

SPORTS BRIEFS

Tyson Hopeful

Washington, March 18 (Bloomberg)—Boxer Mike Tyson could be eligible for release from a Maryland jail as early as next Friday under a proposal from his lawyers that has been discussed with the judge and prosecutors in two meetings, the Washington Post reported. Montgomery County District Court Judge Stephen P. Johnson told Tyson's attorneys and a prosecutor yesterday he'll rule March 26 on whether to reduce to eight months Tyson's one-year sentence for assault after a traffic altercation in Gaithersburg, Maryland, the Post said. If that were to happen, the 50 days Tyson would have served by next Friday would make him immediately eligible for a work-release program, the Post said, citing an unidentified corrections official.

Kwan Unstoppable?

HELSINKI, Finland (AP)—Just as in the Olympics last year, Michelle Kwan is a solid favorite at the world figure skating championships. But this time, Tara Lipinski won't be around to beat her out of the gold medal. In fact, hardly anyone will challenge Kwan.

Sampras Returns

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida, March 22 (Reuters)—Pete Sampras ended Carlos Moya's brief reign at the top of men's tennis by beating Albert Costa after Moya fell to Sebastien Grosjean in Monday's fourth-round action in the Lipton Championships.

Sampras was bumped from the top billing by Moya last week at the Champions Cup tournament at Indian Wells, but recaptured the throne Monday evening after dispatching Costa 6-4 6-4 to reach the quarter-finals.

Moya set up his own downfall when he allowed 74th-ranked Grosjean of France to upset him 3-6 6-4 7-6 (9-7).

Oregon Marches On

The Pac-10 may have had a subpar showing in the NCAA tournament, but that's hardly the case in the NIT.

UCLA, Arizona and Stanford all had early exits in the NCAA tournament, but two Pac-10 teams will battle it out for a chance to go to the NIT championship game.

California (20-11) meets Oregon (19-11) in the opening semifinal matchup at Madison Square Garden on Tuesday. It will be the third meeting between the conference rivals, with the Ducks winning the first two games.

"Throw out the first two," said Golden Bears coach Ben Braun, whose team reached the semis with wins over Fresno State, DePaul and Colorado State. "Pride is on the line. Now we have a chance to play for an NIT championship."

The previous games were far from blowouts. The Ducks won in Berkeley 71-69 in overtime on Jan. 2, then won 93-82 in the regular-season finale in Eugene.

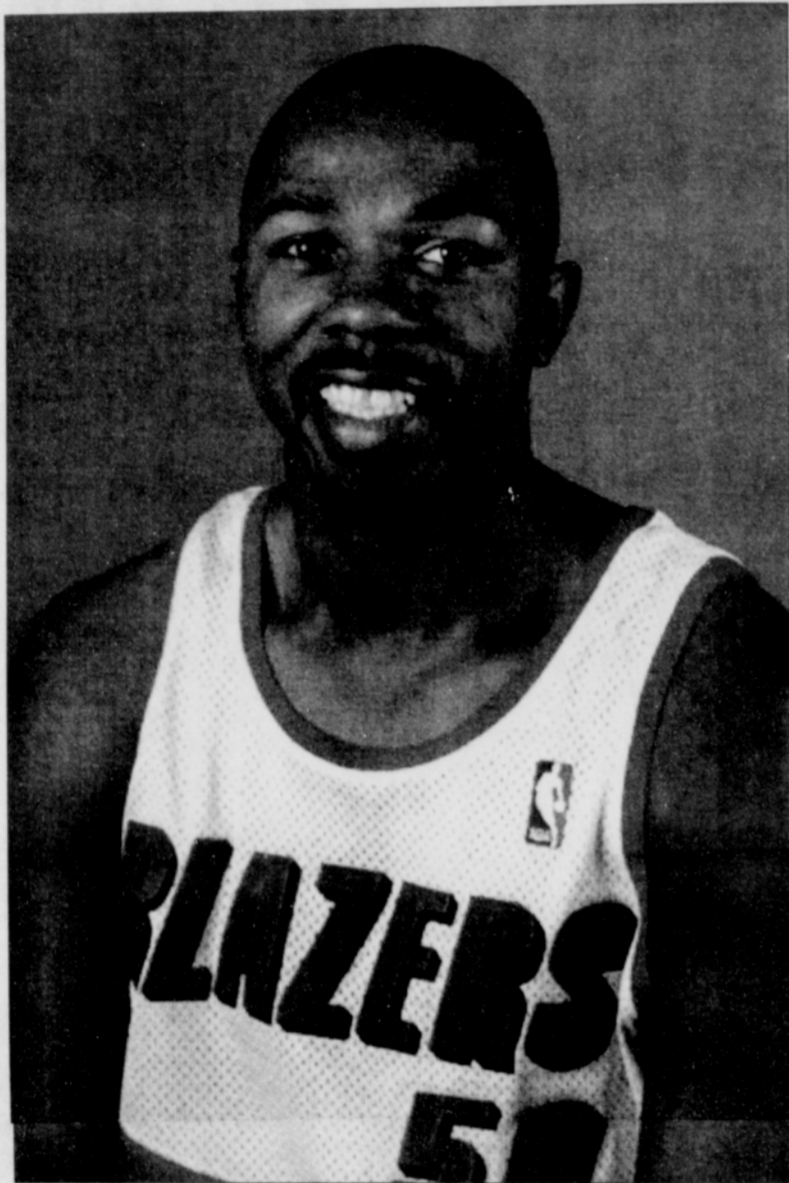
"We've been in tough, hard battles with them," said Oregon coach Ernie Kent, whose squad beat Georgia Tech, Wyoming and Texas Christian to make it to New York. "We know each other very well, so we don't have to go overboard on preparation. But we will have to combat that energy burst they'll bring having lost to us a couple of times."

Oregon has made a habit of playing close games, with 17 of its contests being decided by single-digit margins.

<http://www.portlandobserver.net>

SPORTS

Blazers May Not Have Subs, Just a "Rotating Line-up"



Greg Anthony

Season Results Against Opponent

Portland vs. Golden State

Blazers and Warriors This Season
Portland and Golden State have split this year's series according to homecourt advantage: February 20 Portland 90, Golden State 84 The Blazers completed a four-game sweep of their season's first extended homestand by holding off the persistent Golden State Warriors 90-84. The powerful board work of Brian Grant, who established a new career high with 24 re-

bounds, (bettering his previous high of 20 recorded April 3, 1998 against Dallas) was the key. The 24 rebounds also marks a league-best game so far this season. The Blazers ran their current winning streak to a Western Conference best four games and climbed into a tie with Seattle for the Pacific Division lead at 6-2. J.R. Rider clicked for 27 points to lead all scorers in this tightly contested matchup.

Trailblazers vs. Golden State Series

RECORDS:

Record:	Home:	Road:	Overtime:	
Overall:	20-5 (0.8)	11-1 (0.917)	9-4 (0.692)	3-1 (0.75)
Eastern:	5-1 (0.833)	3-0 (1)	2-1 (0.667)	0-0 (0)
Western:	15-4 (0.789)	8-1 (0.889)	7-3 (0.7)	3-1 (0.75)

STREAKS:

Overall	Home	Road:
Won 3	Won 2	Won 1

Odds On Blue Devils

LAS VEGAS (AP)—This city's oddsmakers aren't taking any chances with Duke's chances of winning a national championship.

The Blue Devils are such a prohibitive favorite in Las Vegas sports books that bettors would have to wager \$7 for every dollar they could win on Duke winning its last two games.

Odds vary at each sports book, but most have had to make Duke such a big favorite to try to discourage bets on the Blue Devils and get some money bet on the other three teams in the Final Four.

"This is one of the biggest favorites we've ever had," said Pete Korner, who helps set odds for sports books at Las Vegas Sports Consultants. "We're just trying to get some money on the other teams."

Korner opened Duke at a 1-3 favorite, but most sports books went well beyond that.

At the Las Vegas Hilton, bettors wanting to put money on Duke on Monday found the Blue Devils a 1-7 favorite.

With Duke the heavy favorite, bettors can get 9-2 on Connecticut win-

ning the title, 10-1 on Michigan State and 12-1 on Ohio State at the Hilton.

The NCAA tournament generally is a big betting event at casino sports books, second in total volume only to the Super Bowl.

Since the tournament began, bettors could wager not only on individual games but on which team would win the national championship.

Gonzaga Looking Forward to Next Year

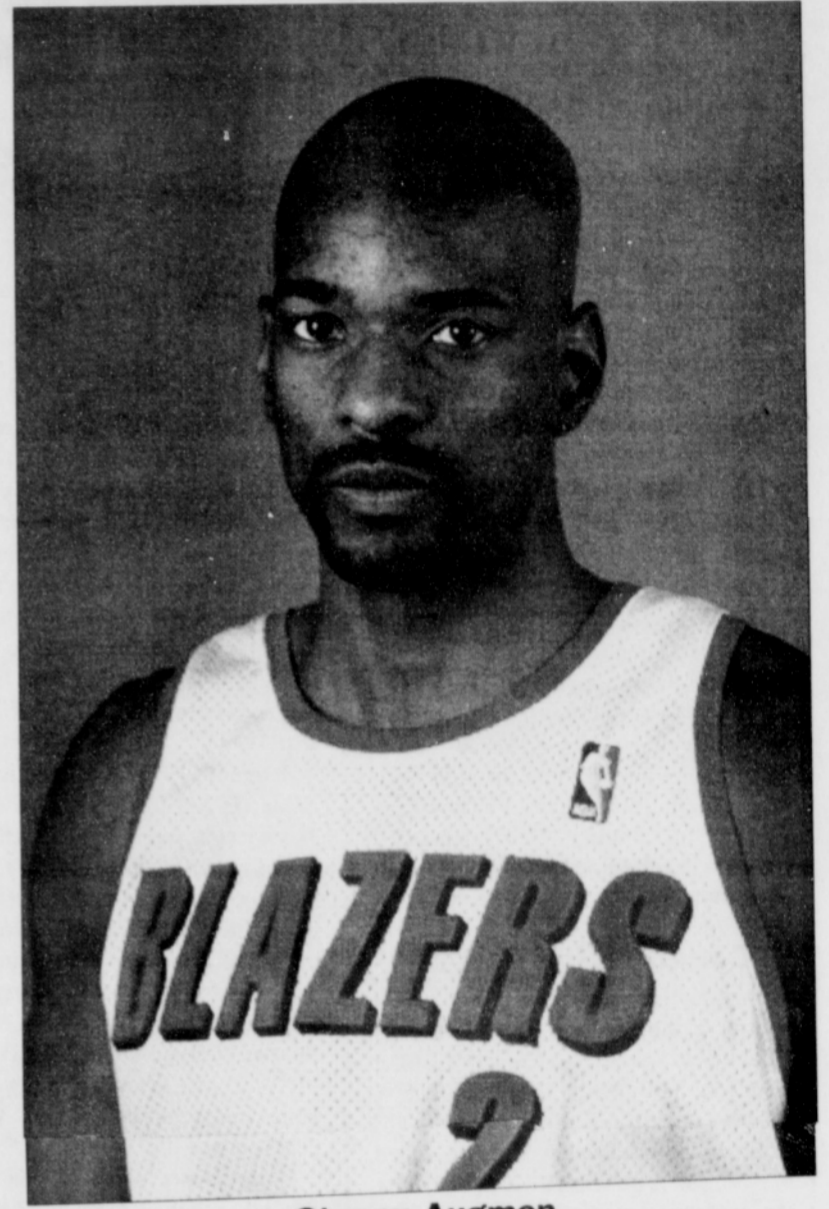
Gonzaga's Richie Frahm may get his wish—but the looming question is whether his coach will be with him next year. "I want to go out like this next year, too," the junior guard told 500 Gonzaga fans who gathered on campus Saturday night to greet the Bulldogs on their return from the NCAA West Region finals in Phoenix.

Trail Blazers Notes

BLAZER FANS, SIMPLY THE BEST The tradition of outstanding fan support of the Blazers continues. Both Friday's game against San Antonio and Sunday's date with Philadelphia were sellouts, making a total of six in 12 home dates. To date, Portland has drawn 230,069 fans for the first 12 games of the season, 96% of the Rose Garden's 19,980 capacity. How does this compare to last season? Last season, Portland's sixth sellout came in the 25th home game of the season against the Lakers. Also last season, Blazers fans filled the Rose Garden to 95% capacity.

Reflecting

March 21 Portland 91, Philadelphia 75 Coach Mike Dunleavy's birthday present wasn't giftwrapped; his Portland Trail Blazers had to labor long and hard to build a defensive wall around league-leading scorer Allen Iverson to gain the win. The Blazers again relied on defense in taking their fifth game in six contests against the Eastern Conference, beating Philadelphia on the Rose Garden floor 91-75 in front of the season's sixth sellout crowd. Stacey Augmon, Greg Anthony and Damon Stoudamire all took turns working against Iverson and the scheme paid dividends as Iverson was held five points below his seasonal average with a team-high 24 on 8 of 21 shooting and an 0 for 7 effort from down-



Stacey Augmon

town. Augmon matched his season's best effort with 10 points and set a new standard with seven rebounds.

Rasheed Wallace, a Philadelphia-area native also set a seasonal standard with 26 points plus seven rebounds.

Michigan State Feels Ready

LANSING, Mich. (AP)—A few months ago, Michigan State coach Tom Izzo was wondering if he'd made the right decision by having the Spartans play the likes of Connecticut and Duke.

But with all three teams now in the Final Four, Izzo says he thinks those games will help the Spartans in St. Petersburg—even though Michigan State lost both matchups.

In Saturday's NCAA semifinals, Duke (36-1) and Michigan State (33-4) face off at 8:17 p.m. at Tropicana Field after Connecticut (32-2) takes on Ohio State (27-8) at 5:42 p.m. The winners of Saturday's games will meet for the NCAA championship at 9:15 p.m. Monday.

The last time the Spartans and Blue Devils met, Duke held Michigan State point guard Mateen Cleaves to 3-of-17 shooting and only nine points. Izzo admitted after that Dec. 2 game in Chi-

cago that Cleaves pressed too much.

But Izzo sees a different ability now in his star point guard. And he says his Spartans are pitching in as a team to get the job done.

"I think Mateen is a lot better now than he was then," Izzo said. "I really think A.J. Granger has stepped it up a couple of notches. I think Andre Hutson is getting better and better."

Granger scored 14 points in Sunday's 73-66 win over Kentucky in the NCAA Midwest Regional, with three of those baskets three-pointers. Hutson also scored 14, while Cleaves had 10 points and 11 assists.

As in Sunday's game against Kentucky, the Spartans fell behind by 13 points against with Duke. But in a move that has become a Spartan trademark this season, they battled back, closing to within 58-55 with 6:08 to play.

On Sunday, the Spartans built

on their comeback to beat Kentucky. They weren't so lucky against the Blue Devils, who shut down the Spartans after Cleaves missed several key shots.

Despite losing 73-67, the Spartans ended the Duke game with a 36-20 edge in rebounds, which could help them Saturday if they can repeat the feat. So far this season, they've outrebounded their opponent in 35 of their 37 games while winning 33 times.

They also do a good job on defense. Heading into Saturday's contest, they've allowed 60 or fewer points in eight of their last 10 outings. In their four NCAA games so far, they've held their opponents to just 38.5 percent shooting from the floor.

That may be tougher against Duke, which has averaged 93 points per game this season. But Izzo, while acknowledging his team faces a huge challenge, remains optimistic.

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