

Still smiling after all this time

□ Michael Jordan is taking his comeback in stride.

DEERFIELD, Ill. (AP) — Michael Jordan has rewritten the NBA record book, has sold shoes and sports drinks simply by smiling, and has been worshipped by fans from Chicago to Shanghai.

There's no more famous athlete on the planet. Yet there was Jordan on Monday, one day after his electrifying comeback to pro basketball, talking about sneaking up on the rest of the NBA. "That's one of my strategies," he said. "A lot of guys haven't seen me play. It might take an adjustment period."

He said that after he told agent David Falk and Chicago Bulls owner Jerry Reinsdorf he wanted to give up his baseball experiment and return to basketball, they tried to talk him into waiting until next season.

"I said, 'Well, it kind of gives us a psychological edge this year,'" Jordan said. "To come back now, it kind of takes some teams by surprise."

The first game of his comeback even surprised Jordan.

He hadn't played in an NBA game since June 20, 1993, when he led the Bulls to their third consecutive championship. Nevertheless, he played 43 minutes Sunday in Chicago's 103-96 overtime loss at Indiana.

"I was very sore last night but I just soaked a little while and came back out today. I feel fine," Jordan said after Monday's two-hour practice. "I was very surprised. The competitive side of me wanted to be in there. But physically, I was a little weak. That's one of the reasons I kind of started cramping up, because my body wasn't really ready for it yet."

How will he deal with leg cramps in the future? "Just drink a lot of Gatorade," he said.

Then he flashed that \$30 million smile and winked.

Jordan spent so much time pitching products

and swinging at pitches after leaving basketball that he almost forgot what it was like to be in an NBA game.

"As much as I tried to search my memory in terms of how to prepare, it was real different," he said. "I think going through those 43 minutes gave me a frame of mind in terms of how to adjust to a game again."

"The biggest key is to try to slow my process, my body, down to adjust to a game, pace it a little bit to where I'm productive every minute and not trying to be overproductive every minute. That's tough for me. But I think in a couple of games, I'll adjust."

Jordan missed 21 of his 28 shots, but he did have 19 points, six rebounds, six assists and three steals.

"They weren't the greatest highlights," he said, "but I was glad to be back."

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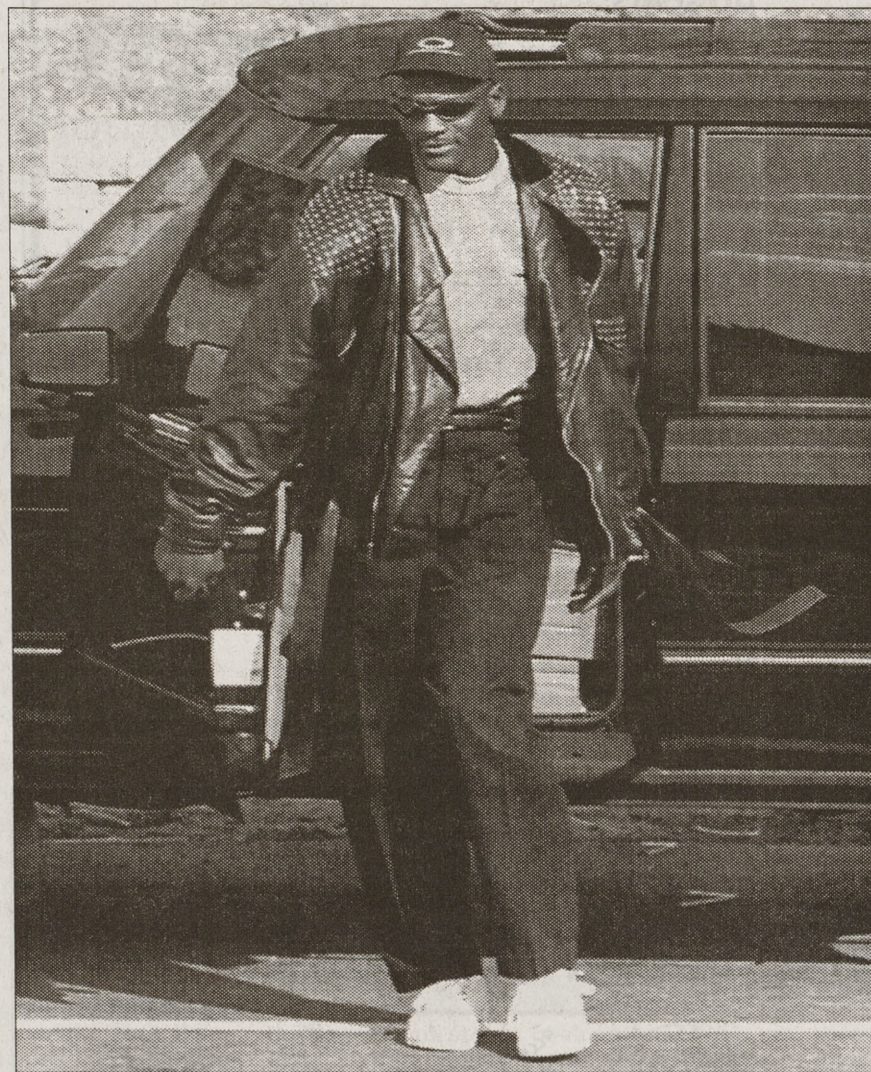
— Michael Jordan

The Bulls next play Wednesday against the Celtics in Jordan's final visit to Boston Garden. "I'm just happy to have an opportunity to play in it before they rip it down," he said.

His first home game is Friday against the Orlando Magic.

Jordan hopes to use those games, and the 14 regular-season contests that follow, to get acclimated to his teammates. Only Scottie Pippen, B.J. Armstrong and Will Perdue were around for his first nine-year stint with the Bulls.

"The biggest thing for me is not to change this team, but to try to fit in," he said. "They were doing very well over the last 18 months. I just want to add to that and make them a little more dangerous. I'm not trying to reconstruct the team or create any new identity."



Prior to rejoining the Chicago Bulls, Michael Jordan exits his car to attend a practice session last week.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Campbell helps boy to road of recovery

TYLER (AP) — Former Houston Oilers running back Earl Campbell recently came to the aid of a sick 9-year-old boy in his hometown.

During a visit to a Tyler elementary school last month, Campbell was told that fourth-grader Clay "Magic" Ware Jr. had missed nearly two months of school because of unexplainable severe abdominal pain.

Some doctors had diagnosed the illness as a psychological disorder. And problems had arisen because of limitations with the family's health insurance.

Campbell walked to the boy's house and became outraged when he learned that a Dallas hospital had said it couldn't admit Clay until March 27, unless it was a life-threatening situation.

Campbell returned to Austin and arranged for the boy to visit a pediatrician he knows in Houston, who diagnosed the boy's illness as a stomach hernia. The problem was fixed March 6 during a simple one-hour surgical procedure.

"He told me the only payback he wants is just for me to help somebody else who needs it," said Clay's father, Clay Ware Sr. "If Earl Campbell hadn't come by the school that day, we would probably still be waiting to get Magic some help."

UH regents vote to join new conference

HOUSTON (AP) — The University of Houston system board of regents took the next step into the future on Monday by voting unanimously to join 11 other universities to form a still unnamed athletic conference.

"This makes it official," UH athletic director Bill Carr said. "The next steps are to finalize the many details pertaining to the conference, the name, the office location, the commissioner's situation."

The new league is scheduled to begin play in all sports except football next season, but the Cougars will remain in the Southwest Conference through the spring schedule of 1996 before jumping to the new league.

The other 11 schools in the new league are a combination of former Metro and Great Midwest Conference schools. They are: Louisville, North Carolina-Charlotte, Southern Mississippi, South Florida and Tulane from the Metro and Alabama-Birmingham, Cincinnati, DePaul, Marquette, Memphis and St. Louis from the Great Midwest.

Olympic worker plunges to his death

ATLANTA (AP) — An ironworker fell to his death Monday when one of nine 150-foot light towers at the unfinished Olympic Stadium buckled, unleashing two banks of lights on workers below.

Two other workers were injured, one seriously, when lights fell from the weakened structure and crashed to the 85,000-seat stadium's concrete bleachers.

The cause remained unclear, said Chuck Winstead, project director for Atlanta Stadium Constructors, the general contractor. Construction was halted as an investigation began, but officials said some work could resume Tuesday.

As constructed, the tower resembled an inverted L with two light banks attached to the ends of its horizontal beams. The worker who died was hanging from the top section on a safety harness when it folded in.

Construction worker Thomas Houston said he heard a low, loud rumbling.

"When I looked, I saw the guy flipping. He didn't move, man. That was it," Houston said.

"At first it was slow, then it was just like that," said Rick Jones, who witnessed the collapse as he drove by the stadium.

Buzzer beaters the norm at NCAAs

□ The 'big dance' is down to 16, but not without a flair for the dramatics.

AP-The 15 games left in the NCAA tournament have a tough act to follow.

With six overtime games, a few early upsets and a bunch of blunders and buzzer beaters, the first two rounds had everything a basketball fan could want.

One TV was not enough.

The next act starts Thursday night with the first games in the round of 16. Following the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show might have been easier.

On Sunday alone, three of the tournament's greatest moments looked a lot like some of the NCAA's best highlights from years past.

Tyus Edney's length-of-the-court drive covering 4.8 seconds for UCLA's game-winning shot against Missouri looked like Danny Ainge's sprint that shocked Notre Dame in BYU's 51-50 win in the 1981 East Regional semifinals.

Don Reid's rebound and basket off Allen Iverson's airball gave Georgetown the buzzer-beating win over Weber State. The play was similar to North Carolina State's 54-52 title game win over Houston in 1983

when Lorenzo Charles dunked Dereck Whittenburg's airball at the buzzer.

Lawrence Moten's timeout when Syracuse had none left in a loss to Arkansas immediately had people bringing up Chris Webber's similar mistake in Michigan's 77-71 championship game loss to North Carolina in 1993.

Those harried endings capped four days of OTs, upsets and emotion.

Old Dominion's triple OT win over Villanova was the tournament's longest game in 13 years. Two No. 14 seeds won, and another could have if a buzzer shot hadn't bounced off the rim. And for every group of huggers and jumpers, there were just as many locker rooms full of criers.

The eight highest seeds — four No. 1s and four No. 2s — are still going, and none of the remaining teams are seeded lower than sixth. The round of 16 will also be without a team from the Big Ten — the first time that's happened.

Six Big Ten teams started and five lost in the first round. Purdue lost in the second round. As bad as the first two rounds were for the Big Ten, they were perfect for the ACC, which has four teams still alive — one in each region. The SEC has three and the Big Eight and Big East still have two.

Spurs forward out of action again

□ After sitting out for oversleeping, Rodman now on injured list.

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — For a player who gets a lot of attention, Dennis Rodman sure doesn't play many games.

The San Antonio Spurs' forward with the shifting hair color separated his shoulder Sunday while riding his motorcycle. He'll miss as much as a month.

"He was out on a beautiful Texas day," Spurs coach Bob Hill said, "and apparently the stop sign came up on him a little quick."

"He slammed on his brakes. His bike went down. He went down. He separated his right shoulder, completely separated it, so he'll be gone two-to-four

weeks."

Team spokesman Tom James said he was uncertain on details of the Sunday incident and could only say it took place in the Hill Country.

No accident reports were filed with the San Antonio police, or with Bexar, Bandera, Kerr or Gillespie counties in the Texas Hill Country. There also was no report filed with the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Dr. David Schmidt diagnosed Rodman with a third-degree separation of the acromioclavicular joint in his right shoulder.

Because of Rodman's suspensions, mishaps and other troubles, he's already missed 19 of the Spurs' 62 games this year. He missed three last season, as well as amassing 32 technical fouls, being ejected four times and suspended twice.

The Spurs' 44-18 record matches the best record in franchise history after 62 games, which was set last year.

Rodman, who led the NBA in rebounds last season, was suspended from the team for the first three games this season and then took a leave of absence during which he was instructed to get psychological counseling.

He was suspended again Dec. 7 when he failed to return from his leave of absence for meetings with Hill. The Spurs activated him from the suspended list Dec. 10.

On Thursday, Rodman arrived in the second quarter of the Spurs' game against the Philadelphia 76ers. He said he overslept when his alarm clock failed to go off. He never left the locker room during the Spurs' 112-86 victory.

Setting the standard for others

Who is the Fightingest Texas Aggie?

These days no one person stands out enough to claim the title. But from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, every member of the Corps knew the answer. When they were freshmen they had to know it or they couldn't get any dessert.

Jerry Bonnen was named the Fightingest Texas Aggie when he finished fourth in the two-mile run at the Southwest Conference Track and Field Championships in 1947. He didn't receive the title because he finished fourth. It was because he finished.

Going into the last two events of the meet, Texas A&M and the University of Texas were neck and neck with each other for the team title. Bonnen was the Aggies lone representative in the two-mile run.

"I wasn't supposed to win anything," Bonnen



DAVE WINDER
SPORTS EDITOR

said. "But on every curb of that track my teammates were yelling for me."

Egged on by his fellow Aggies, Bonnen stayed in the race until he dropped on the final turn.

"I was so exhausted I fell off the track," Bonnen said.

Bonnen, with severe leg cramps, crawled back onto the track and started towards the finish line. He worked his way into a kind of duck walk in time to finish fourth. The Aggies received one point.

At the end of the meet, the point really didn't mean much in the overall standings. But Bonnen's performance inspired the A&M mile relay team to capture first place. Those points gave the Aggies the SWC title.

The win broke the Longhorns' domination of track and field and started a winning streak for

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