

Sheena Johnson

# SPORTS

## JOHNSON HURDLES WAY TO ATHENS



(AP)—Sheena Johnson is off to Athens, and not just as a young hurdler in her first Olympics. Her impressive performance at

the U.S. track and field trials Sunday cements her position as one of the favorites for a gold medal in the 400-meter hurdles. In fact, all

three Americans in the event could be contenders in their first Olympics.

Johnson's 52.95 seconds, Brenda Taylor's 53.36 and Lashinda Demus' 53.43 are the three fastest in the world this year.

"I know everybody's going to come after me, so I guess I've just got to run," Johnson said. "I know we have the best hurdlers in the world, so as long as I know that, I think I'll be OK."

Johnson's time was the fastest ever by an American on U.S. soil and just a shade off the American record of 52.61 set by Kim Batton nine years ago.

Only one runner has a faster time in the past five years - Russian Yuliya Pechenkina in her world record 52.34 last year.

Johnson turned it on in the final few meters.

"I just told myself at the eighth hurdle I was going to run all out, no matter what leg came up," she said.

Johnson, who helped the UCLA women win the NCAA championship with a first-place finish at the collegiate nationals in June with a then world-leading 53.54, is coached by Bob Kersee.

Among Kersee's previous pupils are Florence-Griffith Joyner, Jackie Joyner Kersee, Gail Devers and Valerie Brisco-Hooks.

"I know he's coached a lot of great hurdlers," Johnson said. "He really knows the competition. He knows how to keep me focused."

## Lakers Land New Coach

Tomjanovich joins team amid roster upheaval

(AP)—Rudy Tomjanovich, who guided the Houston Rockets to NBA championships in 1994 and 1995, agreed Friday to coach the Los Angeles Lakers.

Tomjanovich succeeds Phil Jackson, who coached the Lakers to three titles in five years. The team announced June 18, three days after losing to the Detroit Pistons in the NBA Finals, that Jackson wouldn't return next season.

The 55-year-old Tomjanovich coached the Rockets for 12 years before stepping down in May 2003 - two months after being diagnosed with bladder cancer. He negotiated a settlement of the remaining two years and \$12 million left on his coaching contract.

Reportedly in good health now, he worked as a scout with the Rockets last season - his 34th year with the organization he joined in 1970 as the second overall selection in the NBA draft.

Tomjanovich was the winningest coach in Rockets history with a 503-397 record, but they failed to make the playoffs in his last four years there.

Rudy Tomjanovich succeeds Phil Jackson as coach of the Los Angeles Lakers.



He joins an unsettled Lakers team - Kobe Bryant is an unrestricted free agent and Shaquille O'Neal has demanded a trade. Derek Fisher and Karl Malone are also unrestricted free agents.

## O'Neal Trade Expected

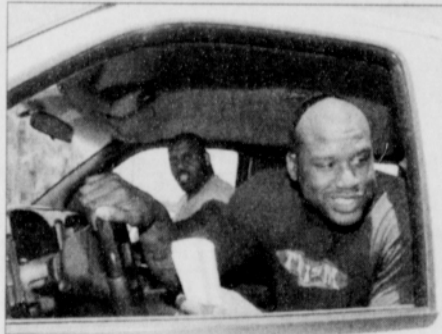
NBA star spotted scoping real estate in Florida

(AP)—Expect to see Shaquille O'Neal in a Miami Heat uniform next season. His agent does.

Perry Rogers said Sunday a blockbuster deal between the Heat and Los Angeles Lakers is imminent and could be official Wednesday when the NBA's two-week player movement moratorium expires.

"I can tell you we're confident that this will move forward," Rogers told The Associated Press in a phone interview Sunday. "We're excited about the prospects. We're confident that Shaquille will be moving to Miami soon."

Miami is expected to send a package that includes Lamar



Los Angeles Lakers basketball star Shaquille O'Neal chats with reporters after leaving a real estate office in Orlando, Fla., Saturday. (AP photo)

Odom, Brian Grant, one other player - perhaps Caron Butler - and a first-round draft choice to Los Angeles in exchange for the 7-foot-1, 340-pound O'Neal, who demanded a trade shortly after the Lakers lost the NBA Finals to Detroit.

Rogers said he did not know which players the Lakers and Heat have agreed to swap.

## Speedsters Race To Victory

After a two-year absence from the Northwest, the American Le Mans Grand Prix Series returns to Portland International Raceway, July 23-25. The weekend event features exotic automotive manufactures like Audi, Lola, Corvette, Ferrari, Dodge Viper, Mustang, Porsche and Lamborghini battling for speed and competing for bragging rights. For information about ticket sales and event details, call 503-821-4344.

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