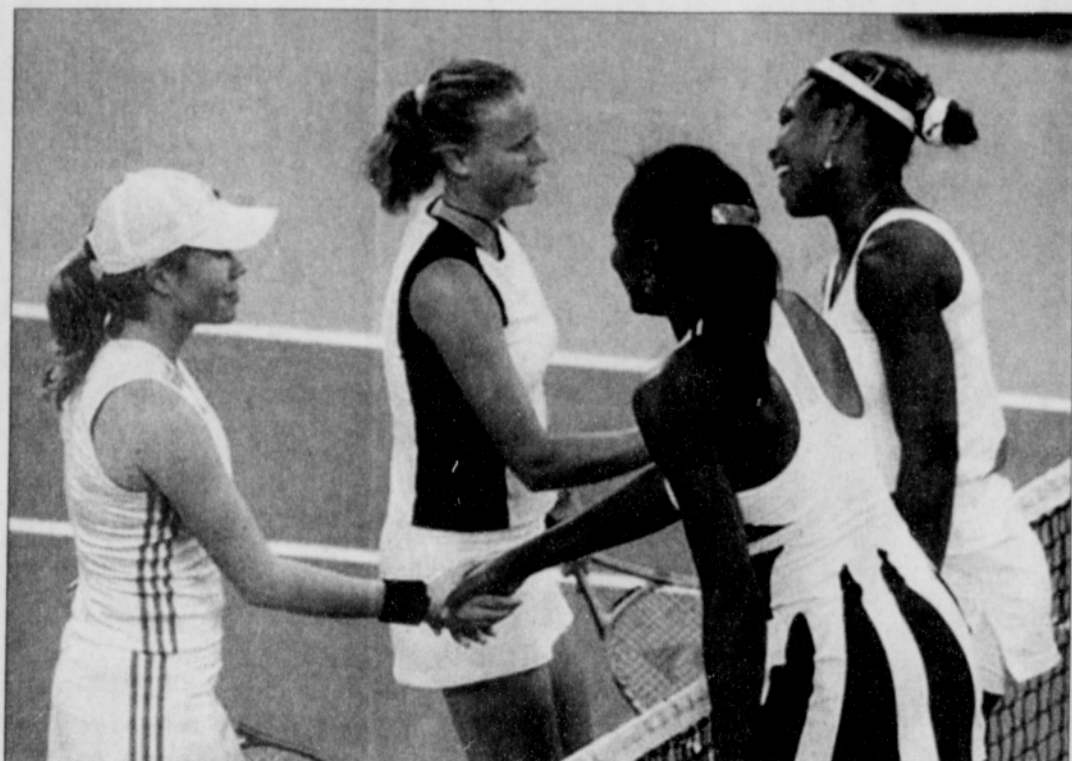


SPORTS



Venus Williams and her sister, Serena shake hands with Eva Birnerova and Daja Bedanova, both from the Czech Republic, after their doubles match at the Fed Cup in Lowell, Mass., Sunday. (AP photo)

Williams Sisters Sweep

(AP)—Daja Bedanova summed up the Williams sisters this way: "They're rebig. They're everywhere." That's true on the tennis court, where Serena and Venus Williams swept five matches for the United States against the Czech Republic in the Fed Cup, and off the court. "It's huge because they transcend tennis," U.S. captain Billie Jean King said. "They're just so popular. When they play, it's very extra special."

The Czechs learned the hard way. They were unable to win a set against the world's No. 1 ranked player, Serena, and third-ranked Venus. "My serve was cooking a little more," Serena said after the clinching victory. "It's a wonderful experience. I really love it. Go USA." The United States took a 2-0 lead into Sunday, and Serena needed just 50 minutes to beat Klara Koukalova 6-2, 6-2 and put the Americans into the next round.

Venus then defeated Iveta Benesova 6-3, 6-2 in the last singles, with doubles to follow. The sisters completed the 5-0 weekend sweep with a 6-0, 6-1 doubles victory in 44 minutes, beating Bedanova and Eva Birnerova. The sisters joined teammates Meghann Shaughnessy and Alexandra Stevenson in parading the American flag around the Tsongas Arena court after the clinching match.

Blazers Return to Dallas for Game 5

(AP)—After Nick Van Exel's buzzer-beating 3-pointer from near midcourt gave the Dallas Mavericks a halftime lead, the Portland Trail Blazers could have given up. They'd already lost 10 straight playoff games, and were two quarters away from a third straight first-round sweep.

Maybe the Mavericks expected that reaction, but the Blazers refused to play along. Portland responded with a 21-0 run in the third period and won 98-79 Sunday night to force a fifth game Wednesday night in Dallas.

"Their backs were against the wall and they wanted to show their fans that they could still play basketball and that they can win games," said Mavs forward Dirk Nowitzki, who had 26 points. "They gave us a hard fight and ended up blowing us out."

Still, the Blazers know they still have a long way to go before making this series competitive, especially considering that Dallas hasn't lost four straight games all season.

"They're still in the driver's seat," Portland guard Damon Stoudamire acknowledged. "But if we can get this next game, I think the pressure will shift to them a little bit."

The top priority for coach Don Nelson will be getting points out of Steve Nash. He was scoreless in 21 minutes in Game 4, missing all four shots and not making it to the foul line.

Michael Finley's offense also was missing. He was 3-for-12 while battling flu symptoms.

Coach Maurice Cheeks is asking his team to "just win one game." Then he'll ask for another, and another.

"If we can win one game, then maybe we can change this series," said Cheeks.

But winning again might prove difficult because Portland will be without guard Derek Anderson, who had knee surgery Sunday. Cheeks is hoping guard Scottie Pippen and center Arvydas Sabonis can return. Both sat out Game 4 with injuries.

SIBLINGS QUALIFY FOR JUNIOR OLYMPICS

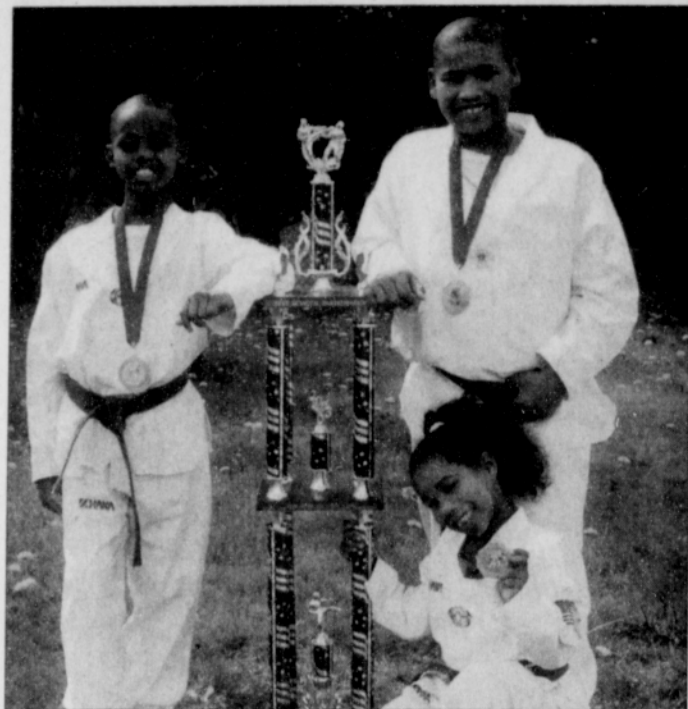
Two local brothers and a sister have qualified for the national Junior Olympics.

"I'm so proud of them," their mother Lynn James said.

At a recent competition at the Oregon Convention Center, Joey, 9, and Steven, 11, both took home gold medals for sparring and Jetamine received a silver medal in the form event.

In July, they will represent the state of Oregon in the National Junior Olympics.

"I'm their biggest fan," James said.



Taekwondo enthusiasts Steven, 9 (from left) Joey, 11 and their younger sister, Jetamine.

Bryant, Iverson, O'Neal Make USA Team

(AP) — Kobe Bryant was added to the U.S. basketball team Tuesday, along with Allen Iverson and Jermaine O'Neal.

They completed what USA Basketball called a "core group" of nine players for the Olympic qualifying tournament to be

played in August in Puerto Rico. The players are expected to be members of the 2004 Olympic team.

In addition to Bryant, O'Neal and Iverson, the team includes Ray Allen, Mike Bibby, Jason Kidd, Karl Malone, Tim Duncan and Tracy McGrady. The team is expected to

add three other players from college or overseas.

"They have paid their dues in our league," said Philadelphia 76ers coach Larry Brown, who will coach the U.S. team. "It is a great honor for them, and I am happy for all three of them."

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