

Portland Metro/Sports Observer

Trail Blazers 81, Jazz 79

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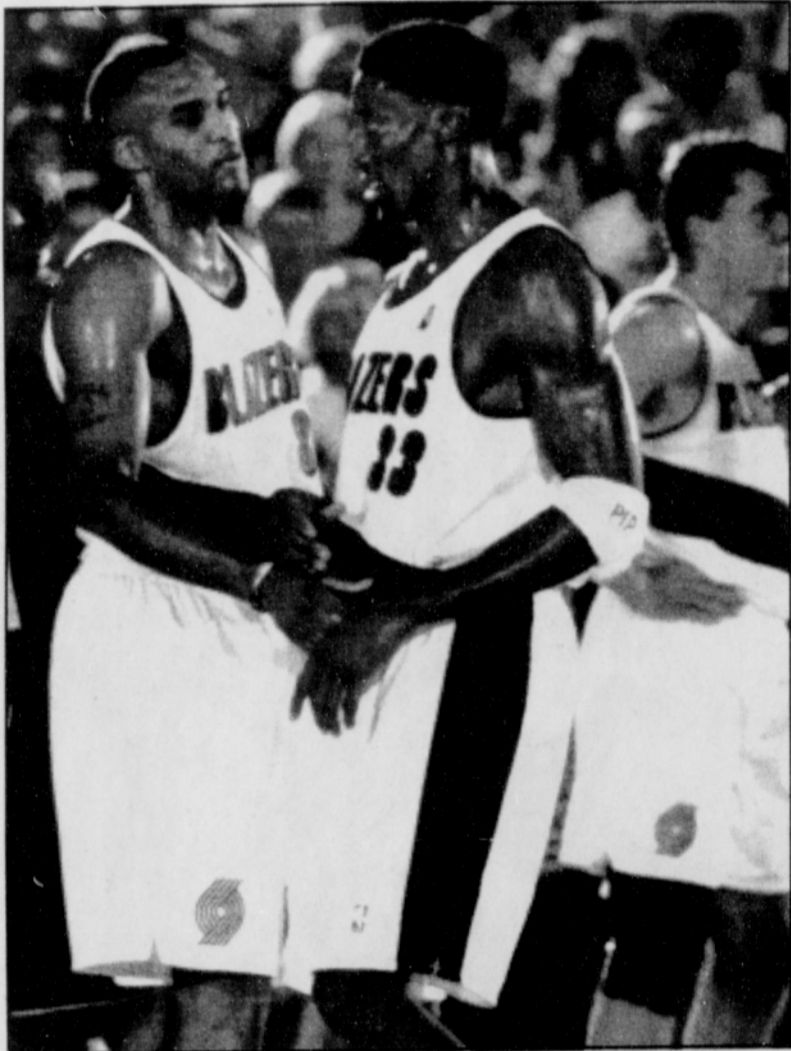
All Scottie Pippen needed was a few feet of space between him and Bryon Russell. And just like that, the Utah Jazz's season was over. Pippen, dazed for several minutes after being inadvertently knocked down from behind by teammate Arvydas Sabonis, hit a 3-pointer with 7.3 seconds left Tuesday night, lifting the Portland Trail Blazers to an 81-79 victory. The loss eliminated the Jazz 4-1 in the best-of-seven series.

"It was my opportunity to take the shot, and I made it," Pippen said. "I was looking to go inside to Rasheed (Wallace) to try to get something quick. They played it pretty good. Russell jumped back in the passing lane, and I just looked for the shot." Pippen created just enough room to get off the game-winner after moving Russell back with a head fake.

"He was so deep," Russell said. "And he's not a good 3-point shooter anyway, so I felt good about it. He looked like he prayed it in anyway, but it went in."

Even after that, Pippen's work wasn't done. Trailing 80-79, Utah had a chance to take the lead when Russell was fouled by Detlef Schrempf with three seconds left, but Russell missed both free throws.

Russell complained that someone was "shaking and jumping down



on" the basket support, altering his first shot. There was brief confusion as the officials decided what to do, but they didn't award him another

Pippen grabbed the rebound of the second miss, was fouled immediately and hit one of two free throws for an 81-79 lead.

Portland's WNBA team Portland Fire hoping to establish strong berth in a league of their own

By Gideon Lantz, For The Portland Observer

Fans of the now disbanded ABL team *Portland Power* recently saw former All-Star Natalie Williams play again last Sunday with the *Utah Starzz* in an exhibition game against that team's local successor. However, whatever excitement former Olympian Williams' appearance caused there, it was in reality a swan song for her and that team that night. For the first time, Williams played against a new local WNBA team hoping to establish a league of their own here—*Portland Fire*.

In an exciting first demonstration of their prowess, the new WNBA team defeated their more experienced opponent 84-74. Another exhibition game will take place May 26 versus Minnesota in Rochester, Minn., before *Portland Fire's* regular season begins against the *Houston Comets* May 31. *Portland Fire* coach Linda Hargrove hoped two All-Stars, Sophia Witherspoon and Point Guard Tully Bevilaqua, would help fill the void left by the departure of the once popular ABL team, *Portland Power*, before the game. Though Witherspoon partially realized that hope, it was another player, Vanessa Nygaard, who led scoring with 15 points. Witherspoon scored 10. Portland fans expecting to see Williams got to. But they also got to see *Portland Fire*.

"A lot of people know who Natalie is, she was an Olympian, she's an All-Star, she was the best player on *Portland Power*, so they want to have a chance to come watch her again," coach Hargrove said in a practice held before the game. On Sunday it was a *Portland Fire*, not Williams, who took center stage, at least this time. Hargrove surely felt more confident that her new WNBA team

might be able to succeed in her ambition of establishing a new league for Portland after Sunday's win against the *Utah Starzz*. However, the initial win was still an exhibition game. Only 11 *Portland Fire* starters must still make the cut to remain on the WNBA team, which is now still considered inexperienced and untried. It will be able to seriously test its mettle again when it opens regular season play against the *Houston Comets* May 31. *Portland Fire* will then be in its final form when coach Hargrove cuts 7 members from the

16 players now in training camp to end up with 11 starters by May 28. Until that time all 16 are fighting to win a final spot on the team, which desires to have a league of their own in the City of Roses. Each one of the *Portland Fire* players now have something to prove in order to remain for regular season play. Tension runs high. "We have several players on the team who were on other teams, and were either waived or were left unprotected in the expansion draft. I would say those players all feel like this is a fresh start for them."

"They have an opportunity here to start with a new team, and hopefully prove to the old team that they shouldn't have left them unprotected or waived now," Coach Hargrove said. Sophia Witherspoon talked about the tension behind the currently scheduled cuts. "There's 16 of us that are out here, you can have 18 in a camp. None of our jobs are secure," Witherspoon said. After graduation from University of Florida in 1991, the African-American player played 6 years overseas in Switzerland, France,

Italy, Turkey, and Hungary. She then coached for 2 years and started in the WNBA in 1997, when she was drafted by New York Liberty, and traded out here last season.

Witherspoon has been around a bit. The problem is, so have the other professional WNBA players she's competing against. "You've got 16 people out here fighting for 11 spots, and we don't know who's going to be where. None of us are secure, so we're just working hard each and every day, and we're busting our butts to try and get it out, fight and get a job."

"When you go to interview for a job, you have your resume. Well, they've seen our resume, now we're going to interview for a job, and by interviewing for that job, we're actually out here on the court each and every day, displaying what we can do," Witherspoon said. *Portland Fire's* coach Hargrove also knows about the tension.

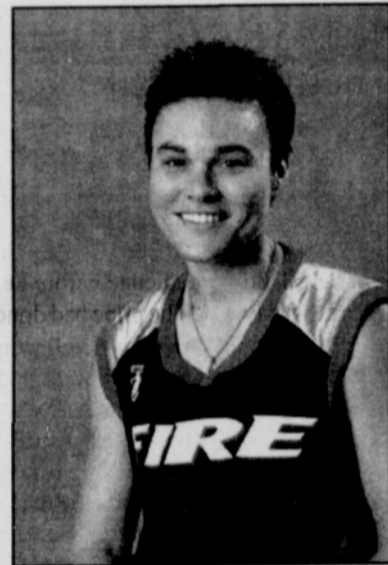
"There's 16 players in camp right now, we'll get another one in camp who's playing in the Italian championship. She'll be here as soon as her team loses or wins the Italian

Championship, and so yeah, they're all fighting for a job. It's very competitive in practice, and it will be up until May 28, when we do the final cut," Hargrove said. Hargrove coached professionally for 2 years, in USA Basketball for 12 years, was an Assistant on the 1992 Olympic Women's Basketball Team and the 1990 World

Championship Team, and has been involved with many of USA Basketball National and International Teams. She also coached college basketball for 29 years before moving to the WNBA. Sunday's exhibition game was merely an initial test as part of the crucible of Hargrove and *Portland Fire's* efforts to establish a league of its own in Portland. "They had the *Portland Power* here for two and a half years, a very popular women's professional team that the fans here really, really enjoyed," Hargrove said. Now a new WNBA Team, *Portland Fire*, will seek to fill the void left by *Portland Power's* departure from the scene. Perhaps *Portland Fire* leader Sophia Witherspoon and point guard Tully Bevilaqua are hoping their team will be as popular as the song, *Girls Just Wanna Have Fun*, by Cindi Lauper, as they anticipate their future in the WNBA. If *Portland Fire's* WNBA women just wanna have fun, maybe they will.



Sophia Witherspoon



Tully Bevilaqua



Vanessa Nygaard

Doris' Cafe honors PIL champs



Doris' Cafe sponsors a succulent awards dinner, not to be forgotten, for the 4A Boys Basketball State Champions Jefferson Democrats.

Housing award from page 1

In 1998, the Portland metropolitan area was estimated to have more than 4,000 individuals living with HIV and some, 1,300 living with AIDS. More than a third have substance abuse problems and 15 percent deal with homelessness. In the last several years, however, housing needs for HIV/AIDS population have changed dramatically from hospice and intensive medical-care facilities to a need for affordable housing market and skyrocketing rents. CCC addressed these complex issues by taking a derelict motel frequented by drug dealers and prostitutes and turning it into the Rose Wood Apartments, a beautiful, affordable, safe haven and the only known

supportive alcohol and drug-free community for low-income and homeless individuals with HIV/AIDS in the country.

"The people of Central City Concern have spent the last two years helping the most needy in our state live," said US Senator Ron Wyden. "Because of their tireless work, these children and families who are fighting the AIDS virus don't have to struggle with homelessness too."

The Fannie Mae Foundation introduced the Maxwell Awards (originally named the Awards of Excellence Program for the Production of Low-Income Housing and renamed in tribute to former Fannie Mae Chairman and CEO David O. Maxwell

for his commitment to the housing needs of low-income people) in 1988.

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