than the Bo Jacksons, Marcus Allen's or John Elway's who won Heismans in the eighties? In a word, no.

The fact is that aside from McMahon in 1982 no other BYU quarterback should have been considered for the award. And none were.

The argument for Detmer, as I've stated, lies within his statistics. As boisterous as they may be let me remind you that every quarterback who has played for BYU in the eighties has passed for similar numbers. Is it the man or the offense. Do you think Oregon quarterback Bill Musgrave could pass for

4,869 yards if given 517 attempts? You bet. And when the NFL draft comes along (although Detmer is a junior and Musgraves a senior bare with me in my comparison) you can bet again as to who will be drafted first. Musgrave, without a doubt. Detmer's not that good. He was simply in the right place at the right time. The best player in the nation is Raghbi Ismail.

For those who love the numbers game, as I, Ismail's numbers come across stale until you examine the diversity of them.

As a running back Ismail gained 702 yards. As a receiver Ismail gained 537 yards. Now here's where it gets interesting. As a kick returner Ismail gained 487 yards. Add them together and you have 1,723 all-purpose yards. Ah, the diversity.

No one player in the nation does more things for their team than Ismail. If he had rushed for 1,723 yards or caught passes for 1,723 yards he would have won the Heisman. But because he spread out his numbers over three different categories the best player in the nation was left as the brides maid to Detmer's wedding.

The key to Ismail's low individual numbers are the amounts of times he touched the ball. To gain those 702 yards rushing Ismail touched the ball only 88 times giving him a per-carry average of eight yards. To gain those 537 yards receiving Ismail had to catch 24 passes giving him a 22 yards per-catch average.

"If there is a better player in the nation," said Miami Hurricanes coach Dennis Erickson after his 'Canes ran into Ismail. "I haven't seen him." Erickson barely saw Ismail as he burned the Hurricanes for a 94 yard kick-off return that won the game for Notre Dame.

In two years when Detmer is struggling to make an NFL team the nation will be witnessing Ismail ascending to stardom in the NFL. BYU will go on without Detmer and try and push the Heisman hopes of another quarterback. BYU will be the same without Detmer, he's replaceable. Ismail is not. It's no coincidence that Notre Dame's two losses this season came due to the fact that Ismail was unable to perform. As for BYU's three losses. Will Detmer throw a total of 13 interceptions in those three games. Enough said.

For you 49'er fans: Two weeks ago I said that the Giants would defeat the 49'ers on Monday Night. I filled these pages with every reason I could think of to support my prediction of a Giant's triumph. I was wrong.

Kenya. The fax machines are used to track down information on top runners around the world, from biographical information to data on their recent competitions, and even to gather the travel itineraries of international runners. "Without the fax, keeping track of the histories and travel plans of so many runners, especially internationally, would be quite difficult," said Guy Morse, race director. The fax is also used to distribute information to the national media. And even some international race applications arrive over the machines!

There is some irony in all of this. The world's first marathoner is said to have been a Greek messenger who ran an extraordinary distance from Athens to Sparta exclaiming victory in the battle at Marathon. Today, he would have simply faxed the message and run to Sparta for the competitive thrill.

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