



# Metro/Sports

## Ken Griffey Jr. jolts Mets Suns coach Danny Ainge resigns

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He would be bigger than the Empire State Building, the brightest star in town since Reggie. Only one problem: Ken Griffey Jr. does not want to play in New York. Junior jolted the Mets late Monday night, blocking a deal they had worked overtime to set with the Seattle Mariners. "It's been made clear to us that he would prefer not to be traded to the Mets," New York general manager Steve Phillips said. The Mets packed up and left the winter meetings Tuesday, still with

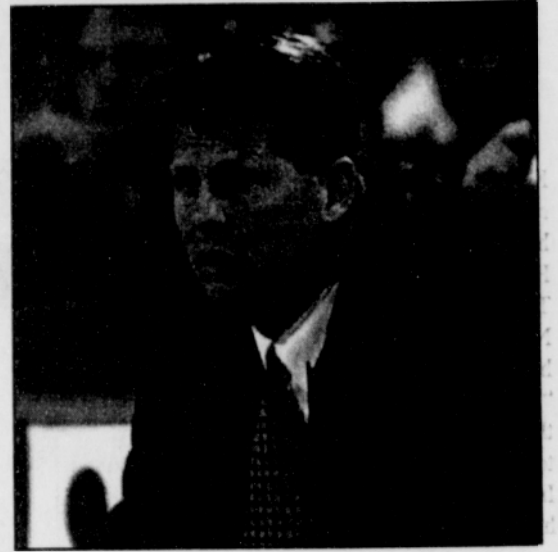
Griffey on their minds. They do not plan to badger Seattle about the 10-time All-Star, but their offer-pitchers Armando Benitez and Octavio Dotel and outfielder Roger Cedeno - is likely to remain open. "At this point, I don't think he wants to go to the Mets," Mariners GM Pat Gillick said. "You're always hopeful something will change." Said Phillips: "I'm always willing to leave that door ajar." "I don't feel like we were wasting time," he said. "I think it was a worthy effort to pursue, and an exciting one to pursue."

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After just three seasons on the job, Danny Ainge is giving up coaching the Phoenix Suns at the age of 40 for the sake of his family. Now an even younger coach will try to guide the Suns into contention. Scott Skiles made his debut Tuesday when the Suns hosted the Detroit Pistons. At 35, he is the youngest coach in the NBA. "Scott has prepared himself since he was a little kid to be a coach," the Suns' Jason Kidd said. "Scott is one who has written down play after play since he's been in the league. We all respect him. We're all going to be open-minded and trust him. That's the biggest thing." Ainge's resignation, announced on Monday, took the entire Suns organization by surprise. Skiles, Ainge's top assistant, said Ainge told him of his plans on the plane ride home from Dallas, where the Suns lost Saturday night. "I was shocked to say the least," Skiles said. Ainge has six children, ages 4 to 19, and he said he became increasingly aware that he was not living up to his responsibilities as a father and husband, responsibilities that are emphasized by his Mormon faith. "It really comes down to just wanting to make a statement to my family that they are more important than my career," Ainge said.

Even a seven-game winning streak didn't cheer him up. "I felt like I had a lot of little kid in me when I played," Ainge said. "I feel like that little kid is dead because I haven't been able to enjoy it." Ainge had a 136-90 record with the Suns. His current team's 13-7 record was tarnished by some lackluster performances, most recently Saturday's loss at Dallas. Yet Ainge said the team's performance had nothing to do with his resignation. "If we were 17-3, I'd be making the same decision," he said. However, Kidd thought Ainge was becoming increasingly frustrated by the team's play. "As a coach you kind of get fed up," Kidd said. "I think he was worn out and tired." Skiles likely will bring a tougher approach to the job. The new coach has a distinctly different personality from Ainge, who is easygoing and masks his intensity with humor and a boyish grin. "Scotty is a different person. He's more a disciplinarian," said Penny Hardaway, who as a rookie played with Skiles in Orlando. "He's a guy that's not going to take a lot of nonsense. It's going to be a different story around here because Danny was more laid-back, more friendly. Scotty is the same, but he'll yell at you when he has to." In a 10-year NBA career that included

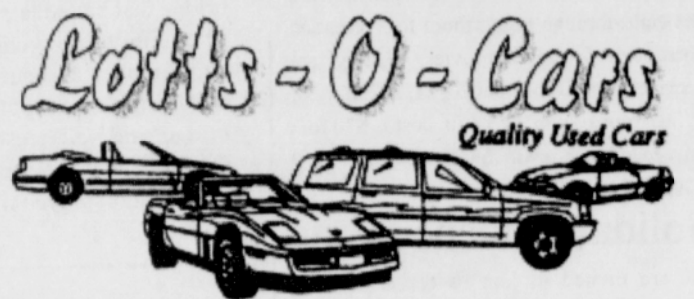
stops in five cities, Skiles played with three current Suns - Hardaway, Tom Gugliotta and Rex Chapman. Skiles still holds the NBA record for most assists in a game at 30 while playing for Orlando against Denver on Dec. 30, 1990. Skiles said it will be up to him to earn the players' respect as a coach.



## Ron Dayne wins Heisman by landslide

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Wearing blue jeans and a green winter jacket, Heisman Trophy winner Ron Dayne stepped into the back seat of a car parked in front of the Downtown Athletic Club. After months of Heisman hype, and an hour of nerve-racking anticipation Saturday night, a relaxed Dayne and a few buddies drove off for a few hours of celebrating. Earlier in the evening, Dayne, dressed in a blue pinstriped suit, was shaking so hard in his chair he had to move away from Marshall quarterback Chad Pennington, seated next to him at the Heisman presentation. "I wish I was calm as can be," Dayne said. "I wanted to move from Chad. I didn't want him to feel how hard my leg was shaking. Once I moved away, I was able to relax a little bit." And when he stood up to approach the lectern in the Heisman Room, he was still unsure of himself. "I didn't know what to do, shake the finalists' hands, hug my coach, carry him around, or carry my uncle around and put him on my shoulders," he said. Dayne turned family troubles into family triumph with his sensational season, and many of his relatives were with him on his greatest day. Those attending the ceremony included his girlfriend, Alia Lester, and their 2-year-old daughter, Jada. Also in the crowd were Dayne's legal guardians, uncle Rob Reid and Reid's wife, Debbie, along with Dayne's birth mother, Brenda Dayne. Dayne moved in with the Reids as a teen-ager after divorce and drugs ravaged his family. Rob Reid couldn't have been more proud of Dayne. "I never thought it would end up this way," Reid said, "never in a million years." Dayne's acceptance speech lasted about a minute, which for the media-shy star is like an hour-long special. After thanking his coach, Barry Alvarez, and teammates, he turned to his family. "I'd like to thank my daughter, Jada, for being the biggest inspiration in my life, and I'd like to thank the real Heisman winner, for me, Uncle Rob, who is always there for me and is always someone to talk to and tell jokes with."



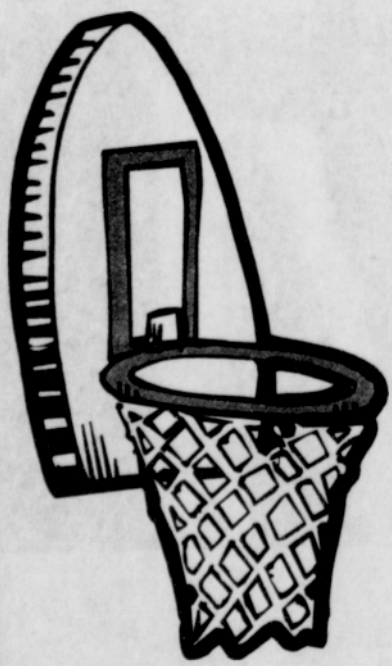
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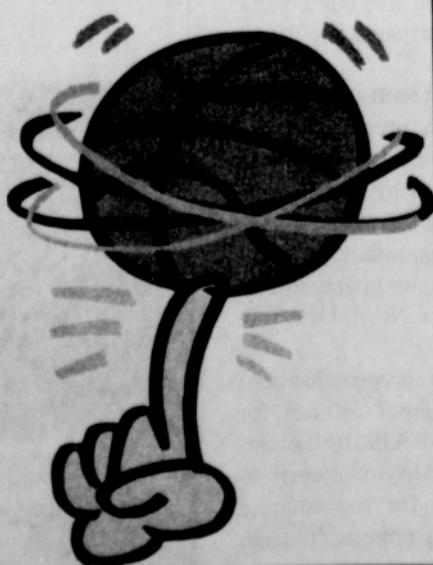
January 23, 2000 at 4 p.m.

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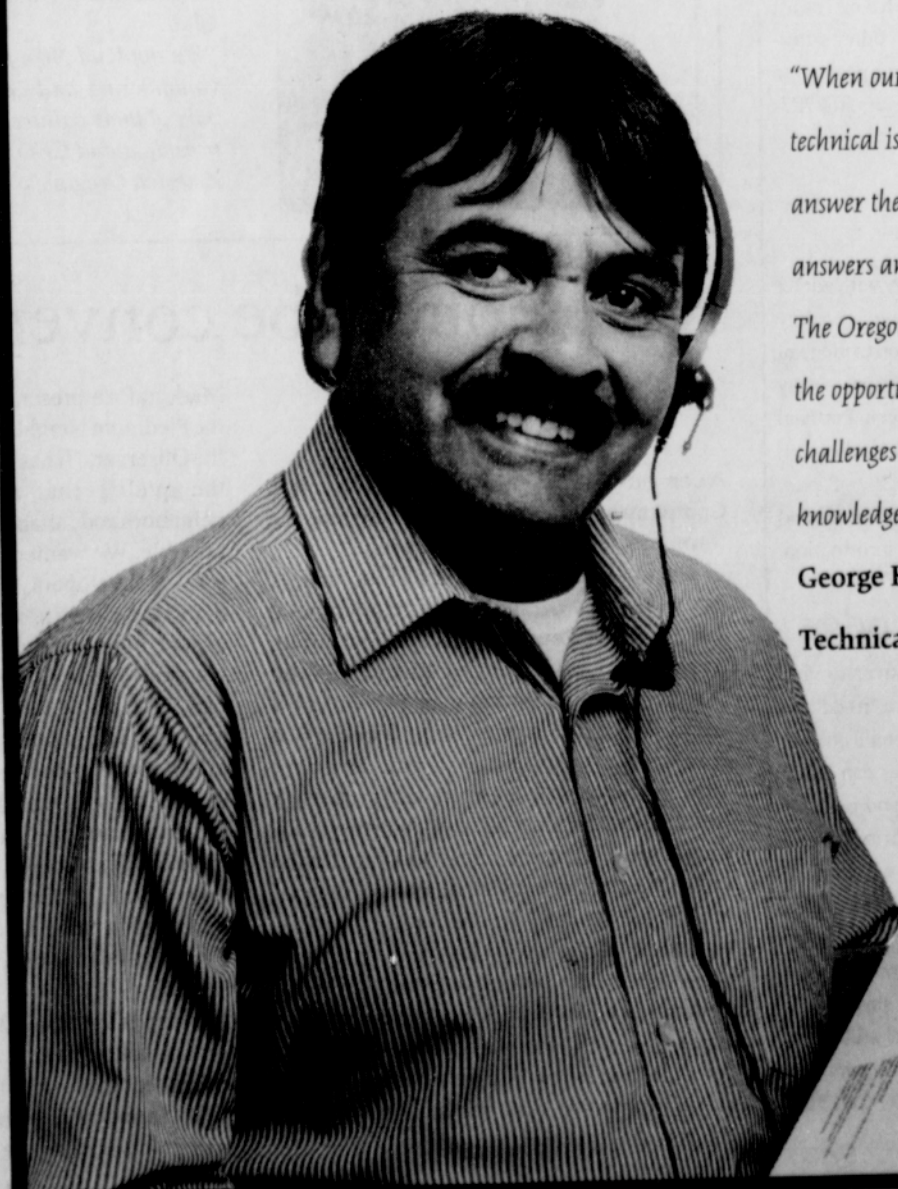


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