

PREVIEW

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"I think (the WNBA) is going to work and work well," he said. "If I was spending sports marketing bucks it would be in women's professional basketball."

The year-old ABL, operating with much less TV exposure and corporate sponsorship but with many good players, believes the market is big enough for two women's leagues, especially since it plays in the fall, while the WNBA plays in the summer.

"It's a competitive situation. We're the underdog. But ultimately, this is great for women's basketball," ABL's co-founder Gary Cavelli said. "Two years ago, great college players had two choices: drop their sport or play overseas. Now, exposure to women's basketball is at an all-time high in this country."

The WNBA hopes it will continue to grow.

Although the league estimates an average attendance of just 4,000, the TV audience will be much bigger. The three WNBA games a week will be broadcast on ESPN, NBC or Lifetime. (NBC will show the inaugural game between the Los Angeles Sparks and the visiting Liberty).

The 28-game regular season runs

through August, with the winners of the Eastern and Western conferences and the two teams with the next best records advancing to single-elimination playoff games.

The league features Olympians and

**"If I was spending sports marketing bucks it would be in women's professional basketball."**

**Richard Luker  
Executive director of the  
ESPN Chilton Sports Poll**

top college players, like Lisa Leslie of the Sparks and the Houston Comets' Sheryl Swoopes, who is expecting her first child this month and may not play this season.

Foreign professionals also have signed up, including Elena Baranova of Russia, a 6-5 center/forward with the Utah Starzz, and Catarina Pollini, a 6-5 forward with the Comets who also plays in the Italian league.

Among the WNBA's 80 players, 15 are from 14 countries outside the United States, 22 are former Olympians and 12

have won Olympic gold medals. The ABL, on the other hand, limits each team to two foreign-born players.

"The WNBA has the best players from around the world," Ackerman said. "These women have been playing in obscurity overseas. People's heads will turn when they see the skill of these women."

Indeed, the WNBA game will be played at a level that will shock fans, with an up-tempo, physical style like the NBA, players and coaches say.

"When I look at the ABL, it's much more of a guard-based game, with so many of the good young college guards," said Mary Murphy, coach of the WNBA's Sacramento Monarchs.

"The WNBA will be much more of a post-game, and we have a great inside-out game. Overseas leagues look for post players, 6-foot-2, 6-3 and up. We have those players."

Pollini warns against comparing the women's game with the men's.

"Basketball is basketball. Physically, the difference between men and women is big. But technically, what we can do with the ball can be very good," Pollini said.

"Of course, we can't dunk every time. But basketball isn't only dunking or alley-oops. Just go out and see what we can do," she said. "When you go see a team score after five players touch the ball, that's great basketball, too."

WNBA team rosters

Eastern Conference

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	College
14	Katasha Artis	F	6-0	Northeastern '95
55	Michi Atkins	F	5-11	Texas Tech '96
23	Vicky Bullett	F	5-11	Maryland '89
3	Andrea Congraevs	C/F	6-3	Mercer '92/Great Britain
50	Sharon Manning	C/F	5-11	N.C. State '91
51	Rhonda Mapp	G	5-10	N.C. State '92
32	Andrea Stinson	G	5-10	N.C. State '91
7	Tora Suber	G	5-10	Virginia '97
5	Milica Vukadinovic	G	5-7	Berkeley '93/Yugoslavia
25	Debra Williams	G	5-7	Louisiana Tech '96

Head coach - Marynell Meadors

Cleveland Rockers

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	College
14	Jenny Boucek	G	5-8	Virginia '96
8	Janice Lawhence Braxton	C	6-3	Louisiana Tech '84
44	Michelle Edwards	G	5-9	Iowa '88
13	Isabelle Fajtkowski	C/F	6-5	Colorado '95/France
50	Donna Harrington	C/F	6-1	Old Dominion '88
6	Merisla Jorjas	C/F	6-1	Florida '95
40	Anita Maxwell	F	5-11	New Mexico State '96
6	Eva Nemcova	G	6-2	Czech Republic
11	Tina Nicholson	G	6-2	Penn State '97
4	Lynette Woodard	G	6-0	Kansas '81

Head coach - Linda Hill-MacDonald

Houston Comets

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	College
4	Jameth Arcain	F	5-11	Brazil
14	Cynthia Cooper	G	5-10	USC '86
8	Pietra Gay	G/F	5-9	Louisiana State '97
9	Wanda Guyton	C	6-1	South Florida '89
3	Patty Jo Hedge	C	6-1	Rocky '83
6	Nekeshia Hurd	C	6-1	Florida '95
23	Tammy Jackson	C	6-1	Florida '85
11	Catarina Pollini	F	6-5	Italy
43	Raquel Spurlock	C	6-2	Louisiana Tech '97
22	Sheryl Swoopes	F	6-0	Texas Tech '93
7	Tina Thompson	F	6-3	USC '97

Head coach - Van Chancellor

New York Liberty

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	College
10	Rhonda Blades	G	5-6	Vanderbilt '95
5	Kisha Ford	G/F	5-10	Georgia Tech '97
34	Kym Hampton	F	6-2	Arizona State '84
55	Vickie Johnson	F	5-9	Louisiana Tech '96
50	Rebecca Lobo	C	6-4	Connecticut '95
4	Jasmina Perazic-Grip	G/F	6-1	Maryland '83/Yugoslavia
33	Trena Trice	C	6-2	N.C. State '87
11	Teresa Weatherspoon	G	5-8	Louisiana Tech '88
23	Sue Wicks	F	6-5	Rutgers '88
13	Sophia Witherspoon	G	6-10	Florida '91

Head coach - Nancy Darsch

WNBA team rosters

Western Conference

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	College
42	Linda Burgess	F	6-1	Alabama '92
32	Daedra Charles	F	6-3	Tennessee '91
12	Katrina Colloton	C	6-10	Maryland '93
21	Tamecka Dixon	C	6-10	Kentucky '97
34	Travesa Gant	C	6-10	Utah '94
9	Lisa Leslie	F	6-6	USC '94
7	Mwadi Mabasa	C	6-11	Chicago
11	Penny Toler	F	5-10	Long Beach State '93
10	Jamila Wideman	G	5-9	Stanford '97
28	Zheng Haixia	G	6-8	China

Head coach - Linda Sharp

Phoenix Mercury

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	College
42	Monique Ambers	F	6-4	Arizona State '93
14	Marlies Askamp	F	6-5	Germany
0	Toni Foster	F	6-0	Iowa '93
22	Jennifer Gillom	F	6-3	Mississippi '86
3	Tia Jackson	G	5-11	Iowa '95
10	Nancy Lieberman-Cline	G	5-10	Old Dominion '80
32	Bridget Pettis	G	5-8	Florida '97
7	Michelle Trimmer	F	6-6	Australia
21	Umeki Webb	F	5-9	N.C. State '93
31	Tara Williams	F	5-11	Auburn '97

Head coach - Cheryl Miller

Sacramento Monarchs

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	College
40	Tajama Abraham	C	6-2	George Washington '93
6	Ruthie Bolton-Holfield	G	5-8	Auburn '89
30	Bridgette Gordon	F	6-0	Tennessee '89
23	Denique Graves	C	6-5	Howard '97
24	Mikiko Hagiyawa	F	6-2	Japan
5	Pamela McGee	F	6-1	USC '84
7	Judy Mosley-McAfee	F	6-1	Hawaii '90
10	Eliza Sokolowicz	F	6-2	Berkley '96/Poland
3	Chanel Tremiere	F	6-0	Auburn '91
20	Corissa Yassen	F	6-0	Purdue '96

Head coach - Mary Murphy

Utah Starzz

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	College
28	Elena Baranova	F/C	6-5	Russia
34	Deborah Carter	F	6-0	Georgia '93
22	Megan Compain	F	6-0	St. Joseph's '97/New Zealand
27	Lady Hardmon	F	6-10	Georgia '92
11	Dena Head	F	6-10	Tennessee '92
25	Jessie Hicks	F	6-7	Maryland '93
14	Wendy Palmer	F	6-2	Virginia '96
32	Tammi Reiss	G	5-8	Virginia '92
52	Raeegan Scott	F	6-3	Colorado '97
23	Kim Williams	F	5-4	DePaul '97

Head coach - Denise Taylor

PLAYERS

Continued from Page 3

Leslie, a 6-foot-5 center, signed with a modeling agency after leading the Olympic team with a 19.5 scoring average.

She first grabbed headlines in 1990 by scoring 101 first-half points for Morningside (Calif.) High School and undoubtedly would have broken the national high school scoring record of 105 points if the opposing coach hadn't pulled his team off the

court. (Cheryl Miller, coach of the Mercury, holds the record).

"When I was younger, players that were older would say, 'Oh, don't worry about it, by the time you get older, there will be a professional league,'" said Leslie, an All-American and national player of the year at Southern Cal.

"I came out of college and there wasn't one. I went overseas and played in Italy and went through the same struggles that they had. But I thank God that I'm only 24 and I'm still in my prime, able to improve."

TEAMS AND SOME MARQUEE PLAYERS OF THE WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE:

**Charlotte Sting** — Vicky Bullett, 1988

Olympic gold medalist.

**Cleveland Rockers** — Lynette

Woodard, 1984 Olympic gold medalist.

**Houston Comets** — Sheryl Swoopes,

1996 Olympic gold medalist; 1993 NCAA

champion, Texas Tech (on maternity leave).

**New York Liberty** — Rebecca Lobo,

1996 Olympic gold medalist; 1995 NCAA

champion, Connecticut.

WESTERN CONFERENCE:

**Los Angeles Sparks** — Lisa Leslie, 1996

Olympic gold medalist.

**Phoenix Mercury** — Nancy Lieberman-

Cline, 1976 Olympic silver medalist; 1979,

1980 AIAW champion, Old Dominion.

**Sacramento Monarchs** — Ruthie

Bolton-Holfield, 1996 Olympic gold

medalist.

**Utah Starzz** — Dena Head, 1991 NCAA

champion, Tennessee.

Soccer gets a whif of scandal

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — Where there is money, there is temptation. And from World Cup champion Brazil to a soccer also-ran like Belgium, talk of bribes and game-fixing pervade the sport as much as talk of goals and standings.

On Tuesday, in the latest scandal to hit Belgian soccer, the federation suspended two officials on corruption charges but ruled Eendracht Aalst could stay in the top division despite claims it bought games to avoid relegation to a lower division.

Earlier this year, Anderlecht admitted its former chairman paid about \$550,000 to a soccer agent who threatened to publicly accuse Bel-

gium's most famous club of bribing its way to the 1984 UEEA Cup final.

Anderlecht maintains its innocence, claiming its chairman paid the bribes only to protect his reputation. European soccer authorities are still investigating.

In Brazil, where soccer unleashes much passion as perhaps anywhere in the world, scandal struck last week.

The country's Superior Sports Tribunal banned both Ivens Mendes, the head of the referee committee until his resignation last month, and Mario Celso Petraglia, president of Atletico Paranaense, for life from the game following game-fixing charges.

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