

Trip to injured list ends Michael Jordan's season

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michael Jordan will miss the rest of the season because of nagging problems with his knee.

The Washington Wizards placed Jordan on the injured list Wednesday, one day after he scored a career-low two points in a career-low 12 minutes of a loss to the Los Angeles Lakers.

"I think it is best at this point to rest the knee and let it heal properly," Jordan said in a statement released by the team. "I tried to get back and play as soon as possible and, early on, the knee responded well. But after the swelling this morning, I think it's best to give it rest."

Jordan had arthroscopic surgery Feb. 27 to repair torn cartilage in his right knee.

He missed 12 games before returning to the active roster on March 20 in Denver and has appeared in seven games since, all as a reserve.

"Following his surgery, Michael did absolutely everything to come back as quickly as possible to help his team in our playoff push," general manager Wes Unseld said. "In doing that, Michael probably pushed a little too hard."

Jordan reiterated that he plans to play next season if he is physically able.

"I signed a two-year contract to play," Jordan said. "Obviously, my health will always determine my playing status. But at this time, my plan is to play next season."

Jordan traveled with the Wizards to Milwaukee late Tuesday for Wednesday night's game against the Bucks, but he returned to Washington on Wednesday afternoon.

Bobby Simmons was activated off the injured list and was to be in uniform for the Milwaukee game.

Jordan leads the Wizards in scoring with 23.3 points per game, but he has not been the same since he knocked knees with teammate Etan Thomas in the final game before the Star break.

Jordan struggled for five games after the break before opting for surgery. His struggles coincided with the Wizards' fall from playoff picture.

The Wizards were 8-11 in the All-Star break and lost Wednesday's game as they headed to Indiana for the final playoff game in the Eastern Conference. Jordan has never been on a team that didn't make the playoffs.

The Wizards had eight games remaining in the regular season going into the game in Milwaukee.

The 39-year-old Jordan played only in the first half of the 113-93 loss to the Lakers.

Coach Doug Collins said the team was one game away from the playoffs because the game was one-sided and that Jordan needed the rest.

Jordan's minutes were inconsequential in the game, and for the first time in his career he was a marginal, no-factor player off the bench.

After the game, Jordan said his knee felt fine, but he gave no indication he was done for the season. "I was in no pain," Jordan said after the game. "It was Doug's decision to make sure I don't overdo it."

Jordan battled tendinitis in both knees and wrist, and had to overcome back spasms and broken ribs as he prepared for his second season back last summer. Nevertheless, he won 22 of his 82 games.

Jordan's season scoring average is the lowest of his career, ahead only of his second season with the Chicago Bulls in 1985-86, when he broke his foot and played just 18 games.

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— Michael Jordan
Wizards' guard.

Back problems force Nicklaus to withdraw from The Masters

(AP) — Jack Nicklaus played in his first Masters as a 19-year-old amateur, won his sixth green jacket when he was 46 and was still a factor going into the weekend two years ago at age 60 with an artificial hip.

The Masters will have to do without him this year.

Nicklaus, the most dominant player in Augusta National history, withdrew Tuesday from the Masters because of lingering back problems that have kept him from tournament golf since the Senior British Open last summer.

"I do not think my golf game is suitable right now for the competition," Nicklaus said.

While the Golden Bear has expressed concerns about competing against players half his age on an Augusta National course that has added nearly 300 yards, it was a back injury that has plagued him for nearly a year that forced him to withdraw.

The 62-year-old Nicklaus also withdrew from this week's Legends of Golf on the Senior

PGA Tour.

"I have tried over the last couple of months to get my body and my golf game in shape to play at the Legends and possibly the Masters," Nicklaus said. "And while encouraged, I made a decision today that neither is at the point I hoped they'd be at this stage."

It will be only the second time since 1959 that Nicklaus has missed the Masters. He also skipped in 1999 when he was recovering from hip replacement surgery.

"We are disappointed that due to his health, Jack will not be competing in this year's Masters," Augusta National chairman Hootie Johnson said. "Jack has made numerous contributions to this tournament, and we hope physically he is able to play golf again soon."

Nicklaus said he will continue a fitness program designed to help his back. He hopes to play in The Tradition, the first major on the senior tour to be played the last week in April in Arizona

on a course he designed.

"My back is better, and I fully expect it will come around at some point where it will allow me to play golf in the not-so-distant future," he said. "I really enjoy competitive golf. It's in my blood, and I very much look forward to playing again soon."

He first suggested he might skip the Masters in January when his lower back caused problems swinging the club.

Nicklaus joined Augusta National last year and played a members' tournament in November. He said he could reach the fairway bunker on No. 1 from the members' tees, but his routine hit his drives about 210 yards.

Golf World magazine recently checked the scores Nicklaus posted at his home course, Bear's Club in Jupiter, Fla., and found his handicap index was 10.

Nicklaus still plans to play Augusta National next week in the Champions Dinner, and not rule out playing the Masters again, depending on his health.

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