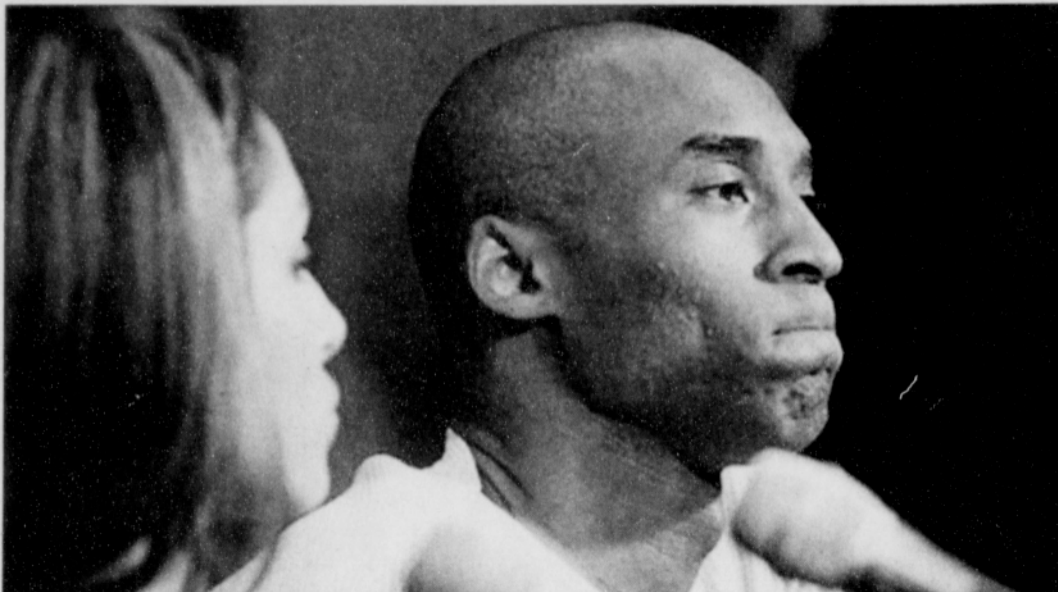


# SPORTS

## Sexual Assault Charge Casts Cloud



Laker Kobe Bryant, seated next to his wife Vanessa at a news conference in Los Angeles, pauses while speaking about the sexual assault charge he faces in Colorado. (AP photo)

### Kobe supporters rally around NBA star

(AP)—The sexual assault charge brought against Kobe Bryant and his admission that he "made the mistake of adultery" threaten to spoil his reputation as one of the NBA's classiest role models and cast a cloud over the Los Angeles Lakers.

Bryant appeared at a Los Angeles news conference holding hands with wife Vanessa on Friday and said he was innocent of the criminal charge and insisted the act was consensual.

"I sit here in front of you guys, furious at myself, disgusted at myself for making the mistake of adultery," he said.

Bryant, 24, was charged Friday with a single count of felony sexual

assault against a 19-year-old woman at an exclusive spa where he was staying when he came to Colorado for knee surgery. If convicted, he faces four years to life in prison or 20 years to life on probation, and a fine of up to \$750,000.

Eagle County District Attorney Mark Hurlbert filed the charge after spending two weeks reviewing evidence and consulting with other prosecutors, and said he "can prove this case beyond a reasonable doubt."

Even if he is ultimately cleared, the criminal charge and admission of infidelity will almost certainly change the public perception of Bryant.

His squeaky-clean image made him one of the NBA's most recognizable and marketable stars. He recently signed a multimillion-dollar deal with Nike and has endorsement deals with Sprite, McDonald's

and Spalding.

Bryant could lose millions of dollars in endorsements.

Bryant's team could feel the sting as well.

The Lakers became the favorites to win the NBA championship next season after signing point guard Gary Payton and power forward Karl Malone.

Bryant said Friday he was thinking more of his family than his career.

"I have a lot at stake, and it has nothing to do with the game of basketball and it has nothing to do with endorsements," said Bryant, who fought back tears several times during the news conference.

"It has to do with my family and being falsely accused. And, I'm innocent. We're going to fight this all the way to the end."

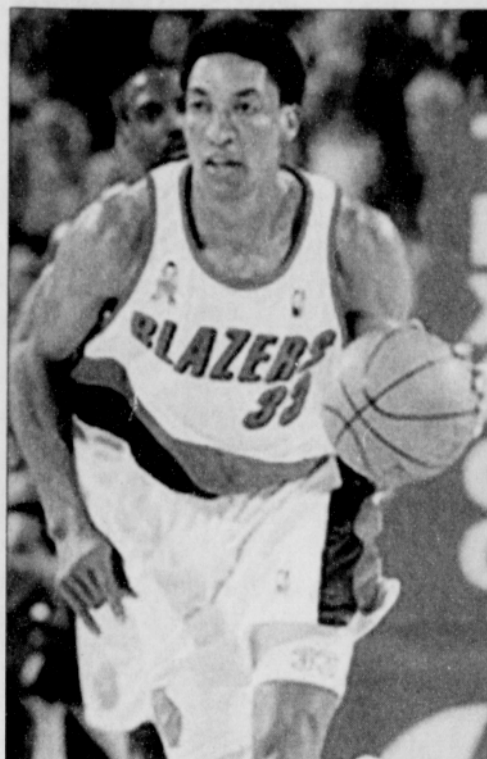
Legal experts said that prosecutors have a tough task because the case appears to hinge mainly on Bryant's word against that of the alleged victim.

Bryant tearfully addressed his wife at the news conference.

"You're a blessing, you're a piece of my heart, the air I breathe, and you're the strongest person I know and I'm so sorry for having to put you through this, putting my family through this," Bryant said, pausing several times as he spoke.

Patricia Brewer, who was at the Staples Center for her daughter's basketball game, was shocked at the news.

"I love him so much and I'll still keep an open mind and hope that this is all a mistake," Brewer said. "But you know, if it's true, then he's just another man masquerading as a family man, fooling us all, and that just makes your heart sink."



Scottie Pippen

## Blazers Release Pippen to Chicago NBA great hopes to get Bulls back in playoffs

(AP)—Scottie Pippen has one goal as he returns to the team he helped win six NBA championships: lead the Chicago Bulls back to the playoffs.

The Bulls officially announced Sunday they re-signed Pippen, a member of six title teams in the 1990s. The team expects Pippen to supply veteran leadership and a winning attitude to a young team.

"I'm here to help get this team back to the playoffs—that's my goal," Pippen said in a statement released by the team Sunday. "I've made the playoffs every year of my 16-year career, and I don't plan on breaking that streak."

Pippen was a seven-time All-Star in his 11 seasons with the Bulls, before leaving for the Houston Rockets before the 1999 season. He has spent the last four seasons with the Portland Trail Blazers.

"I've always been a Bull in my heart," Pippen said, "and now I will play where my heart."

## Blazers Introduce Nash as GM

(AP)—John Nash, officially introduced last Wednesday as the Trail Blazers' sixth general manager, said he was excited about joining a team that is in the midst of a soul-searching overhaul.

Nash says he looks forward to the opportunity of joining a team recently re-dedicated to excellence—both on and off the court.

"Paul Allen has made it clear that he wants a team that both he and the city of Portland can be proud of," said Nash, adding that he was excited to join a team "re-dedicated



John Nash

to excellence both on and off the court."

Nash, the former Philadelphia, Washington and New Jersey GM, was most recently a basketball analyst on the Philadelphia 76ers post-game show.

The 56-year-old veteran manager replaces Bob Whitsitt, whose personnel moves

angered many in the community. The team failed to win a championship with the league's highest payroll and several notable players have had surly attitudes and

legal problems.

Nash said he wouldn't shy away from those problems.

"It would be my goal to make some changes before the season starts, but not change for the sake of change," he said.

One of the team's worst headaches has been Rasheed Wallace, whose tirades against referees have been the on-court symbol for a team perceived to be out of control when it leaves the arena.

As Washington's GM, Nash drafted Wallace.

Nash has also been known for cleaning house. With the Nets, he swung a nine-player trade with Dallas and an eight-player trade with Philadelphia.

## Serena Williams, Woods win ESPYs

(AP)—Serena Williams was honored as female athlete of the year and female tennis player at the 11th annual ESPY Awards in Los Angeles, a year after she accepted the same trophies on behalf of older sister Venus.

Tiger Woods repeated as male golfer for the fourth consecutive year. Cyclist Lance Armstrong was chosen male athlete of the year over Barry Bonds, Tim Duncan and Woods, who had won the last three years. Bonds was chosen major league baseball player for the second straight year.

Serena Williams recently defeated Venus to win her second straight Wimbledon title.

She thanked her divorced parents at last week's award ceremony.

The World Series champion Anaheim Angels were chosen best team. Quarterback Tommy Maddox of the Pittsburgh Steelers was chosen comeback athlete.

Duncan, who helped the San Antonio Spurs win a champion-



Serena Williams is honored as female athlete of the year at the annual ESPY Awards in Los Angeles.

ship, was named NBA player, beating out Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal of the Los Angeles Lakers, among others.

Carmelo Anthony, who helped Syracuse win the NCAA championship before leaving for the NBA, was named male college athlete.

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**Boxing Battles Fill Fight Card**

Battle at the Beach III at the Chinook Winds Casino and Convention Center in Lincoln City features 10 bouts on Friday.

The main event is the 2000 Olympic team Super Heavy alternate Mike Wilson of the Medford Bulldogs against Tony O'Bryant of West Portland. Also on the card at 160 pounds is Lincoln City's favorite home-boy, former Siletz resident currently from Albany, Bo Marthaller who will go up against Boone Wyatt of Medford in the Junior Middleweight category.

Another exciting bout will pit two 16 years old talented warriors in Luis DeAlba of Seattle and Eloy Perez of Rochester, WA. Braulio Lopez of West Portland will make his third appearance at Chinook Winds and will go up against the more experienced Lorenzo Rios of Medford.