

# The Magic Man Cometh: Johnson announces return

### Johnson will play Tuesday night against Golden State at power forward.

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Magic Johnson returned to the NBA today from an off-and-on retirement he entered after learning in 1991 that he had the AIDS virus.

Johnson signed a contract for the remainder of the season, and will return to the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday night when they play the Golden State Warriors at the Forum.

"It's now or never," Johnson said after practice today. "I'm 36. If this is the last hurrah, so be it, if it's next year, we'll see."

"I can still do some of the things I'm used to doing," he said.



Johnson

Johnson, who has been practicing with the team for two weeks, won't be playing point guard — the position he played when he led the Lakers to five NBA championships in the 1980s. Instead, he'll be in the lineup as a forward, and much of the offense will probably run through him.

"After I practiced with the Lakers, I realized I could still do some things that will help this team. They don't have to fit in with me, I have to fit in with them."

Johnson will be playing in his first NBA game other than exhibitions since June 12, 1991. He retired five months later, just prior to the 1991-92 season, after the positive test for the virus that causes AIDS.

Johnson said he was "not worried" about experiencing the kind of negative reaction that some players expressed about competing with someone who is HIV positive during an abortive comeback in the 1992-93 preseason.

He said NBA commissioner David Stern "has done a wonderful job of educating the players."

Johnson said he has competed in enough

exhibition games to allay those fears.

"If you play against players all summer, there's no difference with playing against them in a game," he said.

Johnson's agent, Lon Rosen, said the Lakers great signed a contract just before practice at Loyola Marymount University and sold his interest in the Lakers.

"He will be playing tomorrow night, No. 32 will be back," Rosen said.

There have been several aborted Johnson comebacks since his original retirement, and several other speculative comebacks. Johnson continually changed his mind and finally, last summer, said he would never return.

For Johnson, however, the word "never" never has been a definite thing.

"We're happy to welcome Earvin back," Stern said. "Even after his retirement from the NBA, he continued to bring joy to millions of fans from around the world through his global travels. We're pleased that he has decided to once again showcase to NBA fans his talent and unique enthusiasm

for the game."

Rosen said Johnson will decide following this season what he wants to do thereafter. Johnson will be 37 by the time the 1996-97 season starts.

"He'll continue in all his businesses," Rosen said. "His touring team will postpone its tour."

Lakers coach Del Harris expressed excitement about Johnson's move.

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— Lon Rosen  
Magic Johnson's agent

"It's an exciting day, obviously, for everybody," Harris said. "There's no doubt the players are looking forward to playing with him on a real basis."

"I've been excited about it for some time. The team's playing well and now we expect to play even better. I'm more happy for Earvin, really, than anything else."

"He adds so much," Lakers guard Sedale Threatt said. "He can play five positions. I think teams will have to concen-

trate on him and, with the nucleus we already have, it will make us the best team in the West."

Teammate Cedric Ceballos said Johnson wanted to play Tuesday to "warm himself up for Michael Jordan."

The Lakers play the Chicago Bulls on Friday night at the Forum.

"I'm on record, coast-to-coast, as saying I've always been in favor of it and our team is in favor of it," Harris had said prior to the announcement.

Johnson was surrounded by reporters when he arrived at practice, working out at center and forward.

"Yes, I am back, and I'll see you guys later," he said. "Hey, I'm back. It's that time. I have to go to work."

Before his retirement, Johnson led the Lakers to five NBA championships in 12 seasons and won three most valuable player awards. Often referred to as the world's tallest point guard, Johnson retired as the NBA career assist leader, a position since passed by Utah's John Stockton.

In his comeback, Johnson is expected to spend most of his time at power forward.

## 76er Maxwell hit with 90-day jail term

### The former Rocket failed to meet orders on a marijuana charge.

HOUSTON (AP) — Philadelphia 76ers guard Vernon Maxwell was sentenced Monday to 90 days in jail after failing to meet court orders on a marijuana possession charge.

However, Maxwell's attorneys moved quickly to file an appeal, making it unlikely that the 30-year-old would see the inside of a jail cell just yet.

Maxwell shook his head but said nothing as County Court-at-Law Judge Don Jackson issued the sentence — three times the punishment sought by prosecutor Lance Long.

Last Oct. 30, Maxwell pleaded no-contest to a misdemeanor charge of marijuana possession. He was ordered at the time to complete drug rehabilitation and submit to regular drug testing, requirements he failed to meet.

Maxwell also failed to return more than 25 telephone calls made to him by the Harris County probation office.

Jackson said Maxwell's disregard of the guidelines prompted him to mete out the stern punishment, radio station KTRH reported.

"Mr. Maxwell did not avail himself of the time period," the judge said.

Attorney Jim Cooper quickly

worked to arrange Maxwell's appeal bond of \$20,000. The 76ers were to play the Vancouver Grizzlies in Philadelphia Monday night.

Once his bond was paid, Maxwell was to be released by the court pending his appeal, which must be filed within the next 30 days.

Nina McElroy, a 76ers spokeswoman, said the team had no comment.

"It's a personal matter," she said. "It's got nothing to do with the team."

Maxwell was arrested on the marijuana charge last August after a Houston police officer pulled him over in the city's nightclub district for running a red light. Just over a gram of pot was found in his 1995 Mercedes convertible, police said.

It was the latest of several times Maxwell ran afoul of the law while living in Houston and playing for the Rockets. He was arrested once for waving a handgun at another motorist and another time for fighting with a nightclub bouncer.

In perhaps the most-publicized incident, Maxwell ran into the stands while the Rockets were playing in Portland and punched a Trail Blazers fan.

He was cut by the Rockets last June after leaving the club amid its championship run. He is averaging 17 points per game for Philadelphia this season.

## Steelers' strong show gives hope to AFC teams

### Pittsburgh's 10-point loss was the closest by an AFC team in six years.

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys' struggle to beat Pittsburgh in the Super Bowl could be a sign that the NFL's dominance is slowly coming to an end after a dozen straight NFL titles.

"Free agency promotes parity," coach Barry Switzer said Monday as he talked about the Cowboys' 27-17 win a day earlier.

That's parity between conferences as well as parity among teams.

After all, the AFC has as many Super Bowl winning coaches (Bill Parcells and Jimmy Johnson) as the NFC (Switzer and George Seifert). And the Steelers' Bill Cowher enhanced his standing as the game's best young coach by outmaneuvering the more talented Cowboys and almost winning.

Moreover, the Dallas victory, giving Switzer the Super Bowl title he had to win, was as difficult as the Cowboys' season. It ended 15-4, but was little fun for either players or coaches, under microscopic scrutiny from the media and under pressure from their owner and fans to win it all or be a dire failure.

The Steelers dominated the second half, controlling the ball for 21 minutes, 20 seconds, and losing mainly because Larry Brown, the game's MVP, picked off two Neil O'Donnell passes to set up two touchdowns.

And it gets worse next season for the Cowboys.



They have seven defensive starters who are free agents.

One cornerback, Kevin Smith, is recovering from an Achilles tendon injury; another, Deion Sanders, could miss part of the season playing baseball, and a third, Brown, is likely off post-season performances against Green Bay and Pittsburgh to triple his \$500,000 salary.

They also are saddled with an extra \$800,000 against the salary cap because of an adjustment to Sanders' signing bonus.

"Right now we have one cornerback, Alundis Brice, and he's a rookie," Switzer said.

Dallas undoubtedly will have enough corners to field a secondary next year.

And unless Troy Aikman demands a trade because he's had enough of Switzer, they'll retain the Aikman-Emmitt Smith-Michael Irvin trio that's the best of its kind in the league.

But it's also clear they'll take another step back, just as last year's winner, San Francisco, did when it lost Ricky Watters to free agency and William Floyd to injury. The Niners already are in a panic mode, bringing back Bill Walsh to help revamp an offense that was second in the league.

San Francisco and Dallas will be good next year, and so should Green Bay, Detroit and maybe Philadelphia (all subject to the whims of free agency). But will they be any better than such AFC teams as Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Miami with Jimmy Johnson and even Seattle, which has a lot of good young players?

Who knows?

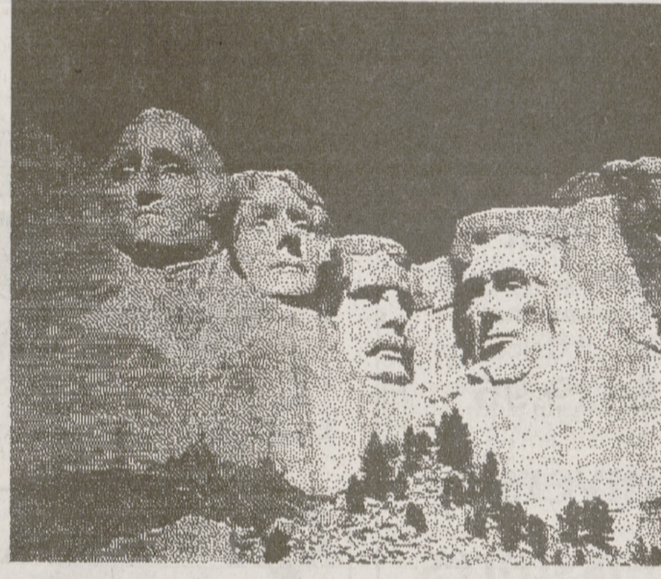
## WHAT INSPIRED THE MOUNTAIN MEN?

### George Washington:

"Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor."

### Abraham Lincoln:

"Intelligence, Patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulty. ...As was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether'"



### Thomas Jefferson:

"God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever."

### Teddy Roosevelt:

"There are those who believe that a new modernity demands a new morality. What they fail to consider is the harsh reality that there is no such thing as a new morality. There is only one morality. All else is immorality. There is only true Christian ethics over against which stands the whole of paganism. If we are to fulfill our great destiny as people, then we must return to the old morality, the sole morality."

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