

Sports

Coaches say three-pointer helped UNLV, Providence

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Some basketball coaches agree that Nevada-Las Vegas and Providence might not be in the NCAA Final Four if not for the 3-point goal. "It helped some teams, that's for sure — UNLV and Providence," Pittsburgh Coach Paul Evans said Thursday.

"The 3-point goal really benefited Providence because they haven't a lot of inside players," Michigan Coach Bill Frieder said. "Whether the championship game will be a shootout between UNLV and Providence remains to be seen. In Saturday's first game of the Superdome double-header, No. 10 Syracuse, 30-6, takes on Providence, 25-8, followed by No. 1 UNLV, 37-1, against No. 3 Indiana, 28-4.

Indiana, led by Steve Alford's 52-percent accuracy with 98 3-pointers, has the best 3-point shooting marksmanship (121 for 241 — 50 percent) among the Final Four teams. Syracuse basically relies on one 3-point player, Greg Monroe, and has made 93 of 230. UNLV, with Freddie Banks and Gerald Paddio leading the way, has thrown up 746 bombs, making 40 percent. Banks made 142 and Paddio 85.

The Runnin' Rebels, coached by Jerry Tarkanian, are on the biggest

roll of all with a 22-game winning streak in quest of their first NCAA crown.

Providence hit 43 percent of its long-range shots on 275 of 646. Billy Donovan, 96; Ernie "Pop" Lewis, 94, and Delray Brooks, 65, head the Friar 3-point makers.

The Friars finished fourth in the Big East regular season and are the lowest seed (No. 5 in the Southeast) to get this far. Both UNLV (West) and Indiana (Midwest) were No. 1 seeds and Syracuse (East) was the No. 2 seed.

In a sampling of coaches who are meeting in New Orleans in connection with the Final Four, most agreed that both games were toss-ups.

"It's wide-open, a tough call," said Frieder, who added that he picks Big Ten rival Indiana and Syracuse to win. "Indiana has been in every game this season and (Syracuse's Ron) Seikaly is playing extremely well."

Southern California Coach George Raveling said, "It's a strong Final Four. Any team has a good shot at winning it. (Indiana Coach) Bobby Knight's tough with a week to prepare. (Providence Coach) Rick Pitino's on a roll.

"Vegas not only has a good offense but a good defensive and rebounding team. The 3-point rule has helped Vegas and Providence and helped Syracuse because it opened things up inside for Seikaly." Oregon State's Ralph Miller, the dean of Division I coaches, said, "Any four teams are capable of winning. It's whose game is on. Like Tarkanian said, it takes a little luck. With North Carolina and Villanova the last few years (NCAA champions in 1983 and 1985), who knows?"

Coach John Thompson, whose team beat Syracuse in the Big East tournament final, said of the Orange-emen-Providence game: "It's very unpredictable when you have two league teams. It's like the NBA when teams play best-of-five or seven. You never sweep the other team. Syracuse is in a tough situation. They already won twice. It's psychologically tough to win a third."

Of those coaches interviewed, only Evans had a strong view on the outcomes, picking Indiana and Syracuse to meet in the title game.

"Probably Syracuse's inside game will take its toll on Providence. When Bobby Knight has a week to prepare, he can beat anybody." And the winner will be? "I hope for Syracuse," Evans said, "but probably Indiana."

John Feinstein's chronicle of a season with Knight and the Hoosiers, has found itself atop *The New York Times* non-fiction bestseller list.

A CBS Sports crew already has filmed the story of the town of Kouts, which had one of the smallest high schools to make it to the regionals of the state tourney this year.

Come Saturday, and the high school semifinals, ABC's *Wide World of Sports*, ESPN and *USA Today* all will be on hand, said Bob Williams of the Indiana High School Athletic Association.

Rockets' Sampson practicing, hopes to return to lineup April 1

HOUSTON (AP) — Ralph Sampson is still trying to make something positive out of an injury-filled season.

Sampson, sidelined since Feb. 3 after undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery, returned to workouts Wednesday and hopes to be playing regularly again by April 1.

He's also retained a new agent to negotiate his contract renewal.

"If we can get it (contract) done before the playoffs, let's do it," Sampson said. "I would like to do that and then go on and win the championship. That would cap off the whole year."

Such a scenario would be a reversal of the way Sampson's season has gone. He was on the team's injury list twice early in the season with sprained ankles.

Then he had to have lateral cartilage removed and has been recuperating from surgery while the Rockets struggle for position in the NBA playoffs.

Sampson had missed 25 games with his latest injury going into Thursday night's game against Portland in The Summit.

Sampson was considering suiting up for the game and hopes to be playing regularly soon.



"My projection is to be playing by April 1 and take it to the playoffs," Sampson said.

Sampson also has hired the Philadelphia firm of Wilkinson & Perry as his agents to replace Tom Collins of Los Angeles, also the former agent for Los Angeles Lakers center Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

Gene Perry, an attorney for the firm, said he likely would start contract talks with Rockets General Manager Ray Patterson before the playoffs.

"I thought Ralph did very well," Rockets Coach Bill Fitch said of Sampson's first workout

since his Feb. 3 injury. "His passing from the low post really stood out."

"Granted, he's not moving around defensively like he'll have to later on. But for the first practice, it was very good."

Sampson missed 11 of Houston's first 13 games this season with ankle sprains.

"I want to avoid what happened after the first ankle sprain," Sampson said. "I tried to come back a little too soon and re-injured myself."

"I'm going to be very patient until I know I can put a foot down and be physical, which is what it takes to win in the playoffs."

Sampson is in the final year of a 4-year, \$5.5 million contract, signed his rookie year.

The Rockets earlier made a verbal \$20 million contract offer to Sampson but he backed off, saying he didn't want to be distracted during the season.

"It's been a rough year for me, but I think the Rockets management knows that I like Houston and that I think we can win here," Sampson said. "I've expressed that many times."

Gervin could join Rockets by year's end

HOUSTON (AP) — Former San Antonio Spurs guard George Gervin, who led the NBA in scoring four times, could be wearing a Houston Rockets uniform for the rest of the regular season and the playoffs, General Manager Ray Patterson says.

"George Gervin would look great in a Rockets uniform," Patterson said. "Gervin would certainly take a lot of pressure off Akeem (Olajuwon) and Ralph (Sampson)."

Gervin currently is playing for Banco Di Roma in the Italian League.

If Gervin's team loses its playoff game Sunday, its season will

be over, leaving Gervin free to play in the United States.

"It's a unique case where we could help him and he could help us over the short haul," Patterson said. "Here's a guy who can roll out of bed and score 20 points. He would give us a tremendous lift at the big-guard spot."

Patterson said that because of the team's salary cap, the Rockets are only interested in signing Gervin for the rest of the regular season and for the playoffs.

Gervin, contacted by the *San Antonio Express-News* in Rome, said he was happy playing in Italy but left room for negotiation.

"I'm a businessman first, and I

have to consider an offer like that," he said.

Gervin led the NBA in scoring four times and in nine NBA seasons averaged 26.2 points and shot a career 51.1 percent from the floor.

The Rockets have suffered at the big-guard spot this season. Robert Reid was bothered early in the season by a knee injury, and Lewis Lloyd and Mitchell Wiggins were banned from the NBA in January because of drug usage.

"This was the best alternative we could come up with in trying to get ready for the playoffs," Patterson said.

Indiana in state of hoop, Hoosier hysteria

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — From the preps to the pros, basketball has Indiana on the brink of Hoosier hysteria.

Coach Bob Knight's Indiana team made it to the NCAA's Final Four, and the Pacers are headed for the NBA playoffs for the first time since 1981, and the Marion high school team is trying for a third straight prep title.

Hoosier Hysteria, that uniquely Indiana strain of March Madness that afflicts the state most of the year, again has built to a fever pitch. "With IU in the Final Four, it's all

there," said David Finkelstein of Fort Wayne, among the many who showed up in Hoosier red at the Pacers' 101-92 victory earlier this week over Washington. "Sure it's bigger that last year, no doubt about it."

It's had some help. The movie "Hoosiers," the eighth top revenue-grossing motion picture last week, has enlightened the nation about Indiana's prep tourney, in which every high school, large or small, has a shot at a single state crown. And "Season On The Brink,"

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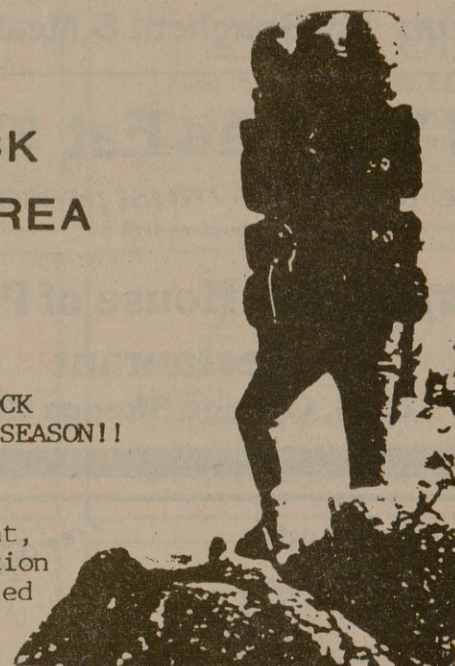
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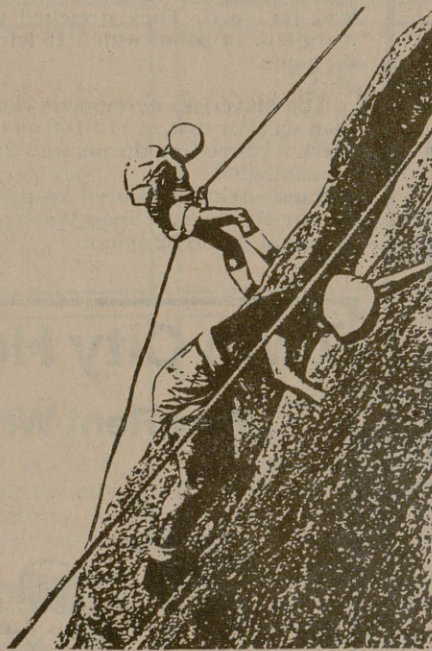
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