SPORTS

## PREVIEW

#### Continued from Page 3

"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

### **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

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

court. (Cheryl Miller, coach of the Mercury,

players that were older

ry about it, by the time

a professional league,'

would say, 'Oh, don't wor-

you get older, there will be

said Leslie, an All-Ameri-

the year at Southern Cal.

can and national player of

'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.

'When I was younger,

holds the record).

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

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

**WNBA** team rosters

Eastern Conference

'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.

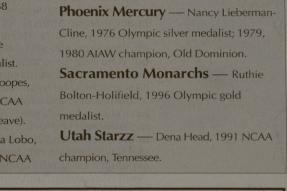
"The WNBA will be much more of a post-game, and we have a great insideout game. Overseas leagues look for post players, 6-foot-2, 6-3 and up. We have those players."

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

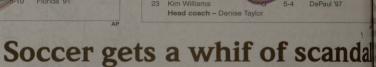
"Basketball is basketball. Physically, the difference between men and women is big. But technically, what we can do with the ball can be very good," Pollini said.

"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.'

# champion, Connecticut. WESTERN CONFERENCE: Los Angeles Sparks — Lisa Leslie, 1996 Olympic gold medalist.







BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) Where there is money, there is temptation. And from World Cup champion Brazil to a soccer alsoran 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 ad-

mitted its former chairman paid

gium's most famous club of br its way to the 1984 UEFA Cup fin

Anderlecht maintains its in cence, claiming its chairman pa the bribes only to protect his ren tation. European soccer authori are still investigating.

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

The country's Superior Spo Tribunal banned both lve Mendes, the head of the refer committee until his resignation month, and Mario Celso Petragi president of Atletico Paranaen

	threatened to publicly		game-fixing cha	
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