

## SPORTS / METRO

## Girls Battle in Little League World Series



Girls from Tucson, Ariz. gather around their coaches during early rounds of the Little League Softball World Series in Beaverton. The girls competing in the tournament are among the best 11- and 12-year-old softball players in the world.

PHOTOS BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Ariana Anaya of Tucson, Ariz. (left) looks up to someone in the stands during the Little League Softball World Series at Alpenrose Dairy. The series finals take place Wednesday at 5 p.m. with hometown favorite Beaverton matching up against a team from South Bend, Ind. Both teams are undefeated going into the championship game which will be carried live on ESPN2.

## Fire Just Shy From Making Playoffs

The Phoenix Mercury waited until the final road game of the season to finally make a worthwhile trip.

Gordana Crubin scored 17 points and made a key late defensive play as the Mercury ended a WNBA-record 21-game road losing streak with a 73-70 victory over the Portland

Fire, who were eliminated from playoff contention.

Phoenix was 0-15 away from home this season and had not won on the road since a 56-54 triumph at Seattle on July 27, 2001. The Mercury endured a difficult season in which former coach Cynthia Cooper resigned and troubled forward Brandy

Reed was kicked off the team for the second straight season.

Portland was eliminated when Seattle defeated Utah earlier on Sunday. That game became final just before Portland's game reached halftime and the Fire responded with a sluggish first-half finish.

Phoenix closed the first half

with a 9-3 run for a 44-37 advantage at halftime on Grubin's runner just before the buzzer. Portland never got even but pulled within 52-51 on two free throws by Tamicha Jackson with just over 12 minutes remaining.

The Fire closed their season at 16-16.

## NBA gets Instant Replay

(AP)—The NBA will make sure next season that last-second shots really do beat the buzzer.

The league on Monday approved the use of instant replay beginning with the 2002-2003 preseason, just months after some controversial last-second calls in the playoffs.

Officials can also determine if a player a 24-second shot clock or eight-second backcourt violation occurred before a shot. Any last-second shot would be reviewed and coaches will not be able to prompt them.

The league's Competition Committee recommended the move to the Board of Governors last week, and the board approved the measure by an "overwhelming majority" Monday.

At least three-quarters, or 22 of 29 members, needed to vote in favor of the rule for the league to adopt it.

## Stiles Brings Fire Fun to Fair

Portland Fire basketball star Jackie Stiles will make a special two-hour guest appearance at the 2002 Oregon State Fair for Portland Fire Basketball Day on Thursday, Aug. 29.

The 2001 Rookie of the Year will sign autographs, pose for pictures and assist with the Free

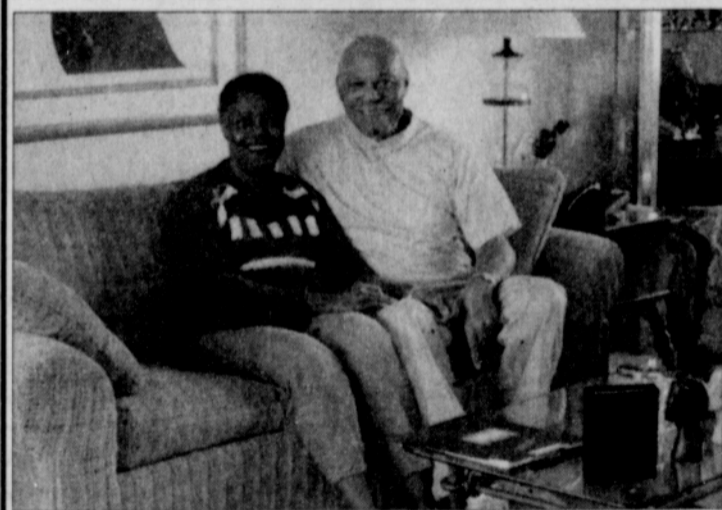
Throw Contest from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., presented by the Hoop.

"I'm looking forward to spending the day at the Fair and meeting with all the Portland Fire fans," Stiles said.

The Free Throw Contest will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in front of the Fountain Plaza Stage

in the main concourse. Prizes of up to \$100 each will be awarded, along with a signed Jackie Stiles Jersey.

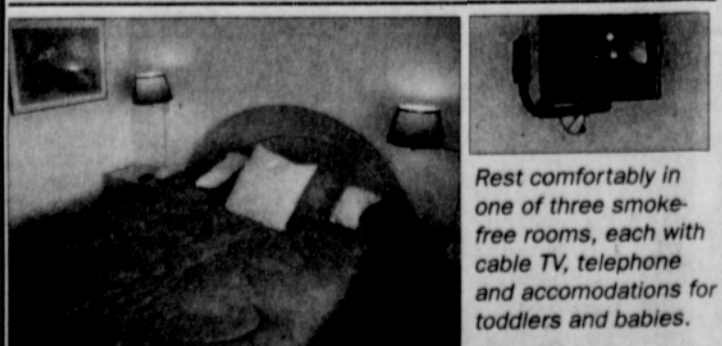
Portland Fire Assistant Coach Tom Newell will host Drills for Skill workshop for youth ages 8 to 16 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

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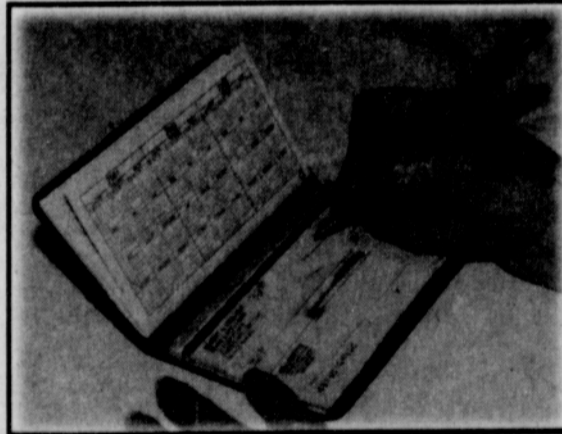
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