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SPORTS

Oden or Durant: Blazers to Decide

Team awaits history making day

BY PAT GRUHLER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

One of the biggest days in the history of the Portland Trail Blazers comes in just one week. Thursday, June 28 will be the day the Blazers make the much anticipated first selection in the NBA draft.

A lot has been made of this pick for two reasons; Greg Oden and Kevin Durant. Popular opinion has been to pick Oden. The majority of sportswriters, former players and large groups of friends have been screaming "DRAFT ODEN."

In the Blazer's office, the pick is not decided. Sunday's Oregonian reported that General Manager Kevin Pritchard is still far from a decision. Coach Nate McMillan is leaning more towards Oden, just like the majority of Blazer fans across the city.

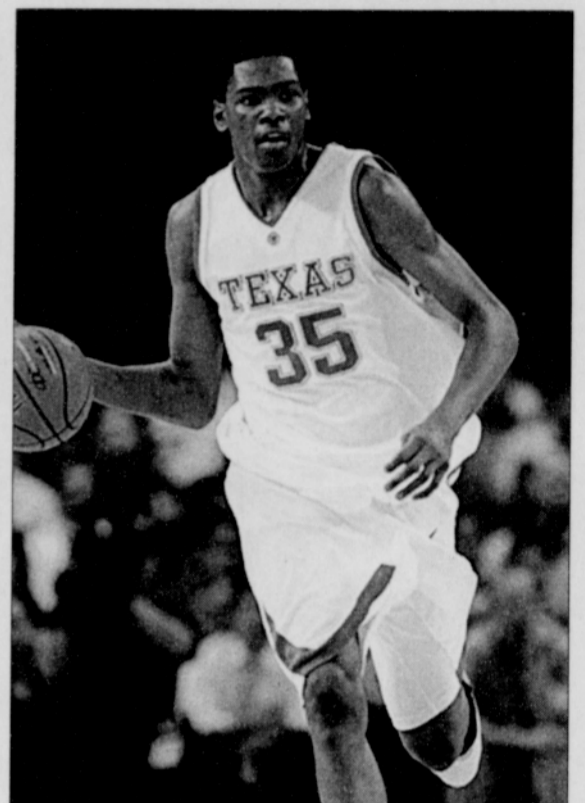
Let's take a quick look at both players.

Oden is 7-foot tall and looks to be a defensive stopper in the realm of Bill Russell. He is big, strong and has amazing timing.

His freshmen year at Ohio State University was cut short by an injured right wrist which caused Oden to miss the start of the season. When he returned, he could barely grip the ball with both hands and he shot free throws with his right hand. He still averaged nearly 16 points and 10 rebounds a game, putting an exclamation point on his recovery with a 25 points, 12 board and 4 block performance in the National Championship.



Greg Oden



Kevin Durant

His former coach Thad Matta said that Oden was never 100 percent ready to play, and that he was medically given clearance to play in the middle of May. At the NBA pre-draft camp in Orlando a few weeks ago, Oden continued to wow people with a 34 inch vertical jump and his flexibility during agility tests. He did not participate in the bench press lift because of his wrist. Kevin Durant had one of the best freshmen seasons in the history of college basketball. He averaged 26 points, 11 boards and was the consensus Player of the Year in college. He would most likely be a 6-10 small forward in the NBA, due to his skinny frame. He is about 185 pounds, soaking wet.

His agility, wingspan and deep shooting range are making many GMs, including Pritchard, drool all

over their notebooks.

Unlike Oden, Durant caused a little shakiness in his stock at the pre-draft camp. Durant was the only player, out of about 60, who could not bench 185 pounds even once. And he finished last out of the players who completed all of the drills. Even his vertical jump and agility were lower than expected. But most GMs, including Pritchard, could care less.

Oden was due to workout and meet with the Blazers Tuesday and leave Thursday morning. Durant will come later on Thursday and stay until Saturday morning.

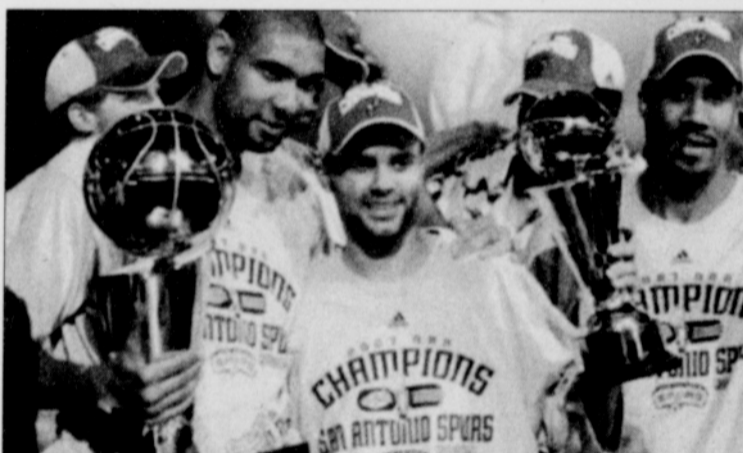
Pritchard has said that he will wait to make an official announcement until he meets with both players and sees them workout for himself.

We all know Pritchard is not afraid to create noise and to get exactly

what he wants. Last year he made a record six trades in the draft, getting two of the top four talents in the draft. We also know that he does not mind picking the opposite of what his fans want. At the time, the public was pushing for him to pick former Gonzaga star Adam Morrison, and instead he skipped Morrison to draft LaMarcus Aldridge and Brandon Roy.

The team also has four second round draft picks and several tradable assets like, Zack Randolph, Travis Outlaw, Jarrett Jack and Martell Webster. The team may need to trade for a small forward, depending on the draft.

And Pritchard is working very hard to get another lottery pick. He is very high on Corey Brewer and would love to get another pick to get him into a Blazers uniform.



San Antonio Spurs Tim Duncan holds up the Larry O'Brien Trophy while teammate Tony Parker holds up his MVP trophy after defeating the Cleveland Cavaliers to win the NBA Finals basketball series Thursday in Cleveland, Ohio. (AP photo)

San Antonio Sweeps the NBA Finals

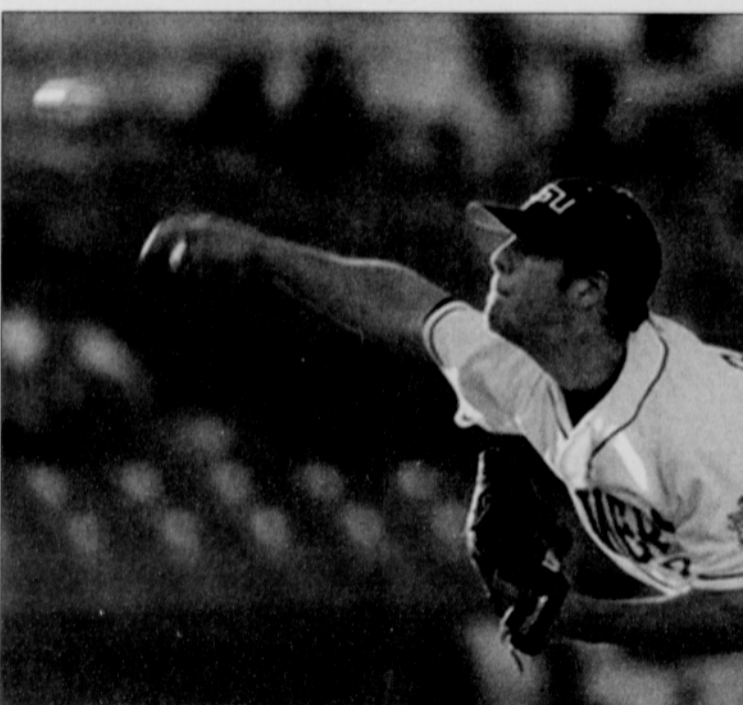
The San Antonio Spurs completed their four game sweep against the Cleveland Cavaliers in the NBA Finals, winning 83-82, Thursday in Cleveland, Ohio. This series was the lowest television rated finals of all time.

The Cavs had the early lead against the Spurs in both games in Cleveland, but could not match San Antonio down the stretch.

Cleveland opened the fourth

quarter in Game 4 on an 11-0 run, to take their first fourth quarter lead of the series, 63-60. The game was tied at 66 when San Antonio scored 8 straight points to regain control of the game.

The Cavs hit a few threes late, the last one was meaningless with no time left. The Spurs won their fourth championship in 9 years, to bring much debate on whether they are a dynasty or not.



Oregon starting pitcher Michael Stutes works against Arizona State in the first inning of a College World Series baseball winner's bracket game, in Omaha, Neb., Monday. (AP photo)

OSU up 2-0 at College World Series

Defending NCAA Champion Oregon State has continued its hot play in the post season as they dominated the Arizona State Sun Devils, 12-6, Monday for their second victory of the College World Series in Omaha, Neb.

The Beavers simply dominated the Devils, scoring at least one run in the first six innings taking a 12-1

lead into the top of seventh. Arizona State finally got their bats working as they got four runs in the inning, before Beavers reliever Joe Paterson came in to finish the job that starter Michael Stutes started.

Oregon State got 18 hits against the Devils. They will play Wednesday, in either a rematch against Arizona State or against UC Irvine.

SPORTS WEEK IN REVIEW

Kobe Trade Talk

Intentional or not, Kobe Bryant seems to be doing everything he can to pressure the Los Angeles Lakers into trading him. So far, it doesn't appear to be working. The latest twist in the saga involves an amateur video of the nine-time All-Star denouncing general manager Mitch Kupchak and teammate Andrew Bynum.

Lakers spokesman John Black said the team was contacted about the video before Bryant first requested to be traded on May 30. "It doesn't change our stance at all," Black said a day after saying essentially the same thing — that the team has no plans to trade the two-time defending NBA scoring champion.

Mariners losing steam

After winning 9 of 10 games, and five straight games on their last at bat, the Seattle Mariners have lost five straight games to drop 7 1/2 games out of first in the AL West.

After winning the first game in a three-game series at Wrigley field, the Cubs won the last two games against the Mariners, before the Houston Astros swept Seattle in Houston.

The Mariners returned home Tuesday to open up a series against the Pittsburgh Pirates.

U.S. Open Upset



Keeping up with the high scoring that seems to become traditional at the U.S. Open, Angel Cabrera won his first tournament on U.S. soil with a +5, beating former Open winners Tiger Woods and Jim Furyk Sunday at Oakmont in Pennsylvania. Cabrera shot a 69 on Sunday, finishing with two of the tournaments eight rounds below par.

Fatherhood for Woods

Less than 24 hours after Tiger Woods finished second at the U.S. Open on Father's Day, his wife gave birth to their first child, a daughter named Sam Alexis Woods. The news was announced on his Web site, leaving out such details as height and weight and when she was born.