

# SPORTS

## Blazers Tap Nike Executive

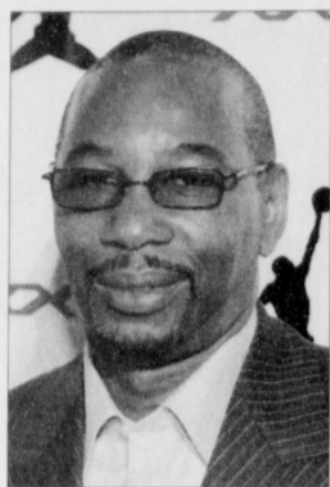
First African American to lead franchise

The Portland Trail Blazers has named Portland resident Larry Miller as its team president in charge of the business aspects of the NBA franchise, such as ticket sales, corporate sponsorships and marketing.

Miller is the first African American to hold such a high ranking position with the NBA team. He joins the Blazers after 10 years at Nike where he served as vice-president and general manager of basketball, responsible for the shoe and apparel maker's global basketball business.

"For me, what I'd like to do is see this city fall in love again with the Portland Trail Blazers," Miller said.

"It is a very exciting day for the Trail Blazers organization to be able to announce the hiring of Larry Miller as our team President," said Trail Blazers chairman and owner Paul Allen. "Larry is a pre-eminent figure in the basketball industry and one of the most widely respected sports



Larry Miller

professionals in the country, and importantly has been a long time-member of the Portland community."

As President of the Trail Blazers, Miller will be responsible for all aspects of the Trail Blazers business portfolio, including all team business activities, the Rose Quarter and Rose City Radio and will report to Vulcan Sports CEO Tod Leiweke.

Blazer General Manager Kevin Pritchard will continue to be in charge of player personnel matters.

Miller, a Philadelphia native, joined Nike as Vice President, USA Apparel in 1997, having previously served as President of Jantzen since 1992. He was promoted to president of Nike Brand Jordan in 1999.

"Larry leaves behind a very talented team at Nike, and we wish him much success in his new role," said Nike Brand President Charlie Denson. "We look forward to continuing Nike's strong relationship with the Trail Blazers and with Larry."

## Sweep Brings World Series Repeat

### OSU Beavers make history

BY PAT GRUHLER  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Oregon State Beavers swept North Carolina 9-3 on Sunday night in Omaha, Neb., to become the first team ever to win the national championship while posting a losing record in their conference.

The Beavers were also just the sixth team to ever repeat as national champions, a remarkable feat after losing six of eight positions starters from last year's championship team and two of the three starting pitchers.

Seniors Darwin Barney and Mitch Canham picked up their game this year, with freshmen Joey Wong and Jorge Reyes also playing huge roles. Even veteran pitchers Daniel Turpen, Mike Stutes and Joe Patterson changed their roles from last year and earlier in the season to help orchestrate the championship run.

On Saturday, the Beavers made a big first step in repeating as national champions when Reyes took the reins on the pitching mound and made it very difficult for the Tar Heels to muster much on offense. Reyes pitched six 1/3 innings and gave up three runs. He really dictated the game and frustrated the Tar Heel hitters.

Offensively the Beavers did in the championship series what they have done since getting back into the college world series. They played their brand of small ball and forced the defense to make mistakes. They got the early lead, and even though they gave up a few runs, they never relented and kept getting one-run punches before



Oregon State players pile onto the field after the Beavers beat North Carolina 9-3 in Game 2 of the best-of-three College World Series baseball finals, to win the championship Sunday in Omaha, Neb. (AP photo)

winning each game comfortably.

The Beavers made every play a challenge. They ran hard to each bag and forced the Tar Heels defense to make bad throws.

The postseason formula has been the same ever since they faced two elimination games in the same day in the opening regional round: Play strong defense and don't give the opponent anything easy. When you're on base, run hard to each bag, slide to outside when going into home. They laid down perfect bunts and slid head first into first base. They played perfect funda-

mental baseball. No mistakes.

At the end of the regular season, slightly more than a month ago, nobody was quite sure of the fate of this season for the Beavers. After starting the season ranked in top 15, and moving into the Top 10 twice, and starting out 10-1, the Beavers struggled when they got into Pac-10 play with a 10-14 record.

OSU was the last team to make it into the regional round. After winning their first game and losing the second, the Beavers had a day off before playing two elimination games in the same day. They elimi-

nated Rutgers, before beating Virginia in the next game and again the next day to host a super regional against Michigan, and swept the Wolverines in two games.

To reach the finals they dominated nearly every game that they played, putting on defensive and offensive exhibitions throughout the tournament.

OSU has now made the playoffs three years in a row and Coach Pat Casey once again has been recruiting the nation's top players. Look to see the Beavers contend in 2008.

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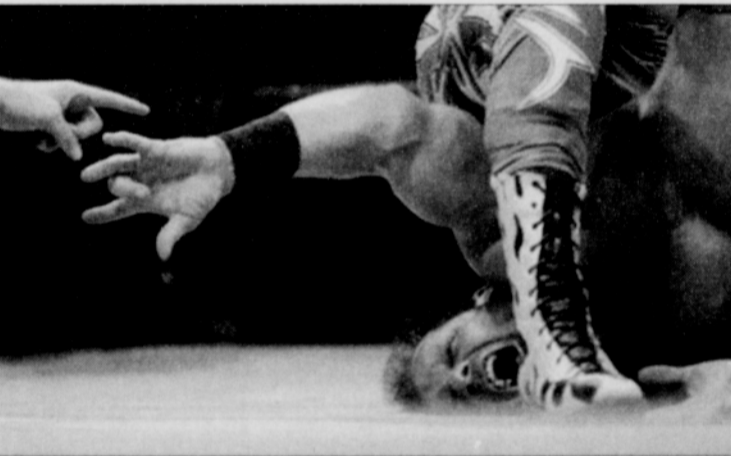
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## Wrestler Suspect in Murder-Suicide

Professional wrestling superstar Chris Benoit was found dead along with his wife and 7-year-old son in what police believe was a murder-suicide, authorities said on Tuesday.

Benoit and his family were discovered on Monday afternoon inside their home in Fayetteville, Ga., an Atlanta suburb.

The county's district attorney, Scott Ballard, declined to give further details about how the three died, but authorities said Benoit appeared to have smothered his son and strangled his wife before hanging himself with the pulley of a



Chris Benoit during a Smackdown World Wrestling Entertainment show in Madrid last year. (AP photo)

weightlifting machine, according to the Associated Press.

Benoit's employer, World Wrestling Entertainment, said in a statement on its Web site that he canceled two events in Texas over the weekend, citing an undisclosed family emergency.

Benoit then sent "several curious text messages" to friends early Sunday morning, prompting authorities to check on Benoit and his family at their home, the statement said.

Nicknamed "The Rabid Wolverine" and "The Canadian Crippler," Benoit was a leading international star of professional wrestling.

### SPORTS COMMENTARY

## Oden or Durant is Step One

BY PAT GRUHLER  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Last week I wrote about what the Blazers were thinking about doing in the NBA draft this coming Thursday.

The big question has been, do we pick Greg Oden or Kevin Durant?

But the Blazers 2007-08 season will depend on a lot more than just that first pick, although that is step one in the blueprint to making this Blazers team championship-bound.

What else does Portland need to do?

The first thing the team will look to do is make a splash in the trade game. That will be the best way to add more talent at a good price. Rumored players on the block are

superstar Zack Randolph, starting point guard Jarrett Jack, and even good young players like Travis Outlaw and Martell Webster.

Don't forget the Blazers have four second-round draft picks to play around with.

It's no secret that the Blazers have been trying to get another lottery pick in the draft. Kevin Pritchard is just greedy. Last year he had to have both LaMarcus Aldridge and Brandon Roy. This year there has been some debate on what other player the Blazers will try to draft.

An early rumor had Randolph going to the Atlanta Hawks for the third pick so we could draft Mike Conley and give Oden the same point guard he has had in high

school. But in the month since the draft lottery that talk has cooled down, but not the ambitions to add another draft pick.

A more recent rumor has the Blazers trading with the Hawks for the 11th pick in the draft, and giving up starting point guard Jack. With that pick, the Blazers would look to address their need at small forward, by drafting either Al Thornton or Julian Wright. I would be okay with this trade. The Blazers could play Roy at point guard or start exciting second year guard Sergio Rodriguez. Any small forward the Blazers got at 11 would probably be an upgrade for the team.

My only concern is making this young team even younger. The

Blazers will be looking to add inexpensive veteran role players, such as former Blazer Steve Blake.

After the draft the Blazers will have a bigger question to answer: What to do with Zack Randolph?

Let's say the Blazers draft Oden and Al Thornton, who will be the next small forward?

At center we would have Oden and Joel Prysbylla. I think Randolph is too much of a black hole offensively, so you start Aldridge at power forward. Travis Outlaw would play some minutes behind him.

My top priorities would be to draft Oden, get a second lottery pick, trade Randolph and start practicing. See you at the trophy presentation in June.

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FINANCIAL ADVISOR  
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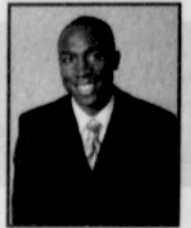


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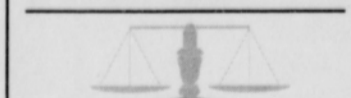
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