

SPORTS

TUESDAY
April 23, 1996

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sports GLANCE

Rockets cut Breaux, two more from roster

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston Rockets left forward Tim Breaux and guards Melvin Booker and Tracy Moore off their 12-man roster for the upcoming NBA playoffs.

Booker and Moore signed with the Rockets during the season after starting the year in the CBA. Breaux played in 54 games for the Rockets and was a starter in four.

Booker (strained back) and Breaux (tendinitis, left knee) are on the team's injury list.

The Rockets placed forward Robert Horry on the injury list for Sunday's final game against Phoenix, but he'll be activated in time for Thursday's playoff opener against the Los Angeles Lakers.

Nets ditch Beard, many point to Pitino

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP) — After winning just 30 games in each of his two seasons and then criticizing his bosses for providing him with second-line players, Butch Beard left little doubt about his dismissal.

The only question was when, and the Nets answered that Monday. They fired Beard two days after the team ended its season by losing 23 of its final 30 games.

Speculation on a replacement already is centering on Rick Pitino, despite recent comments by the Kentucky coach that he wants to win another NCAA title.

"No one thing totally was the real reason I made the decision," Nets general manager Willis Reed said in announcing the decision to not pick up an option year in Beard's three-year contract.

"I thought Butch had taken the players as far as he could," Reed added in a conference call.

Beard, who earned about \$350,000 annually, is owed no money, said a source close to Nets management. The Nets had either seven days from the end of the season or until June 1 to decide on the option year.

Nets, Magic to kick off 1996-97 in Tokyo

NEW YORK (AP) — The New Jersey Nets and Orlando Magic will play each other twice in November at the Tokyo Dome in the NBA Japan Games.

Commissioner David Stern made the announcement, designating the game dates as Nov. 7 and 9. It will be the fourth time the league has played regular-season games in Japan.

In 1990, the NBA became the first American pro league to have regular season games outside North America when Phoenix played Utah in Tokyo.

"The NBA is pleased to continue the tradition of playing regular season games in Japan, where support for the NBA and the sport of basketball has grown tremendously," Stern said.

The complete 1996-97 NBA regular season schedule will be announced in mid-July. The season will begin on Friday, Nov. 1.

The announcement came the same day that the Nets fired their head coach Butch Beard after he put up back to back 30-win seasons. The Magic enter the postseason as the East's No. 2 seed.

SCORES ROUNDUP

NL

San Diego 5, Florida 3
Montreal 8, St. Louis 0
Pittsburgh 9, Philadelphia 3
New York 5, Cincinnati 1
Atlanta 4, Los Angeles 1
Colorado 4, Chicago 2
Houston 11, San Francisco 8

NHL

Pittsburgh 4, Washington 1
Florida 6, Boston 2
Vancouver 4, Calgary 3

AL

Cleveland 6, Baltimore 3
Boston 4, Minnesota 1
New York 6, Kansas City 2
Chicago 12, Texas 4
Detroit at California (n)
Oakland 6, Milwaukee 2
Toronto at Seattle (n)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Aggie Baseball

The Aggies will host the University of Texas at San Antonio at 7 p.m. at Olsen Field in their final nonconference game.

Hayden finds home out in left field



Texas A&M junior leftfielder Heather Hayden prepares to lash another base hit out during a recent Lady Aggie Softball game.

The A&M star has played three different positions

By Wes Swift
THE BATTALION

If anyone knows what playing musical chairs is like, it is Heather Hayden.

In her three years on the Texas A&M Softball Team, Hayden, a junior, has served as a pitcher, then the designated hitter before settling into a niche in left field.

Switching Hayden among positions was necessary, Bob Brock, A&M head softball coach, said, to find the best way to utilize her talent.

"We brought her in as an all-around athlete," Brock said. "The last two years we just couldn't nail down a place for her. This fall, we brought her in and told her that we wanted her in the outfield and that it was up to her to draw as much as she can from it."

So far this season, Hayden has taken advantage of the outfield, starting in all 43 games with a .908 fielding percentage. At the plate, Hayden is third on the team with a .304 batting average.

Despite her solid play, though, Hayden describes herself in modest terms.

"I'm not a big powerhouse player," she said. "I don't think I'm one of stars on this team."

Hayden said she would like to improve a bit more on some of the more mental facets of the game.

"Sometimes I can't always stay focused," Hayden said. "Being in the outfield, you're not always involved in any play. Sometimes, when I'm out there my mind will start to wander to a test coming up."

"I really want to working on

my batting average. Since I've been at home, I haven't had a real good batting average."

Brock had a bit more lavish praise for Hayden's batwork.

"She's batting No. 2 in our lineup and that's a real important position," Brock said. "We ask her to bunt quite a bit. She has been one of our top hitters."

In addition to being one of the Lady Aggies' top hitters, Brock said Hayden also is one of the most easily-coached players on the team.

"She's so coachable," he said. "She works hard at anything you ask her to. She always positive."

But Brock also said that there were areas Hayden could improve.

"I think she wants to play a little stronger defense. When you spend so much time as a pitcher, it's harder to adjust to playing defense, especially since she spent so much time in the infield."

On the field and in the locker room, Hayden said, the outfielder from Spring is positive yet quiet, declining to be vocal around her teammates and instead lending reinforcement.

"I feel like I have a positive, upbeat nature and a good personality," Hayden said. "If someone has a bad game or makes an error, I feel like I'm the first one over there to say 'You'll get 'em next time.'"

Brock also mentioned Hayden's positive attitude.

"She always upbeat. She always cheerful," he said. "She keeps everyone loose on the field. Off the field, she's involved in a lot more than just softball. She's just really got her act together."

Polo team takes national championship

A&M defeated Virginia in the title game last weekend in Fort Worth

Staff and Wire Reports

The Texas A&M Men's Polo Team was crowned the new national intercollegiate polo champion last week in Fort Worth. The team defeated Cornell in the finals to take home its first national title.

After a disappointing loss in last year's national championship game against the University of Virginia, the Aggies won the John Ben Snow Eastern Invitational Tournament this past fall and entered the National Tournament as the No. 1 seed.

In the semifinals, A&M cruised by the University of Connecticut, but were denied a revenge match against Virginia with Cornell's win.

A&M took the win over Cornell however, and ended the year undefeated. The three starters from the team — Shane Coventry, Kevin Coventry and Greg Ford, were named to the All-Star Team and both Coventrys were named All-Americans.

Ford also picked up the Men's Sportsmanship award.

The two-time defending champion Texas A&M Women's Polo Team was not able to win a third consecutive title as they were defeated by Virginia. The women



Photo Courtesy of the Texas A&M Men's Polo Team

The five members of the Texas A&M Men's Polo Team pose with the national championship trophy they won last week in Fort Worth.

went home happy, however, because they went further than most had expected after losing all three starters from last year's team.

Rachel Redington was named

to the Women's All-Star team, and Beverly Cooper won the Women's Sportsmanship award.

The Men's championship trophy will be on display at the Kleberg Building on West Campus.

Bulls' 72 wins mean little in playoffs

(AP) — Time to stop gushing over the Chicago Bulls.

The regular season's over and the Bulls were great, but it doesn't mean much in the NBA for the next two months.

The Houston Rockets are still two-time defending champions and the team to beat. And the Bulls still

have to overcome their failures of the past two seasons.

"We're not going to give it up, not without a fight," Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich said Sunday.

The Rockets are the fifth seed in the West and play the Los Angeles Lakers in a best-of-5 playoff series beginning Thursday night. Houston won the title as a sixth seed last year after going all the way as a No. 2 seed in 1993-94.

"If we're healthy, I'd say on paper, you have added a Mark Bryant, added an Eldridge Recasner to a championship team, you have to feel you're better," Tomjanovich said. "But talent and potential really means nothing in getting the prize."

"Are you the best team? Can you handle the tough situations? The first year we didn't have an explosive offense. We have more options now than we had on

the first championship team. Right now, we have to get back to the team that does what it takes to win."

The Bulls are coming off the best regular season in NBA history (72-10), which assured them of the home-court advantage through the finals.

There are two images to remember from last year's playoffs before penciling in the Bulls as the automatic champion: Rudy T.'s mouth and Michael's mistakes.

Tomjanovich stood at center court in the Summit last June, confetti falling all around him as the Houston Rockets celebrated their second straight championship.

"Never underestimate the heart of a champion," Tomjanovich yelled to the crowd after his team swept the upstart Orlando Magic.

The speech came nearly a month after Jordan, the rust showing after a 21-month retirement, botched his way through Games 1, 3 and 6 against the Orlando Magic and the Bulls were eliminated in six games in the Eastern semifinals.

Draft day doldrums: Leeland gets stood up



PHILIP LEONE
SPORTSWRITER

It wouldn't have been so bad if ESPN hadn't stuck a camera on him for the entire last half of the first round.

It wouldn't have been so bad if we weren't able to see the pain, the hurt, the "what the hell's going on here" in his eyes.

But things just didn't work out, did they, Leeland?

One of a dozen college studs invited by the NFL to New York's Madison Square Garden for the draft, our man Leeland McElroy was a lock for first-round glory and first round diner.

What team wouldn't want a muscle-strapped tailback with blazing 4.27 40-yard dash time, great field vision, high moral character, etc., etc.?

One by one, the other elite players left the waiting room to shake hands with Paul Tagliabue and parade around the draft stage with multi-million dollar smiles reserved for first-rounders.

Girlfriend-beater Lawrence Phillips got selected by St. Louis at No. 6, followed by Tim Biakabutuka who went to Carolina two picks later. Heisman winner Eddie George got taken by the Oilers as the 14th overall selection, which left McElroy as the only gold star running back prospect not taken.

He waited patiently for his turn to come. He was all alone now. All the other players in the room having been selected. Who would've thought McElroy would be the last man in the room? Not even Mel Kiper Jr., could explain it.

Surely Buffalo would choose him at 24. Rumors already had him in red and blue the week before. But the boneheaded Bills passed him over for some yahoo receiver from Mississippi State.

Philadelphia at 25? No. Baltimore at 26? No.

Then there was Green Bay at 27, and even my mom knows how the Packers need to jump start their running game. But that wasn't meant to be either.

The TV cameras focused in on McElroy. The eyes tried not to look too disappointed. They failed. McElroy couldn't even hold out hope of being the first Aggie selected in the draft. The Detroit Lions used pick No. 17 to give line-backer Reggie Brown that honor.

McElroy's draft day blues got even worse when the Steelers and Redskins ignored him and the first round came to a close. Then the lowly Jets poured salt on his wounded ego by passing him over with their first pick in round two.

New York chose receiver Alex Van Dyke out of Nevada after already selecting USC's Keyshawn Johnson as the No. 1 pick overall. Ouch.

Finally Arizona came to the rescue at pick 32. Five and a half brutal hours after the draft began, McElroy became a Cardinal.

He got a hug from Mom and Dad and a new crimson and white baseball hat. There was no jump for joy. Smiles were forced. It was the end of a very long, somewhat embarrassing day.

The second round? The second pick in the second round? The 32nd selection overall? This was not supposed to happen — not to Leeland, Mr. Top 10.

Lawrence Phillips falling to sixth was a surprise; Leeland Leeland's electric slide all the way out of the first round was a swift kick in the stomach.

Pete Kendall. Jermaine Mayberry. John Michels. If you're like me, you've never heard of these guys. But they all went before McElroy in the first round.

Is there an explanation for McElroy's slide? He didn't have the rushing numbers of Phillips, Biakabutuka or George. His durability was questioned because of an ankle that injury slowed him down in the regular season and kept him out of the Alamo Bowl. He only started one year at A&M.

I don't buy any of it. McElroy's is too good an athlete, too much of a physical talent to merit such draft day disrespect.

Should McElroy have stayed for his senior season at A&M? Would he be selected in the first round of next year's draft? Would he get a bigger contract next year? Probably.

Now he has to prove he's as good as we all think he is. Seems like he's been doing that for a while.