

# SPORTS BRIEFS

## BASEBALL

### Yanks finally acquire Irbabu in Padres deal

The Hideki Irbabu saga is over and the hard-throwing right-hander will get his wish to pitch for the New York Yankees. The Yankees sent \$3 million in cash, injured outfielder Ruben Rivera and minor-league pitcher Rafael Medina to San Diego for the rights to Irbabu, minor leaguers Homer Bush and Gordon Amerson and a player to be named later. The trade is subject to the Yankees signing Irbabu, but reports in New York said he has been offered a four-year, \$12 million contract. The Padres owned the rights to Irbabu, who has been called the "Nolan Ryan of Japan" because of an overpowering fastball, as a result of their working agreement with Irbabu's Japanese team, the Chiba Lotte Marines.

### Grissom placed on disabled list

Cleveland Indians center fielder Marquis Grissom, who is batting just .234 in 15 games, was placed on the 15-day disabled list Tuesday due to a strained right hamstring suffered in spring training. Grissom, acquired with outfielder Dave Justice in a blockbuster trade with the Atlanta Braves on March 25th, suffered the injury two days later in an exhibition game against the Kansas City Royals. The 30-year-old Grissom has one homer, four RBI, eight runs scored and six stolen bases as an Indian, but was hitting .311 since starting the season 1-for-19. The move is retroactive to Sunday.

## HOCKEY

### NHL playoffs continuing with six games

The National Hockey League playoffs are continuing tonight with two games in the Eastern Conference and four in the West. The New Jersey Devils, looking to go up 3-0 in their quarterfinal series with Montreal, has rallied for a 4-3 lead over the Canadiens after two periods. The Florida Panthers and New York Rangers are tied, 1-1, in their series, but Florida has scored the last three goals and has a 3-2 lead entering the third period. Out West, the St. Louis Blues—playing without star center Pierre Turgeon—have a 2-0 lead over the Detroit Red Wings after one period.

## BASKETBALL

### Bulls C Wennington out for the playoffs

The Chicago Bulls will be without reserve center Bill Wennington for the postseason. Wennington missed the final 11 games of the season with a torn tendon in his left foot and the team elected not to put him on the postseason roster. Wennington averaged 4.6 points and 2.1 rebounds in 61 games for the Bulls this season. He was a backup to Luc Longley on last year's 72-win championship team. This season, he shared backup duties with Robert Parish. Wennington was injured late in the fourth quarter of a 111-101 victory over New Jersey on March 29th.

### Boston University signs Wolff to coach

After winning its first outright America East regular-season title and capturing a fourth straight conference tournament, Boston University Tuesday rewarded men's basketball coach Dennis Wolff with a new seven-year contract. The Terriers finished the season 25-5, setting school records for wins and winning percentage, as well as regular-season wins (22), conference wins (17), road wins (15) and consecutive wins (13).

# SPORTS

## ISIAH THOMAS TO BECOME MAJORITY OWNER OF RAPTORS

Toronto Raptors general manager Isiah Thomas signed a letter of intent Monday to buy a majority interest in the second year expansion franchise, making him the first African-American to hold a controlling interest in a major league sports team.

Thomas and current majority owner Allan Slaight negotiated the

final aspects of the sale Monday by telephone.

The transaction is expected to close by early summer.

The final transfer must be approved by the NBA's board of governors. An NBA spokesperson indicated Monday that the league has not yet been notified of the proposed sale.

The former Pistons point guard currently owns a nine percent stake in the team.

Slaight owns 81 percent and the Bank of Nova Scotia owns the remaining 10 percent.

Once the deal is completed Thomas will become the franchise's third owner in two years. The original owner was John Bitove.

## KATE STARBIRD SOARS INTO ABL

The ABL has won the latest battle between the two professional women's basketball leagues. Stanford star Kate Starbird, the winner of the 1997 Naismith Award as the nation's top college women's basketball player, Tuesday signed an exclusive three-year contract with the league. She will play for the Seattle Reign.

The 6-foot-2 Tacoma, Washington, native has been designated the Reign's "regional draft pick" in the first round of the ABL Draft on May 5th. "I'm really excited about the opportunity," the two-time All-American at Stanford said Tuesday. "Classes before us didn't have this opportunity, and we have the luxury of knowing that we can play profes-

sionally here in the U.S."

The signing is a coup for the ABL, which is competing for talent with the WNBA, the NBA-sponsored women's league which begins play this summer.

Starbird averaged 20.9 points, 3.7 rebounds, and 3.2 assists and shot .511 (275-538) from the field this season, while leading the Cardinal (34-2) into the NCAA Final Four for the third consecutive year. She established a new Pac-10 single-season scoring record of 753 points, eclipsing her single-season mark from 1995-96. During her stellar career, Starbird became Stanford's all-time leading scorer with 2,215 points (fourth all-time in Pac-10), surpassing current San Jose Laser

Val Whiting. She holds the Cardinal single-game scoring record of 44 points set against Southern California in 1995-96, and neared that record again this season with 40 points in a 77-76 last-second victory over USC.

Throughout her four years at Stanford, Starbird averaged 16.9 points, 3.9 rebounds and 3.3 assists over 131 games. She started 109 games in her collegiate career, including 100 of 101 over the last three seasons.

"The Bay Area fans have been great and I loved my four years at Stanford, but I feel at home in the Seattle-Tacoma area," Starbird said. "It's going to be fun to be playing in front of my home town."

## TRAIL BLAZERS CONTINUE WINNING RUN

Isaiah Rider scored 30 points and the Portland Trail Blazers held off Los Angeles 102-98 Thursday night, ending the Lakers' home winning streak at 12.

The Lakers lost at home for the first time since Nov. 24 despite Shaquille O'Neal's 33 points and 13 rebounds.

O'Neal's dunk with 1:16 left brought the Lakers within 99-96. But he fouled out on the play, giving an elbow to Arvydas Sabonis, and was also handed a technical foul.

Cliff Robinson, back after a one-game disciplinary suspension by Portland coach P.J. Carlesimo, made

a free throw with 25 seconds. Robert Horry's layup with 20 seconds left pulled the Lakers within 100-98.

Kenny Anderson, who finished with 16 points, added one free throw for the Blazers. Jerome Kersey missed a 3-point shot for Los Angeles with three seconds left and Sabonis made a foul shot.

Portland won for the seventh time in eight games.

Eddie Jones added 23 for the Lakers before fouling out. Los Angeles rallied after trailing by 18 points in the third quarter.

Portland led 60-44 at halftime. Los Angeles' frustration showed as Kersey

and Nick Van Exel each drew a technical foul with 39 seconds left. Kersey had fouled Gary Trent and Portland converted on three of the four free throws as it scored the final seven points of the half.

O'Neal reached the 20-point mark for the 28th straight game, extending the longest such streak of his career. The Blazers are in the midst of playing six games in eight days. Before the stretch, they had played only four times in 15 days. The Lakers' home winning streak was their longest since winning 15 in a row in 1990-91. The team record is 21 in 1976-77.

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## FOREMAN VS. SAVARESE

One of boxing's most enduring and renowned heavy-weight champions returns to the ring when World Championship Boxing: George Foreman Vs Lou Savarese is presented live Saturday, April 26 (10:00 pm ET / 8:00 pm MT / 7:00 pm PT), from the Convention Center in Atlantic City, NJ. The HBO Sports broadcast team of Jim Lampley, Larry Merchant and analyst Roy Jones, Jr., will be ringside to call the action, which will be closed-captioned for the hearing-impaired and presented in Spanish language on HBO en Espanol.

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