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SPORTS

Thursday, June 15, 1989

Abdul-Jabbar ends 20-year NBA career

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — It seemed like Kareem would never leave.

Out of the game with 5:18 left, but back in with 3:23 left. Out of the game with 47 seconds left, but back in again with 28 seconds left.

Out one more time with 19 seconds left. And, this time, never to return.

Out, finally, after 20 years. Presidents are allowed to serve only eight years.

Now the fans could let loose. They cheered him, his teammates hugged him and his enemies — the Pistons — applauded him. Detroit's Isiah Thomas shook the hand that launched thousands of skyhooks.

Kareem's career ended Tuesday night in a strange way. He lost and he played poorly. He had only seven points and three rebounds. That was far too little to keep Detroit from a 105-97 victory and a 4-0 sweep over the two-time defending champion Los Angeles Lakers in the NBA Finals.

"I just wish we could have lasted longer," Abdul-Jabbar said.

Some critics had said he already had stayed too long, that he was over

the hill, a drag on the dynasty of the decade.

But he sank the two winning free throws that kept the Pistons from winning the NBA title in Game 6 last year. And he had a season-high 24 points and matched his season-high of 13 rebounds in a 114-110 loss in Game 3 last Sunday.

At 42, he was the oldest player in NBA history. Nobody played more years (20) or scored more points (44,149 including playoffs). His deeds made him a public figure in spite of his private nature.

Yet, he seemed concerned about how he will be remembered by the fans.

"I hope they will see that I played a pretty good game for a long time. I think that's evident. I'd be pleased with that," Abdul-Jabbar said.

But as the years wore on, even his trademark shot changed. It didn't go in as much. And in the last of his 1,797 regular season and playoff games in the NBA, he took six skyhooks. He missed them all.

"I hope I go out a winner like him," Magic Johnson said. "He's done it all, what more can a man do?"

Texas looking to Brown as the next superstar on Rangers' pitching staff

ARLINGTON (AP) —Rookie Kevin Brown has been called the future of the Texas Rangers, the next Nolan Ryan.

Brown already has something in common with the 42-year-old strikeout king: he and Ryan are the team's only starting pitchers who aren't suffering from ailments or struggling with bad outings.

"Of all the guys on this staff, Kevin's the least likely to put extra pressure on himself," bullpen coach Dick Egan said. "And that's one of the things that's going to make him great."

Another is his impressive fastball, consistently clocked at 95 mph. The natural slice in his pitches is what caught scouts' eyes when the Rangers made Brown the fourth player picked in the 1986 June draft.

That slice makes for a nice 93 mph sinker, the fastest in the American League, and reduces powerful swings for the fences into delicate ground balls.

Opponents are hitting just .199 off Brown, who's 5-3. Going into Thursday's games, only Ryan, at .191, and Oakland's Mike Moore, at .180, were containing hitters better than Brown.

With an earned run average of 2.95, Brown also has the lowest ERA among AL rookie qualifying pitchers.

The only things standing in the way of the 24-year-old pitcher and greatness, Egan said, are experience and an effective changeup.

Oakland Athletics outfielder Dave Parker, who went 2-for-4 off Brown in a 5-1 victory over the Rangers Sunday night — the best any hitter has fared against him — said a changeup would make Brown nearly unstoppable.

"He's got a real good sinker, a good fastball and a good breaking ball, too," Parker said. "I was just fortunate to make contact."

"I need to quit thinking so much and just throw it, let my natural throw take over," Brown said.

Summer events play role in Aggs' success

At first glance, summer seems like a slow season for sports at Texas A&M. It is easy for Aggie fans to begin thinking that they are hungrily looking in the window at someone else's feast.

Aggie baseball lies behind us like a memory, and football shines ahead like a distant star which is light-years away. But any dedicated sports fan knows what happens in the off-season can be the difference between a last place team and a championship.

Behind the scenes, players are signing with A&M out of high school, or leaving the Aggies for the professional ranks. These happenings will have a big effect on what happens during the season.

The 1989 Aggie baseball season seems like it ended just yesterday, but already dramatic changes have occurred in the lineup. Ten of last year's starters, including three juniors who earned national recognition, will be absent from the 1990 roster. The team will have a different look next season.

Not all of A&M's talent is leaving, however. The return of players such as Trey Witte, Ronnie Allen, Pat Sweet, and Travis Williams — to name a few — are a solid foundation for the team.

Add the arrival of nationally recognized pitcher Jon Peters, with a record 53 consecutive wins who will add talent and depth to the Aggie's pitching next season.

Jeff Osborne
Assistant Sports Editor

Peters led his high school team, the Brenham Cubs, in hitting as well as career pitching victories. By signing Peters, Texas A&M has gotten one of the most coveted players among all graduating high school seniors. He is certainly the most recognized. Although one person does not make a team, Peters may have altered a time-honored assumption — that every pitcher with awesome talent and potential signs to play for the Texas Longhorns.

Several players from San Jacinto, the junior college national champion for four of the last five years, will be heading north to the A&M campus as well.

These players should have an instant impact, bringing talent and a winning attitude with them. San Jac signs some of the best baseball prospects

in the nation, and the Aggies will certainly benefit from this connection. One of the most notable players to come to Texas A&M from San Jac in recent years is Kirk Thompson, who was a very successful player for the Ags.

A full list of baseball recruits is expected this summer, and this will help determine which prospects will be playing for the Aggies next spring.

Football will be another sport to bring excitement to campus, and the Aggie football team will show major changes as well. The Wrecking Crew defense will be without almost all of last year's starters, including highly touted linebacker John Roper.

The status of injured quarterback Bucky Richardson will likely be determined by events taking place in the summer, but Lance Pavlas will probably have the starring role this fall.

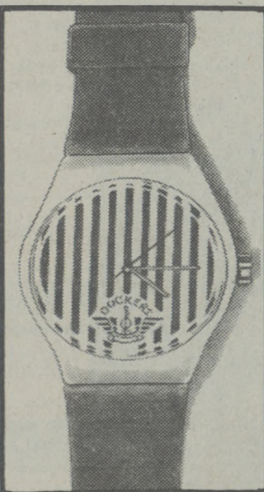
One of the biggest changes will be on the sidelines, as R.C. Slocum replaces Jackie Sherrill as head coach. The result should be less controversy following the team. A final verdict regarding the George Smith scandal is expected this month.

Aggie fans finding the summer wait unbearable will catch a glimpse of next fall in Dave Campbell's *Texas Football* which will hit the newsstands next month.

Stay tuned Aggie fans, this summer won't be slow as it first seemed.



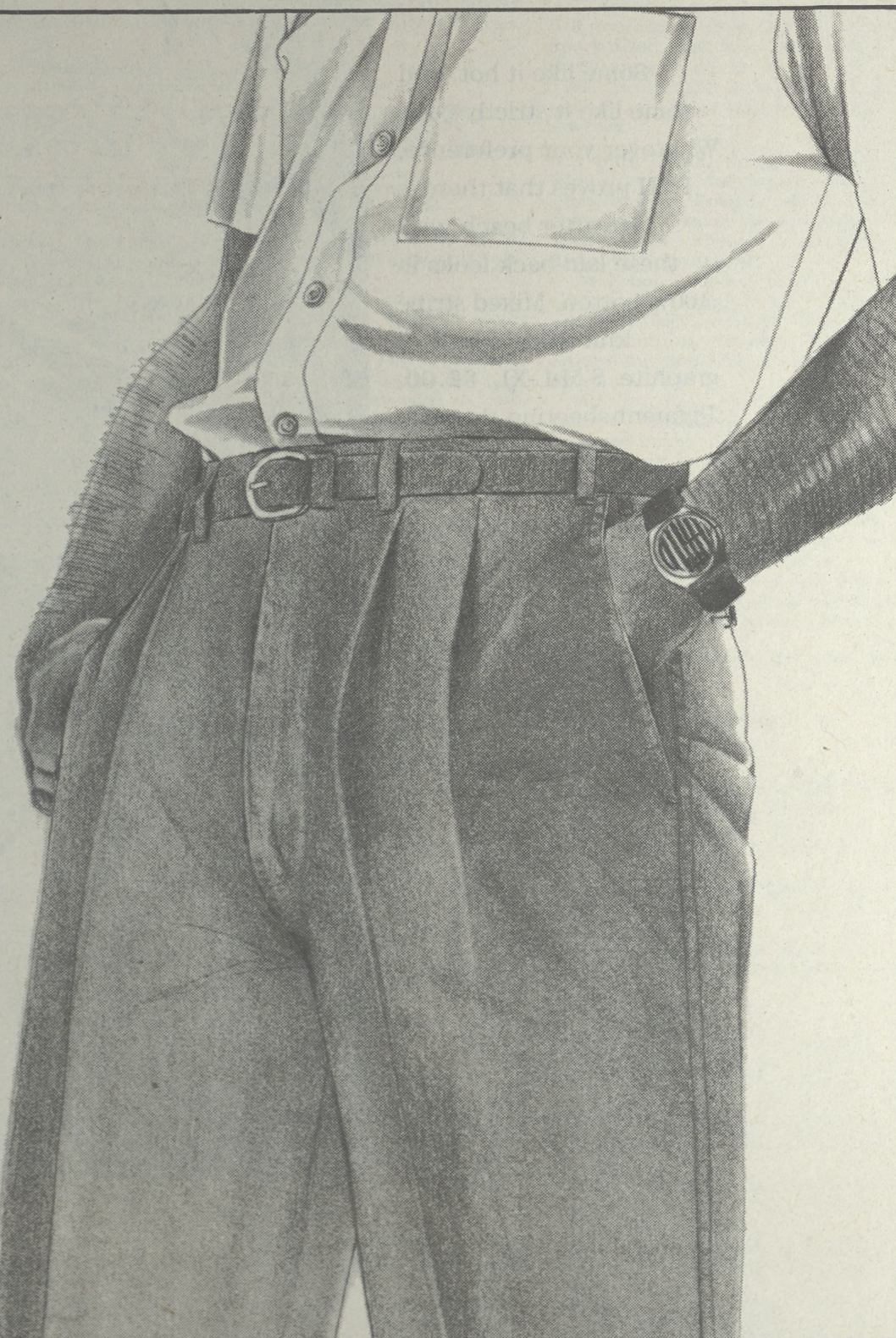
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